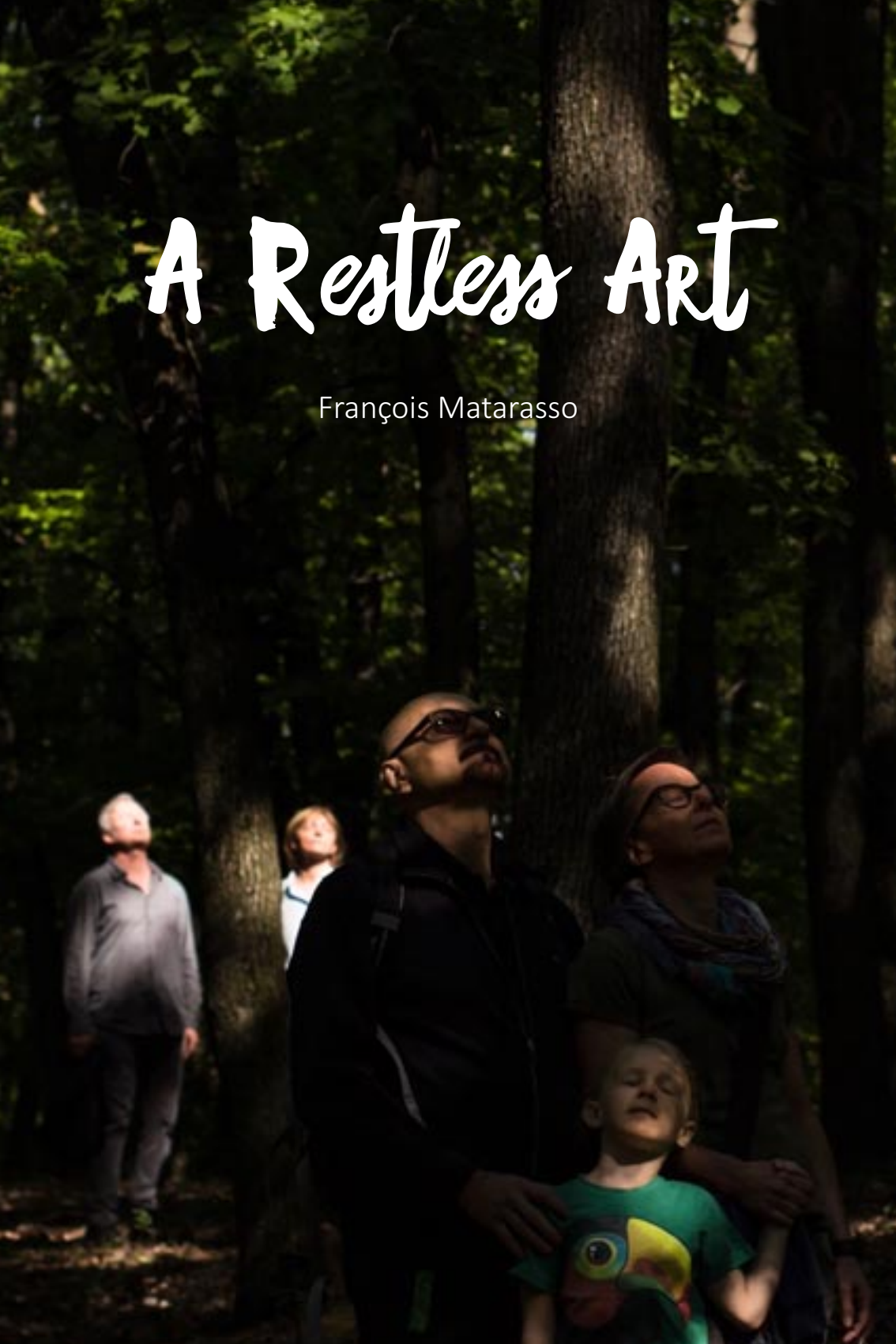
A Restless Art

François Matarasso



At last a reliable text raising the neglected profile of community and participatory art practitioners of the last 50 years. Illustrated with a mass of inspiring international examples, François Matarasso offers scholarly reflective theory, historical insight and a passionate manifesto for ways of creating social transformation.

John Fox. MBE

The arts are particularly skilled at reinventing the wheel—each generation wants to believe its work is all new, breaking previously unbroken boundaries, truly transgressive and creating genuine change. In truth none of us works in a vacuum and, whether we acknowledge it or not, all of our work is built on that of our predecessors. In this book, François Matarasso offers an extensive understanding of the work that came before and a thoughtful analysis of what's happening now, all of which can help us see where we could be headed and what will help us get there, as practitioners, funders, policy-makers or the communities who are (or should be) the beating heart of our work. Above all and hugely welcome right now, this is a hopeful book, focused on deeds not words, on activity and action, which is fortunate—there is much to be done.

Stella Duffy, Co-Founder and Co-Director Fun Palaces

For anyone interested in participatory art and community art, this book is a must read and will likely remain so for years to come. It charts the history and evolution of participatory art in this country and many countries abroad, arguing the case for its continued development with passion and creative force. It is strongly theoretically grounded yet integrated with an insightful awareness of how politics affect this art, and indeed all art. Elegantly and creatively written with telling examples, it shows how the power of this 'restless art' has made an impact on peoples' lives and communities. François Matarasso has the unique quality and far reaching knowledge of one who is both a practitioner and scholar of the arts and humanities. He interweaves these exceptional talents in this book with consummate skill, wisdom and insight that give participatory art its well-deserved place in history.

Helen Simons, Professor Emeritus of Education and Evaluation
at the University of Southampton

O olhar e o pensamento de François Matarasso trouxeram aos projectos PARTIS, e a todos os artistas com interesses sociais nas suas práticas, uma nova consciência do seu lugar nos territórios onde actuam. Depois de o conhecer, dialogar com o seu pensamento é integrar a sua vasta e única experiência em cada um dos nossos pequenos gestos em palco e na rua. Obrigado François.

François Matarasso's vision and thinking offered us all, PARTIS projects and socially engaged artists, a new consciousness of the place we occupy in our territories of operation. Once you know him, engaging with his thinking means integrating his vast and unique experience into our every single small gesture onstage and on the street.

Paulo Lameiro, Artistic Director of Sociedade Artística Musical dos Pousos

A Restless Art

How participation won, and why it matters

François Matarasso

Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation
Lisbon and London

A Restless Art: How participation won, and why it matters

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A Restless Art

This book is for, with and by every artist, professional and non-professional, with whom I have worked, in gratitude.

We are brave in our bold dreams but also in our hesitations. We are brave in our willingness to carry on even as our pounding hearts say, You will fail and land on your face. Brave in our terrific tolerance for making a hundred mistakes. Day after day. We are brave in our persistence.

Kyo Maclear[1]

Malcolm X Elders, ‘We Have Overcome’, (2012)

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Foreword

This is a book about participatory art and its more radical predecessor, community art.[2] It is written from a perspective of engagement. Community art has been my working life, inspiring, educating and supporting me. I am as certain of its value today as I was in my younger days—no, *more* certain, because I have learned so much. The principles that underpin my work are unchanged, but they have been toughened by four decades of making, observing, accompanying and researching participatory art in more than 40 countries.

A Restless Art draws on that history and on new research. It is a kind of dialogue between current practice and past experience, between today's artists and those of my generation, between emerging ideas and tested ones. Between 2015 to 2018, I visited participatory art projects in Portugal, Spain, France, Britain, Ireland, Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Poland, Lithuania, Finland, Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia Herzegovina, Macedonia, Romania, Greece, Morocco and elsewhere, to meet and interview artists and see their work. The choice of projects was part planning and part chance. Some trips were made specially, others were made possible by commissions or invitations. The projects varied in nature, art form, practice and social situation: diversity is a characteristic of participatory art. But all, in my opinion, were worthwhile, even, or especially, when they challenged my ideas or expectations. The lessons of bad participatory art practice are repetitive and largely obvious. The lessons of good practice are endless, unexpected and often inspiring.

The research was undertaken without a specific thesis. It was a response to the rapid growth of participatory art since the early 2000s, especially in places where it was a recent practice with little formal

support. A new generation of artists was involved, their ideas shaped by very different influences from mine. They were making art with communities shattered by the 2008 financial crisis and its aftermath. I was struck by their courage, tenacity and imagination in responding to the pressures of globalisation, war and political failure. These artists were reinventing community art in, with and for a fragile world, and I wanted to learn about their experience. At the same time, I wanted to reflect on the decades of my own work, to understand better what I've done and known, and make sense of what is happening now as the next stage of that history. It has been an exhilarating, sometimes difficult journey. My thinking has changed far more than I anticipated, even about something as fundamental as the meaning and validity of the term 'participatory art'. Consequently, the book has been re-written several times, each very different from the last; I could be revising it for years. Fortunately, deadlines cannot be forever extended. As it is, I am very grateful to the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation for its support and patience.

So this book is a kind of conversation between engaged actors across generations. It is not, as will be evident from this brief account, a detached survey of participatory art. It is, like the few other books on this subject, a book by a practitioner, written primarily for practitioners, albeit with an eye to other audiences. I believe that knowledge can, indeed must, be produced outside the academy, and that art is both a valid research method and a form of knowledge: it is why I work in community art.[3] This book records the particular interaction of my experience and thinking. I have been influenced the humanist thought of Alfred Grosser, a political scientist who acknowledged the importance and the limits of personal experience. This foreword is a first account of what shapes my interpretations; others will be found in what follows. Those interpretations have been continually tested in conversations, seminars and conferences, through the project blog, and by seeking advice on the text. It was feedback from readers that led me to abandon the second draft. The process is rewarding, and the book is much better for the critical rigour of friends and peers. I thank them all for their generosity and support. Of course, what errors of fact or judgement remain are my responsibility. I invite readers to let me know of any they find through the blog: www.arestlessart.com.

It follows that, although this book draws on my best knowledge, research and craft, it can only be one interpretation of participatory art. It does not try to prove what is a matter of judgement, though it does hope to replace belief with knowledge. It sets out an argument for the value of this work that will persuade some but not others. That is as it should be. My vision of participatory art, as a creative and a democratic space in which we can discover, process, understand, organise and share our experience deliberately rejects a single, definitive interpretation, even if I do propose some definitions. I was still young when I saw that there are many ways of making participatory art. I respect them all (or almost all), enjoy many, admire some, but aspire only to mine.[4] The tensions embedded in the form itself—none greater that those arising from co-creation by professional and non-professional artists—are unavoidable. They create ethical, political, artistic and other dilemmas that can only be responded to in context, by the people involved. There are few definitive answers but many ways of doing things better. It is those difficulties that make this work rewarding and important. They arise because community art really matters in people's lives. This is a restless art, tense with conceptual, methodological and ethical ambiguities. Its best practitioners understand and value those ambiguities. They are energised by the tightrope walk, enjoy crossing disciplinary borders, are interested in the people they meet in other territories, and see democratic sense-making as a hopeful way of making life better. Curiously, in my experience, they often don't identify as artists: their eyes are on another prize.

So this book offers more questions than answers. There is no correct place to stand in these debateable lands. There is only your place, chosen because you have considered others and settled on one that corresponds to your artistic, political, philosophical ideas. You might move tomorrow, shifting balance as everything changes around you. This book is one voice in a conversation. Write in the margins, underline the bits you like, cross out those you don't (but ask yourself why). Talk to yourself, talk to your friends, talk to me. In community art, the journey always matters as much as the destination.

François Matarasso
September 2018

Participatory art now

NTW TEAM 'Performance Party', (2018)

1 The normalisation of participatory art

In from the margins

During the past 20 years, something unexpected happened to participatory art. It became normal. I do not mean that people's everyday participation in the arts became normal—it always is. Making, sharing and enjoying art is the foundation of every society's cultural life, as Raymond Williams argued in *Culture is Ordinary*. But this book is not concerned with everyday culture, which does not depned on interpretation or advocacy. It is about participatory art, a specific and historically-recent practice that connects professional and non-professional artists in an act of co-creation.[5] That is a vast, diverse field spanning the sophistication of contemporary art to the politics of social action, but it is defined by the shared creative act. It includes what I call community art, an older, rights-based practice that emerged in the cultural revolution that transformed Western society in the 1960s. Both participatory art and community art are important in connecting everyday cultural participation with the self-consciousness of contemporary art practice, and so healing a rift that was opened with the Enlightenment's invention of fine art (*les beaux arts*) in the 18th century. In that context, the normalisation of participatory art is a historic event, and not only within the art world.

It has taken some decades for that to become clear. In the 1960s and 1970s, the young activists who invented community art saw themselves as a movement, which says something of the radicalism

of their project. They believed that art is vital to human flourishing, that everyone has the capacity to create and define it, and that full, free and equal participation in cultural life is both a human right and a path towards a more just and democratic society.[6]

These ideas were indeed radical. They challenged beliefs about the universal, transcendent value of art, and the genius of the individual artist, that had shaped elite culture and its institutions in Europe since the Enlightenment.[7] The authority of cultural institutions depends on being accepted as legitimate arbiters of value. What is an Academy or an Arts Council for, but to deliver authoritative judgements about art?[8] Throughout the 1970s, the community art movement rejected the standards of the art world, which responded by rejecting community art for failing to meet those standards.[9] So began an argument about the nature, meaning, purpose and value of art—and who is entitled to determine those things—that continues today. That disagreement, which is a recurring theme of this book, is inevitable because art expresses values. That may be why the Norwegian Minister of Church and Culture, Kjølv Egeland, told a meeting of European ministers of culture in 1976 that 'Culture is a matter for politicians'.[10]

In 1981, I was an apprentice community art worker in south London and the strategy of questioning the quality of participatory work seemed effective. Despite 15 years of adventurous, innovative practice, the community art movement had secured little support or respect from the art world. The argument between different visions of art and its place in society was deadlocked. At best, the practice was tolerated. Underfunded and ignored by critics, community art had little visibility beyond the housing estates and community halls where it took place. The early 1980s were a time of ideological strife, as the first Thatcher government fought to establish the economic and social policies now called neoliberalism. Art seemed marginal to that struggle, except perhaps to community artists working in cities and towns facing deindustrialisation. But the movement, which was broadly on the left, could not agree with itself about theory, politics or even the social function of art. In 1987, as the liberalisation of financial services cemented the new hegemony, the National Association of Community Artists was dissolved. It seemed to many people that the promise—or the challenge—of community art was also fin-

OSUNČANA MJESTA, DOTRŠČINA VIRTUAL MUSEUM

Among the trees of Dotrščina Memorial Park in Zagreb, a hundred people stand, separate, faces turned up to the late September sunshine. Most have closed their eyes, feeling the air and the warmth on their skin. As the sun moves, so do they, finding a new patch of light to stand in. No one speaks. Half an hour passes. Then they relax. Quiet voices start to be heard. Footsteps on the leaves. This is the artistic intervention created in 2017 for the Dotrščina Virtual Museum, which Saša Šimpraga founded and has curated since 2012. His work resists political revisionism, using participatory approaches to draw attention to forgotten histories and present injustice. Dotrščina Park is a crime scene. Between 1941 and 1945, 7,000 people were brought here for execution by the Fascist regime. Many were buried among the trees. Today, this history is neglected, except by neo-Nazis who regularly deface the park with graffiti.

Osunčana mjesta was conceived by Zoran Pavelić, in response to an annual open call for a memorial intervention, to enact the idea that 'freedom is always a choice of light'. Artists like Šimpraga and Pavelić continue the courageous tradition of non-violent resistance, through an engaged art that values the actual vulnerability of human beings above political rhetoric. *Sunlit Spots* and the Dotrščina Virtual Museum make art that is urgent and timeless, serious and approachable, evanescent and visceral. There is no distinction here between artist and participant: there is no audience. There is only an invitation to choose the light.

LI DIUEN MAR, PI(È)CE

Barcelona, like other European cities, is living with change as it copes with austerity, gentrification, politics, tourists, migration and terrorism. The public work of artists at such times is not simple. The artistic team of PI(È)CE (Constanza Brncic, Albert Tola, Julio Álvarez and Nuno Rebelo) and the production team of Teatre Tantarantana, is responding by creating space for citizens to meet, create and be heard. Each year, the theatre's artists create a new production with residents.

Li diuen mar, performed in 2016 for the city's prestigious Grec Festival, was a story of the sea, of hope and danger, escape, intimacy, rescue and mutual discovery. It was created during months of workshops by children from local schools, a group of older and retired people, an amateur choir and students at a youth arts centre—people of all ages, backgrounds and cultures who would not otherwise have met. Combining music, dance, film and theatre the performance was poetic, funny and evocative. It was not a statement, but its creation was itself a bold claim for recognition, for inclusion. Beyond the commercial city or the tourist city are other Barcelonas, home to elderly people and teenagers, refugees and disabled people. Their cities are equally important, equally real. PI(È)CE enables these citizens to come forward and claim their place in the mosaic that is Barcelona.

ished. Many people left the field. Those who stayed adapted their work to the new culture. And many began to call their work participatory art to distinguish it from a practice that seemed out of date and tainted by relentless assaults on its artistic value.

In the 1990s, I began to write about community art as well as make it.[11] I wanted to think about my own practice and make the case for a neglected, misrepresented and undervalued art form. When I published research into the social impact of participation in the arts, it was welcomed by practitioners but met little enthusiasm from British arts institutions. Made cautious by experience I wrote only that 'a marginal repositioning of social policy priorities could be very significant: a little art can go a very long way'.[12] In 1997, even that much support for participatory art seemed unlikely.

I could not have been more wrong.

Participatory art is everywhere

What does it mean to say that participatory art has become normal? One answer is that it is now everywhere. It has spread from the marginal urban and rural spaces it occupied in the 1970s to the centres of cultural power. It can be found in arts and cultural institutions; social, urban and economic policy; health and education services; criminal justice; housing; the voluntary sector; the media; across the Internet, and in communities everywhere.

- Participation is integral to the work of contemporary artists such as Jeremy Deller, Theaster Gates and Suzanne Lacy. It is promoted by curators, reviewed by critics and studied by academics. In 2015 Britain's leading contemporary art prize went to work that would have been called community art 40 years earlier. The Turner Prize was awarded to Assemble, a 'collective who work across the fields of art, design and architecture to create projects in tandem with the communities who use and inhabit them'.[13]

- Ideas and methods developed by community artists have become central to the education programmes of museums and galleries. Tate Modern offers daily talks and workshops by artists, including hands-on activities for schools, young people and adults.[14] Middlesbrough Institute of Modern Art describes itself as a 'use-

ful' museum aiming 'to reconnect art with its social function and promote art as a tool for changing the world'.[15]

- The National Theatre of Scotland began in 2006, with 10 plays on the theme of 'Home' opening simultaneously across the country. Local people participated in each production. Vicky Featherstone, then artistic director, said: 'It is about giving them a voice, through their imagination, to unpick the things we take for granted'.[16]

- Sage Gateshead is a concert hall on the banks of the river Tyne, where coal was once loaded onto ships. Alongside its programme of live music, performances and classes, Sage offers community music programmes across north-east England. Many performing art centres now make a similar commitment to participatory work.

- Between 2002 and 2011, Creative Partnerships involved almost a million schoolchildren in creative learning with professional artists, performers, designers and scientists. The scheme placed 3,500 artists in England's most disadvantaged schools through an innovative programme that achieved a measurable improvement in the educational attainment of the young people who took part.[17]

- Participatory art is recognised in social policy. Age Concern manages cARTrefu, a programme that has connected artists with residents of 122 care homes in Wales.[18] Lewisham Social Services finances Meet Me at the Albany, an all-day weekly arts club run for and by elders, with two local arts organisations.[19] South Yorkshire Housing Association co-produces an arts programme with tenants because it contributes to people's quality of life.[20]

- In 2013, Arts Council England launched Creative People and Places (CPP), declaring that 'everyone has the right to experience and be inspired by art and culture'. This £37 million programme operates in 21 areas 'where involvement in the arts is significantly below the national average'. Its approach to involving people in local projects, planning and decision-making reflects longstanding community art practice. In 2018, Sir Nicholas Serota, chair of Arts Council England, announced a further £37 million investment to take CPP to new areas and guarantee the programme until 2022.[21]

- Between 2014 and 2017, Hull was designated UK City of Culture. Hull set itself the goal of increasing residents' cultural participation by 7%, partly through a Creative Communities Programme to support 'opportunities for communities and artists to collaborate'. As a result, there were 62 new community projects 'from street parties to orchestral concerts and from community art jams to audio-visual installations'.[22]

- In 2006, BBC TV screened a documentary series called *The Choir*. It followed Gareth Malone, formerly a community music worker with the London Symphony Orchestra, as he started a choir in a London school. The programme's success led to several further series, industry awards and viewing figures of 2.5 million.[23] It also encouraged thousands to take up choral singing. The Lewisham & Greenwich NHS Choir, formed by health service workers during Malone's *Sing While You Work* (BBC 2012) has sung at Glastonbury Festival and in public health promotion films.[24]

- *Enlightenment*, the Opening Ceremony of the London 2012 Paralympic Games was created by 3,000 non-professional and 100 professional artists, including many disabled people and children.[25] For director, Jenny Sealey, a disability arts pioneer, 'the pressure was immense as we knew this was a once in a lifetime opportunity to place a large skilled cohort of Deaf and disabled people centre stage within a human rights narrative and say to the world "look at us, we are magnificent"'.[26]

This change is not confined to Britain, even if that was one of the places where it began. There has been a similar growth of participatory art throughout and beyond Europe.

- In France, the Philharmonie de Paris runs Démos a classical music education programme, reaching out to children in disadvantaged areas, with a supportive pedagogy. Since 2010 it has developed nationwide through local partnerships. Démos currently supports more than 15 youth orchestras and 2000 young musicians aged between 7 and 14.[27] Part of the funding comes from Art Citoyen, a fund for participatory art created in 2010 by the Fondation Daniel et Nina Carasso.[28]

- In Finland, the National Theatre performs in care homes, hospitals and prisons. In 2017, it opened its stage to *Toinen koti* ('Other home') a documentary play devised and performed by Finnish actors and asylum-seekers in Helsinki. The work, which included professional actors and non-professional musicians, was so successful that its sold-out run was extended.[29]

- In Spain, La Caixa Foundation finances art programmes with a social purpose, including participatory concerts, theatre and exhibitions. It also finances Apropra Cultura, an initiative that supports visits to cultural venues by people attending social services and community centres. Between 2008 and 2017, the foundation invested €4.5 million in 345 participatory art projects involving vulnerable and marginalised groups.[30]

- In the Netherlands, community art has been recognised in national cultural policy since the early 2000s. It is a cornerstone of the Leeuwarden 2018 European Capital of Culture programme.[31] The International Community Arts Festival in Rotterdam, a legacy of that city's year as capital of culture in 2001, is probably the biggest community art event in Europe.[32]

- In Switzerland, the Federal agency for co-operation and development (SDC) is committed to assigning one percent of its aid budget to cultural programmes. In the past decade it has supported major participatory art and culture programmes in the Western Balkans, Central Asia and Sub-Saharan Africa.[33]

- In Norway, Pakistan, Hungary and elsewhere, Creativity, Culture & Education, the charity behind Creative Partnerships, has been building on its innovations with schools, universities and governments to strengthen the place of participatory art in education.[34]

- In Australia, VicHealth, the public health promotion agency of the state of Victoria, finances participatory and community art programmes that encourage physical activity and social connection. Its evaluations contribute to an international body of evidence on the value of arts and health.[35]

Although this list is repetitious, it does help to show how ordinary participatory art has become. The involvement of 'citizens, regular folks, community members, or non-artists' (in the words of curator, Tom Finkelpearl) is a central aspect of artistic creation today.[36] It is also becoming accepted in the much larger field of social policy.[37] Participatory art is normal, at least in the sense that cultural institutions, festivals, social organisations, public agencies, foundations and broadcasters, among others, include it readily in their programmes. There is nothing exceptional about these examples, which could be extended almost *ad infinitum*. That is the point.

The high-profile, well-resourced initiatives of cultural institutions demonstrate how participatory art has come in from the margins. But they are not the whole story, and perhaps not the part of it that matters most. Participatory art is strongest where it began: in communities. There is a vast ecosystem of artists, social organisations, community art groups, development workers, educators and activists making participatory and community art locally. They have little money but great resilience. Unknown to critics or the media, they are the foundations on which more celebrated work stands, the crucible in which new and radical ideas are forged. In countries where resources for culture are limited, or where public institutions retain a conservative view of their role, these small, independent groups are vital both for their grassroots action and for enacting democratic participation in a world under pressure.

Border situations

The normalisation of participatory art presents opportunities and threats. It is a remarkable achievement to which countless people have contributed over decades. As a result, many others have benefited through participating in artistic work. Millions of lives have changed for the better, in small ways and large. At the same time, the growing acceptance of participatory art in centres of power risks making it another arm of institutional control, its purposes, goals and methods dictated from outside rather than negotiated between the people concerned. Less dramatically, there is a risk that participatory art is mishandled by people who do not understand its values and processes, or who believe that it requires little more than good inten-

tions. That will create only mediocrity and resentment. It will also discredit a practice whose promise might be unfulfilled because it is misunderstood.

Is participatory art difficult to understand? That depends on the direction from which you approach it. In four decades of community art work, with people from many cultures within and beyond Europe, I cannot recall any participant who was confused by what they were doing and why. At the same time, I have had endless, often tortuous conversations with artists, managers, academics, funders and politicians who could not grasp participatory art's concepts, processes or value. Likewise, what I've written about participatory art has often been accepted by people making it and rejected by those furthest from the practice. The problem is that participatory art, *by its very nature*, cuts across the art world's conceptual and administrative boundaries. That is its strength—and its challenge.

In uniting professional and non-professional art-making, participatory art creates a new, unstable form. Modern societies organise themselves through ever-more sophisticated (and therefore exclusive) fields of thought, policy and activity. Participatory art reaches across those boundaries to invite new collaborations. It connects art, social work, politics, philosophy, environmentalism, therapy, community development, activism, health, aesthetics, social justice and many other fields. Those connections can be unsettling.

The philosopher, Karl Jaspers, placed a special importance on border situations, which he termed *Grenzsituationen*.[38] He wrote that 'we become ourselves by a change in our consciousness of being' when we are confronted with situations that we cannot evade or change: death, fear, chance, guilt.[39] Writing about Jaspers' thought, Christopher Thornhill describes these border situations as:

> moments, usually accompanied by experiences of dread, guilt or acute anxiety, in which the human mind confronts the restrictions and pathological narrowness of its existing forms, and allows itself to abandon the securities of its limitedness, and so to enter [a] new realm of self-consciousness.[40]

European drama has turned on the existential choices confronting human beings in such situations since its emergence in Classical Athens. Indeed, its power to make them visible, communal and ex-

HOME, BANLIEUES BLEUES

Banlieues Bleues is a jazz festival that happens every spring in Seine-Saint-Denis, on the north-eastern edge of Paris. With its socio-economic disadvantages this is not an obvious place to promote the stars of the world of jazz. But the local politicians who have supported Banlieues Bleues since 1984 believe that their electors deserve the same excellence as anyone else. And so, from the beginning, the festival has worked closely with local schools, associations and musicians to create opportunities for participation.

'Home', performed in the municipal theatre of Clichy-sous-Bois in April 2018, showed that commitment at its best. The concert was performed by Papanosh (France), with Roy Nathanson and Napoleon Maddox (USA), and local people, including primary school pupils, young rappers and an amateur choir. Among several highlights was a piece blending keyboard music with the voices of recently arrived migrant workers. The women had not felt safe enough to perform but they sat in the hall packed with families, their recorded words taking the stage with everyone else. The evening of jazz, singing, comedy, rap, dance and poetry was an exuberant celebration of home, and something that none of the performers could even imagined on their own. Through such creative work, Banlieues Bleues builds common ground between great artists and new ones, and works for the cultural inclusion of everyone in Seine-Saint-Denis.

YOU ARE HERE, RESTOKE

Restoke make site-specific performances in which professional and non-professional artists play an equal part. *You Are Here* (2016) shared the experiences of people who have come to live in Stoke-on-Trent, by choice or necessity. Co-created through exploratory conversations, workshops and rehearsals, it honoured each person's culture and past, whilst also affirming their choice to be a full, free and equal citizen of the country they now call home. For the audience, it was both educational and moving, as one person explained afterwards: *'There is knowing a thing and there is understanding. Beyond understanding, there is a deeper, more profound connection. Thank you for showing me your stories. I understand now.'*

The piece was performed in the former Wedgwood Institute, a Victorian symbol of working people's commitment to culture and self-improvement. The location for Restoke's next production was Goldenhill Working Men's Club, less grand than the Institute, but equally important in local cultural life. *Man Up* (2018) is about masculinity and mental health, and like its predecessor, it was developed slowly by the diverse group of men who performed it: *'Strangers in our own skin, our sanity will not be sourced through silence.'* At a time when so many feel unheard or disregarded by politics, Restoke makes art that values people and fosters mutual understanding.

periential inspired Jean-Paul Sartre, philosopher and playwright, to call in 1947 for 'a theatre of situations'.[41]

But there is another sense in which Jasper's concept of the border situation is useful in understanding participatory art's challenge to conventional thinking. Because it exists only in crossing borders, participatory art cannot help but make us aware of the 'restrictions and pathological narrowness' of the existing forms within which society is organised. In operating at the edge of normative social structures, participatory art confronts us with new questions. It disrupts the concepts and disciplines within and between which it works, abandoning the security of those existing forms and so challenging us to become more self-aware. The disruption is not always conscious or deliberate, but it is the unavoidable result of stepping into no man's land. Sarah Bakewell writes that border situations:

> make you realise that you have to accept the burden of responsibility for what you do. Experiencing such situations is, for Jaspers, almost synonymous with existing […]. Although they are hard to bear, these are puzzles in our existence, and thus open the door to philosophising. We cannot solve them by thinking in the abstract; they must be lived, and in the end we make our choices with our entire being.[42]

That is exactly what participatory art does, at its best, as may be seen in many of the examples in this book. Take Fada Theatre, whose play, *Talent op de vlucht* ('Talent on the run') opened the 2017 International Community Arts Festival in Rotterdam. The company was formed by Syrian refugees during their time in a Dutch asylum seekers' centre and includes professional and non-professional theatremakers. Their play draws on experiences of war, escape and migration that Jaspers would have recognised as border situations. But the means by which reality becomes theatre creates a border situation *within art itself*. In using the processes of community art, Fada challenge the convention that keeps such traumatic events safely on stage, within forms with which we are familiar and comfortable. These are not professional actors and fellow-citizens presenting us with abstract moral dilemmas, as Sartre envisaged. They are survivors testifying about war crimes. In Fada's art, the border situation exists not only in *what* is being said but also in *how* it is said. This is not theatre *about* civil war and migration. It is theatre *of* civil war and migration. When

they work on the borders between art and social action, Fada destabilise the conventions of both, making it harder for the audience, and themselves, to rest easily in either. They leave the restrictions and security of existing forms—not of art itself, but of how art is usually conceived, created and valued. In doing that, they accept the burden of responsibility implied by their artistic act, and they ask audiences to take equal responsibility for their response to that act. There is no stable value system to assess this work, which is partly why the art world struggles so much with questions of quality in participatory art.[43] We cannot rely on the usual authorities to make sense of *Talent op de vlucht*. We must do it ourselves. The effect is to make us more aware of our own assumptions, choices and responsibilities. Participatory art reminds us that we are alive and that our lives matter.

Causes and consequences

Participatory art is now so normal that is hard to understand why that has happened or what might be the consequences. After all, ideas become normal partly when, and because, we stop questioning them. And yet, as we have seen, the very nature of participatory art raises profound and complex questions that cannot be avoided, especially by those working in the field. This book is concerned with those questions, including how we have come to accept the ordinariness of professional and non-professional artists working together to create self-conscious, critical art.

This normalisation is not (or not only) a sign of changing fashion in the art world. It is the result of a revolution in ideas of art, associated with other changes in European society. During the second half of the 20th century, a period of unprecedented peace and prosperity enabled an increase in democracy, education, and leisure, initially in western European nations and then more widely. At the same time, a decline in the power of political ideology and religion as systems for collective sense-making placed a greater burden on culture as a source of meaning, identity and transcendence. These changes transformed people's relationship with art, giving them reasons and ways to question established beliefs. If participatory art has become normal, it is because, more than some other fields of art production, its ideas and processes go with the grain of this social transformation. That

may surprise artists and activists at the leading edge of this work, buffeted as they are by the waves and winds of politics. But below the stormy surface, the tide has been going their way for years.

Now though, and even as this normalisation occurs, the conditions that enabled it are changing again. The political and economic settlement established after the Second World is disintegrating, as the generation by whose sacrifice it was shaped passes away. The 2008 financial crisis made governments unable or unwilling to fulfil the post-war social contract. War, poverty and state failure are driving millions to seek refuge in more secure nations. A technological revolution hints at a strange, perhaps frightening future. Human use of the planet's natural resources is increasingly threatening. Populists and demagogues have emerged, looking for scapegoats.

Participatory art cannot solve these existential challenges. But it might help us face them, in the places where we meet and live. At its best, participatory art creates a space in which all can speak and be heard, where our pain and our hopes can be shared, where we can build common ground and ways of working together, where our creativity and empathy might find better ways of living. And in doing that, it might be specially valuable in the places too small or weak to be noticed by power. In communities left more and more to their own devices, participatory art—and especially community art—might be a valuable tool for building a better future.

Might. Art is a power, not a good. Participatory art can empower people but good results are not guaranteed. Like all art, it can also be hollow, manipulative, pretentious, trivial and dull. The extent to which participation is desirable depends entirely on what it is we participate in, on what terms and to what end. Art can be used to control, dominate and exploit, as the representation of women in the canon of European art often shows. Knowing the spectrum of participatory art, I know too that at its best it can be empowering and transformative. Its normalisation creates new opportunities for human flourishing and social justice, but to make the most of that potential we must understand its nature, its processes and its pitfalls. The next chapter begins the journey by looking at what we mean by art and how those ideas shape our approach to participation.

II

What is participatory art?

Restoke, ‘Man Up’, (2018)

2 Concepts

> Culture is ordinary: that is the first fact. Every human society has its own shape, its own purposes, its own meanings. Every human society expresses these, in institutions, and in arts and learning. The making of a society is the finding of common meanings and directions, and its growth is an active debate and amendment under the pressures of experience, contact, and discovery, writing themselves into the land.
>
> **Raymond Williams**[44]

Art itself is the first difficulty raised by any discussion of participatory art.[45] What do we mean when we use that word? Or, to put it more precisely, what do we *believe* about art, without always thinking much about it? Participatory art is a fascinating, creative practice for one reason above all—it challenges our assumptions about what art is, why we make it, how it affects us and other critical ideas we take for granted. Participatory art crosses borders that have been well guarded for a very long time. The most obvious one is between who is an artist and who isn't, but there are others too, between professions, disciplines and forms, between intentions, between kinds and degrees of power. Participatory art, *by definition*, stands in two places at once, and frequently more than two places. That can be uncomfortable. It certainly makes it restless.

Unless that tension is recognised, it is very hard to understand participatory art. We are used to thinking about art in a particular way and familiarity has often made our thinking rigid. In the 1960s, the first community artists began to ask whether other ways of thinking about art might open the gates that exclude so many. At the time,

their project was seen as political and, in asking questions about power, it inevitably was, but its source, purpose and value were all artistic. So it is necessary to begin by looking at what we mean by art, and how established ideas are tested, and potentially renewed, by participatory art.

Art as object

Art is famously difficult to define but some of that difficulty comes from the idea that it is a *thing*, or rather, a class of things. The Oxford Dictionary defines art as:

> The expression or application of human creative skill and imagination, typically in a visual form such as painting or sculpture, producing works to be appreciated primarily for their beauty or emotional power.[46]

This definition has three principal elements. First, art requires *skill*; secondly, it produces *works* (things); and thirdly, its value is *emotional*. None of these ideas is controversial. They would probably have been accepted by artists in any period of European history, and especially since the late 18th century, when Romanticism turned feeling into philosophy. Still, they do not adequately describe what artists do, especially in the open (and participatory) practices they use today, and, as a result, the nature of art can be controversial. Here is Tate's description of a piece in its collection by the British artist Martin Creed:

> *Work No. 227: The lights going on and off* consists of an empty room which is filled with light for five seconds and then plunged into darkness for five seconds. This pattern is repeated ad infinitum.[47]

It is hard to identify the skill (as opposed to the imagination) required to create this immaterial work, and its beauty or emotional power can only be judged by those who experience it: the Tate website says, understandably, 'Sorry, no image available'. But the work's quality, importance or interest is not the issue. What matters here is that it does not conform to commonly accepted definitions of art, including the one offered by the Oxford Dictionary.

And yet, since this work is made by a celebrated artist and 'owned' by a major gallery, the problem must lie with the definition, not the art. This problem of definition made *Work No. 227* controver-

THE PASSION, STREETWISE OPERA

Streetwise Opera's productions are co-created by music professionals and vulnerable people in several British cities. In 2016/17, Streetwise worked with 667 people, most of whom experience homelessness, mental health problems and disability: together, they created 31 musical performances and unquantifiable solidarity. This is long-term work, rooted in a humanly and artistically demanding commitment to weekly workshops. From it come ideas for artistic projects, often linked to music commissions. Among other achievements, Streetwise Opera is a patron of new vocal music. All this leads to concerts that do not imitate (or aim to imitate) professional opera. Instead, they create new artistic expressions, shaped by the interaction of professional musicians and untrained voices, cultural and political issues, and each performer's lived experience.

All these qulities could be seen in the BBC TV broadcast of Bach's *St Matthew Passion* at Easter 2016. The performance, by Streetwise Opera members and professional singers of The Sixteen, was beautiful and moving. The part of Jesus was played successively by seven Streetwise members, men and women, white and black. The frailty of their singing and their life experience, simply acknowledged, gave Christ a devastating vulnerability. Here was a victim whose quiet utterances were overwhelmed by the power of voices trying literally to silence him. The performance—because of, not despite, its rough edges—returned the Easter story to its deepest meaning.

CAHERCONLISH MURAL

Bridget Lambert spent the summer of 2018 painting a tribute to Dolores O'Riordan with children in rural Limerick. The singer, who had recently died, was born a few miles from Caherconlish, where Bridget worked with 30 primary school children. A Cranberries fan herself, she took pleasure introducing the children to their music, as they explored the joy of colour, painting and co-creation. The design was developed with the help of her sister, Patricia, who is a professional artist. When the canvas was finished, it was installed at a disused petrol station in the village, in the presence of the children and the community.

For Bridget this was part of an MA in Sociology, Youth, Community and Social Regeneration at the University of Limerick, but it is not a typical student project. Her personal connection with O'Riordan's music makes the art sing. Like the masterpiece that traditionally marked the end of an apprenticeship, this work makes the professional personal. Above all, it is a reminder that, whatever the concerns of researchers or policy makers, the most vital criteria of successful participatory art is simply that the people making it want to enjoy and share their creativity.

sial when it was first exhibited. Other art works have been controversial in more substantive ways. Francisco Goya's series of prints, *The Disasters of War* (1810-1820) has divided opinion because of the artist's depiction of violence. Despite the passage of time, Goya's images continue to disturb our ideas about humanity. Creed's work is silent on those questions but is controversial because it disturbs our ideas about art. If we adjusted our expectations, we might be able to respond more fruitfully to the work itself. We might find that asking 'Is it art?' is less interesting than asking 'What is this?', 'What does it say?', 'How do I feel about it?' or 'Is it good?'. One reason why it is difficult to ask such questions is that we are used to thinking of art as a thing.

Art as typology

The idea that art consists of things belongs to the 18th century and the emancipatory impulse of the Enlightenment. Philosophers, artists, writers, politicians and others began to reimagine humanity in the world, often through the lens of new scientific thought. One of their most powerful inventions was fine art, which greatly increased art's importance as a value system and with it the status of the artist. It fuelled an explosion of Western art, first in Romanticism and then in a succession of innovative artistic movements that produced some of humanity's greatest achievements and transformed how we see the world. But in making the artistic tastes of an often anti-democratic elite a supreme value, fine art relegated all other types of artistic practice, and especially those rooted in everyday life, to a second-class status.

This class division shapes attitudes to participatory art, for instance by creating a new opposition between aesthetic and use value. But the Enlightenment's ideas also matter because they made us see art as a *class of things*. In *The Invention of Art*, Larry Shiner describes the conditions that enabled this:

> Before the modern category of fine art could be established, three things needed to come together and gain wide acceptance: a limited *set* of arts, a commonly accepted *term* to easily identify the set, and some generally agreed *principle(s)* or criteria for distinguishing that set from all others.

> The set that formed the modern category of fine art had at its core poetry, painting, sculpture, architecture, and music, to which one or more arts might be added such as dance, rhetoric, or landscape gardening.[48]

That approach made sense when Carl Linnaeus was developing a system for scientific classification based on a hierarchy of class, order, genus and species that mirrored the social order in which he lived.[49] But it has little relevance to the democratic, networked and globalising society in which Europeans now live. In any case, transferring concepts from natural science to society is risky because there is no comparable stability in human affairs.[50] The things that distinguish a daffodil and an iris do not change, at least not in human timescales. But that cannot be said about what distinguishes a sculpture from a rock. A firebrick is a firebrick until Carl André lays it with 119 others in a gallery and calls it *Equivalent VIII*.[51] Then it is art. The problem with regarding art as a set of things is that the set must be continually adjusted to take in new materials, (firebricks), media (photography) and attitudes to existing ones (ceramics). Jazz has lost its subversive quality and is now accepted as 'art music' while landscape painting, which was so important in the Romantic era, is largely left to commercial and amateur artists. And it is hard to imagine an Enlightenment philosopher even recognising *Work No. 227* as art at all.

Art as act

One way out of this maze is to stop identifying art as a taxonomy of *things*—forms (visual art) and objects (sculptures)—and think of it instead as an *act* with specific intentions. The act is creative because it brings into being (creates) something that did not previously exist, but art is in the act, not the thing. It might create an object, a composition, a performance, a story, a symbol or an experience. It can be huge and long-lasting, like the Sphinx, or intangible and brief, like a haiku. But whatever its characteristics, the creation is the result and trace of an act distinguished from other human acts by its intention.

The artistic act intends to create and communicate meaning. Humans are sense-making beings, compelled to understand, construe and express their experience of life in the consciousness of mortality. We do not accept the world, as other animals do: we interpret it. We

do not suffer silently: we ask why we suffer. We invest our inner and outer experience with meaning. Consciously and unconsciously, we express beliefs, values, morals and experiences we think are important. We draw strength when others see things as we do, and feel threatened when they do not. Because our beliefs, values and ideas are invisible and intangible, we create things to give them external, communicable existence.

Each spring, many Derbyshire communities mark the ritual of well-dressing.[52] People create images by fixing flower petals and leaves into a ground of clay, before installing them with ceremony at a well or spring. The work is often lovely. It is left in the open until the colours are faded and petals shrivel. Then it is put away until next year. The origins of the tradition are unknown but they are probably pre-Christian. Presumably, they honoured the importance of clean water to the inhabitants. Today, when water flows from the tap, well-dressing might also be seen as signifying respect for heritage and local identity, and an affirmation through enactment of a certain idea of community. If well-dressing is thought of as art, it is probably in the category of 'folk-art'. That seems an unnecessary distinction. Well-dressing is evidently an artistic act, intended to create and communicate meaning. What it means, how we respond to it and what value we give it are legitimate questions to ask about art. But they can only be asked if we recognise something as art in the first place—as a creation resulting from the artistic act.

Art as meaning

But what does 'mean' mean? In an interview on the Tate website, Carl André says '*Works of art don't mean anything. They are realities*.' [53] It is perfectly fair to say that *Equivalent VIII* does not mean something in the sense of signifying something else. It is not an allegory, metaphor or symbol. No message is hidden between the firebricks. When artists say their work does not mean anything, they are saying that it is not code for something else. But André's choice and arrangement of materials is *meaningful*: if not, he would have made different choices. In calling his assemblage reality and placing it in an art gallery, he differentiates it from the floor on which it stands and from firebricks stacked in a builders' merchant. Perhaps he intends viewers to be-

come more conscious of reality; perhaps he has other intentions. But the artist's act has intention, even if it is unconscious, confused, deceptive or ambiguous. The meaning may be no more than 'look at this', but that is already a powerful statement.

Art is the creation of meaning through stories, images, sounds, performances and other methods that enable people to communicate to others their experience of and feelings about being alive. Despite their apparent differences, *Work No. 227* and *The Disasters of War* both intend to communicate something of their creators' lived experience. For Leo Tolstoy:

> The activity of art is based on the fact that man, as he receives through hearing or sight the expressions of another man's feelings, is capable of experiencing the same feelings as the man who expresses them.[54]

Since Tolstoy dedicated much of his life to that effort, it is understandable that he believed his readers would experience the same feelings he tried to express through his stories. But art is not so straightforward. The writer cannot command the reader's response, as Alberto Manguel explains:

> It is the reader who reads the sense; it is the reader who grants or recognises in an object, place or event a certain possible readability; it is the reader who must attribute meaning to a system of signs, and then decipher it.[55]

The artist's act of interpreting experience, like all acts, is itself open to interpretation. That begins when another person recognises it as an act of art making (what Manguel calls readability). Is well-dressing art? Unquestionably, when a viewer recognises it as art. If they do, they can then construe possible meanings in response, and make their own judgements about the coherence and value of those meanings. Each person decides if and how the artist's act is meaningful to them. The artist has control over none of this, but they create a framework of possible responses and interpretations. It would be strange to interpret *The Disasters of War* as a meditation on love, or *Work No. 227* as a statement about racism. Even so, someone experiencing those works might go away thinking about love or racial prejudice.

An art work enables an encounter between the *creator*, who produced it, and the *re-creator*, who responds imaginatively to what is offered. But the exchange is unpredictable and uncontrollable because it can happen only through the prism of individual experience. Although he invented a mythic world loved by millions, J. R. R. Tolkien disliked allegory and denied that his work had any inner meaning or message. He preferred to see his novels as applicable to a reader's experience. The distinction was critical because it respects the reader's autonomy:

> I think that many confuse 'applicability' with 'allegory'; but the one resides in the freedom of the reader, and the other in the purposed domination of the author.[56]

If the meaning of art cannot be fixed, it cannot be good, despite the Enlightenment's belief, still widely held, that art is a source of ultimate and universal value. The artist's act and its lasting trace are always open to interpretation. Whether an act is seen as good—in intention, execution or result—changes according to perspective. There are great artists whose work creates meanings that I abhor. Antisemitism is not unusual in Christian art, while Fascism and Communism have both inspired powerful art. But there is much in the world that I abhor and no reason to expect that it would not also exist in art. On the contrary, as the expression of humanity's struggle to make sense of its existence, art necessarily reflects *all* that existence. As Wallace Stevens wrote:

> Men in general do not create in light and warmth alone. They create in darkness and coldness. They create when they are hopeless, in the midst of antagonisms, when they are wrong, when their powers are no longer subject to their control. They create as the ministers of evil.[57]

So art becomes a territory of meetings between people, a forum for encounter, friendship, exchange, conflict, alliance, misunderstanding, love, negotiation, mistrust, dislike, discovery, rejection—in fact, for the whole spectrum of human relations. As such, it matters enormously how those relations are regulated and who is allowed to take part. We live in a more democratic time than Carl Linnaeus.

Art and culture

Much of this could equally be said of culture, so why do we have two words that overlap confusingly and are often used interchangeably? Like art, culture is the creation of meaning, the expression of values. It is all that human beings do by choice, not necessity. All humans must eat and keep warm (or cool) but they satisfy those needs in different ways, partly influenced by environmental conditions and the availability of food. With familiarity, everyday practices are invested with meaning. They become tradition and define community. Some aspects of dress or eating acquire special, even sacred, value and are consequently accepted (or rejected) as deliberate, conscious acts. Many more are habits, aspects of identity and conduct we rarely, if ever, think about. But being taken for granted does not make them unimportant. Cultural differences can lead to conflict because through them people find meaning in life itself.

Art and culture both express human values and meanings but art's difference lies in its self-consciousness. People express their culture in everything they do, mostly without thinking about or questioning it. *Art requires self-awareness*. The artistic act is a deliberate response to a felt need. Art is intentional. Creation requires all the concentration, skill and experience the artist can muster, as well as other less controllable qualities such as imagination, courage, sensitivity and integrity. It is therefore always a conscious act related to the artist's own culture, with which it shares the purpose of meaning-making. The act may affirm existing ideas and values or challenge them. Being self-conscious, the artistic act stands back from and can be critical of its own culture. It mediates between the personal and the collective and so—sometimes—enables the individual to influence the group. New ideas in art can produce shifts in cultural values. Modernism, rock music and community art have all changed the culture of the societies in which they emerged. Culture is the expression of beliefs and values in the everyday conduct of life. Art is the toolbox that enables people to interfere with their own culture.

This is why the Enlightenment's idea of fine art has been so powerful. It invited the artist to stand back from their own culture and trust their individual vision. With industrialisation came a consumer economy that freed artists from religious and secular patron-

THE PERFORMANCE ENSEMBLE

Alan Lyddiard is a theatre director in his seventies who is exploring what participatory art can mean at his time of life. With support from Leeds Playhouse (which has a proud record of making art with older people) Alan has established The Performance Ensemble, an experimental company of professional and non-professional artists. Some members, like Namron, Tamara McLorg, Sally Owen and Villmore James, have made eminent careers in dance, music or theatre. Others, including many of the local residents already involved, have never made art before. Retirement has blurred the lines between these groups. They bring different experience, but all have stories to share. Alan's commitment to an ensemble means that everyone has a permanent place and time to learn from each other.

After a first production, *Anniversary*, in 2016, the Performance Ensemble is now working on *Bus Pass*, an ambitious piece with hundreds of performers. It will take five years to create, but there will be commissions and public events as staging posts on the way. A glimpse of work in progress was performed in a Leeds hotel ballroom in September 2018. The final show will involve 16 bus journeys ferrying audience and performers to a spectacular finale. No one can be sure what this will be like, because that will depend on the people drawn to the Ensemble. But whatever its final destination the journey is already creating delight. It might also be helping to change perceptions of older people's place in the city.

5x5x5=CREATIVITY

Children are natural artists—curious, open-minded, needing to understand and share their experience. But adults do not always value that creativity, either at school or in relating to them. In Bath, 5x5x5=creativity advocates for creative learning by exploring art with children, as equals. Projects happen in and out of school, in formal and informal situations. They range from small group activities to the Forest of Imagination, whose installations and events take over a city centre square for four days a year. They involve artists, teachers, parents and researchers working with children as co-investigators, exploring, discovering and making. It is the spirit of Paolo Freire, an inquiry guided by need or desire.

Many art organisations have education programmes, but this is something else. Everyone involved is acting as an artist, applying their unique imagination to a shared idea and the creation of something that cannot be known before it emerges from their interaction. It is not passing on information, or even knowledge. It is giving children the methods and materials to act as artists. They are not taught: they learn. 5x5x5=creativity is a small organisation with a wide reach and it has created a rich body of art and research since its creation in 2000. Above all, this alliance of people passionate about children's rights have helped thousands to flourish by their immersion in creative and artistic processes.

age, if at the price of insecurity. Philosophers taught them to use that freedom to respond critically to society. Where art had affirmed, it now learned to question. The new artistic ideas empowered artists imaginatively, and changed their relationship with audiences. Many artists valued the role of social critic, the principled outsider, the under-appreciated genius. Although some of the greatest, such as Charles Dickens, found ways of giving comfort with critique, the idea that art's role must be critical gained strength. Today, many people would say that is what art is, and that what people look to for solace and confirmation is mere entertainment. But art, as part of culture, cannot only confront. Its role is also to ease and unite, which is partly why it is often valued as a collective experience. The critical perspective that came with the invention of fine art was profoundly liberating but, in neglecting art's other functions, it has always risked becoming an alternative tyranny.

Art and children

> We have a tiny minority of people calling themselves artists. I am recommending that everyone should be an artist. I am not recommending it in a spirit of dilettantism, but as the only preventive of a vast neurosis which will overcome a wholly mechanized and rationalized civilization.
>
> **Herbert Read, 1955**[58]

Art's importance is easier to see if we consider how children use it as a playroom for coming to terms with their existence. They draw, sing, narrate, dance, perform, invent, paint and play in creative interaction with their daily experience. Skill or control is unimportant, at least in early years, because for children art is principally a method, a way of being in the world. At a time when they are powerless and dependent, art enables children to act safely among the sometimes unpredictable people around them. A child for whom speaking in class is fraught with risk will happily express their feelings in a picture, a story or a game. Because they see art as activity, children can be uninterested in the things they make, which they learn to value mainly when adults praise them. It is common to see a young child cast aside a finished picture because they are already focused on the next.

Art provides children with a cyclical developmental process through which to engage with the world in gradually more sophisticated ways. The cycle can be described in five interrelated actions, through which children:

- **Discover** their own feelings and ideas, especially the obscure and incomprehensible aspects of their experience, and see how other beings encounter the world, through the stories, games, images and performances they explore;
- **Process** their experience of being alive by playing with it artistically, pulling it apart and creatively rebuilding it at a manageable scale, unconsciously leaving traces of their imaginative pathway as messages for their future selves;
- **Understand** what they like, believe, desire and care for through art that holds feelings and ideas, as well as moral, philosophical, even political positions against which they can work out who they—and others—are;
- **Organise** the tide of childhood experience so that they come to terms with their own imagination and its relationship with reality, albeit at the cost of gradually taming a sense of wonder and awe at being alive; and
- **Share** their evolving sense-making safely with others, testing their perceptions and positions, influencing the people around them and discovering more about themselves in the world.

We know that children enjoy creating their own art and experiencing art made by others. We understand that art is part of a rounded education and many parents actively support their children's access to it, in and out of school. In the context of rapid automation, we are also beginning to see creativity as a key asset for employability. Why then do we not see that what children gain from artistic activity adults can also benefit from? Art does not lose its power to help us discover, process, understand, organise and share our experience when we become adult, but many of us behave as if art were just another childish thing to be put away when life's serious business begins.

If we return to art as adults, it is often for just this capacity to jolt us out of everyday assumptions, to reconnect us with a sense of wonder and uncertainty that can open new creative paths when we are stuck in routine or unable to find answers to the situations facing us. Art can then be a way of paying attention (which children do naturally) but self-consciously and with all the knowledge, skill and understanding an adult can acquire.

Art helps us accept the dangerous, unstable things we avoid in everyday life because they make us feel, like children, that we are not in control. It allows us to focus on what is fluid and changeable, open to interpretation, unexpected or unfinished, deniable, hesitant or uncertain in our experience; to give our fears, anger, desires, hatred and love the space to breathe safely, speak freely, dream and fantasise, imitate; to discover what we like, feel and don't know we feel and like; to fall down without getting hurt, to strike out and not hurt others. Such things cannot be brought easily into the public spaces of adult life and yet they are real and they determine how we live. Culture and language are not enough. Art is an adventure playground of the heart, where we can explore, discover, share and become who we are, in relative safety, alone and together.

Art and human rights

Among the Enlightenment's greatest emancipatory innovations is the idea of universal human rights, which held (in the words of the American Constitution) as self-evident that all men were created equal and that they were endowed with certain unalienable rights, including freedom. If art is the act of making and sharing meaning, and thus defining the human experience, then, self-evidently, it is, or should be, available to everyone. That is not the same as saying that everyone wants or needs to create art, nor that they can do it equally well. The Enlightenment's principle of equality is philosophical. Since all human life has the same intrinsic value it follows that all people have the same rights. Evidently, they do not have the same talents, nor the same social advantages. Some people, through their own abilities or the benefit of social goods such as education, will be much more successful artists than others. But success has no bearing on a person's right to act as an artist. That right is a philosophical idea. Its

inclusion in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) made it also a political claim:

> Article 27. (1) Everyone has the right freely to participate in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and to share in scientific advancement and its benefits.[59]

These words appear in the last substantive article in the text. They might therefore be seen as less important than what comes before, particularly as they are followed by a rather prosaic statement about intellectual property. Apart from the fact that there can be no gradations where rights are concerned, I prefer to see the right to participate in the cultural life of the community as a safeguard for the rights that precede it. Denying people the right to participate in the cultural life of the community is to deny them a voice. And preventing people from being heard is the first step to denying them other rights.

Only if people are able, fully, freely and equally, to act as artists can they communicate what is meaningful to them in life. Only if they have the right to act as artists can they be heard as well as hear. Only if they have the right to act as artists can they express and defend their reality and their values on the same basis as others.

Living with freedom is wonderful and frightening. It is being an adult, accepting all the complexities and ambiguities of human experience. Art is both an expression of that democratic freedom and a technique for living it well. As such, it belongs, equally, to all. Participatory art usually, and community art always, enacts and defends that principle.

3 Definitions

> The Working Party appointed by the Arts Council to study this [practice] was offered many definitions of 'community arts', but found none of them completely satisfactory. We believe, however, that while the search for definition is probably futile, it is possible to pick out certain features which together add up to a distinctive picture.
>
> **Arts Council of Great Britain, 1974** [60]

Between participation and community

In the Universal Declaration of Human Rights *culture* stands between *participation* and *community*. Those words express the concepts most widely used to describe art made collaboratively by professional and non-professional artists: participatory art and community art. The adjectives, simple as they are, describe significantly different visions of art and people's relationship to it. Participatory emphasises the act of joining in, and implies that there is already something in which to join. Art exists, and the goal is to help people take part in it. This is not just consumption, but it may not always be very far from that either. Community, in contrast, suggests something shared and collective. It imagines art not as a pre-existing thing, but as the result of people coming together to create it. This might seem a subtle linguistic distinction, but language matters. Participation and community hold different visions of culture, democracy and human rights. At the risk of over-simplification, the first might be seen as a form of cultural democratisation (or giving people access to the arts), while

the second aspires to cultural democracy. These concepts are described more fully in Chapter Four.

The difference between participatory art and community art is complex but critical. It defines theoretical and artistic ideas, intentions, practice, outcomes and interpretation. But because that is not always understood, both terms are used loosely. I have heard them applied to a wide range of activities with little in common except that artists involve people in their work. This confusion has two serious consequences. First, without a clear definition, it is impossible to distinguish good practice from bad, or to protect ethical principles and ways of working from external pressures, such as institutionalisation or appropriation. Ideas about purpose, quality or outcomes cannot be defended without a robust theory underpinning practice. Secondly, people planning participatory or community art projects without such a theory, and an understanding of how it translates into practice, are more likely to make mistakes, create false expectations, and have illusions about their work. Good intentions are not enough to avoid bad results when you make art with people.

The differences between participatory art and community art are critical but they can also be confusing, especially to people outside the field or meeting the terms for the first time. That is partly the result of history, which is discussed in Part Three. Community art came first, as term, theory and practice. Participatory art is a later development, but is now much more extensive and varied. Community art's lively, mountain spring has become the broad, slow river of participatory art. To add to the confusion, the whole waterway, from source to mouth, is often described as participatory art.

Language has been further complicated in recent years by the emergence of many new terms for certain approaches to participatory art, such as socially-engaged practice, community cultural development, relational aesthetics, audience development, co-creation, new genre public art, dialogic practice, activist art and applied theatre, to name but a few. At the risk of stretching the riverine metaphor too far, they might be seen as the branches of a broad delta formed by participatory art. Personally, I do not use any of these terms. While respecting people's wish to be precise about ideas and intentions, I think the distinctions are opaque beyond the art world (and perhaps within it). This is problematic for two reasons. First, participatory art

aims to involve non-professional artists in the creative act so it must use language and concepts that they understand. Secondly, I fear that the narcissism of small differences distracts from more serious disagreements.[61] Whatever their specific practice or beliefs, artists committed to participation have far more in common with each other than they do with the power centres of state and commercial art. The essential difference is between participatory art and non-participatory art. There will be time enough to consider internal variations in practice when both forms have equal status and resources. So I make only two distinctions in this book:

1 Between all professional artistic production and participatory art, because participatory art involves non-professionals artists; and

2 Between the field of participatory art practice and community art, because the second enacts a concept of human rights.

The vast world of artistic production can be divided into two quite distinct fields, only one of which involves non-professional artists, the defining characteristic of participatory art. In what follows, I use *participatory art* to indicate the whole river of collaborative practice in which artists work with others to make art, and *community art* to indicate a rights-based approach characterised by an aspiration for emancipatory social engagement. This chapter proposes definitions of both terms. It is a journey upriver, from sea to source, from the broad eddies of the delta to its bubbling springs.

Participatory art

The term participatory art is used in the arts, policy and academia to signify a very wide range of activities. This is confusing and it causes problems if people think they mean the same thing when they actually have different ideas, beliefs and assumptions. So here is a simple definition: [62]

- Participatory art is the creation of art by professional artists and non-professional artists.

The definition is deliberately limited because it must encompass activities as different as music education, cultural mediation in museums and galleries, applied theatre, projects using art for social change, arts activism, art in health, carnival, street art, festivals and community art itself. These activities, all of which could be called participatory art, have only two things in common, but they are vital and, perhaps, controversial.

The first is that *participatory art involves the creation of art*. Without that, what is happening is not art but a form of art education or social development. The creation of art requires a framework of values, ideas and references, the application of knowledge and craft, a duration in time, and some form of presentation. Together, these enable a shared artistic activity to create something with an autonomous existence: a work of art. That creation exists independently of quality. The art work might be moving or banal, ambitious or modest, sophisticated or naïve, original or derivative; it might be temporary, performative or unfulfilled; it might attract admiration or indifference; it might be unsuccessful, even in its own terms. But there is a differ-

FAMILY TREASURES REVEALED

Over the course of a year, mothers visiting Slade & Headington Children's Centre, in Oxford, took part in a participatory art project led by Steve Empson. They sat on the floor, in a circle, and used clay, charcoal and paint to make portraits of loved ones and places where they had grown up. The idea came from Janet Law, the centre manager, who'd seen the importance of non-verbal communication to the growing numbers of women with limited English using the centre. Art seemed a way to help people find points of contact in their cultural diversity.

As they made clay figures of family members or painted self-portraits, the women discovered connections beneath surface differences. They experienced personally significant changes, gaining confidence about themselves and their place in the community. Gyongi decided *'that there is no reason to be afraid of asking questions about different people's culture and traditions'*. For Ralitsa, discovering that she could paint *'was dramatic—if I can do art, I can do anything'*. Their work was presented to family and friends in an exhibition at the Children's Centre; everyone brought a dish from her own culture for the celebration. *Family Treasures Revealed* was a modest, unpretentious project. It was also a quiet claim for recognition, characteristic of much valuable but not always acknowledged participatory art being made today.

PLAVE PRIČE

Plave priče ('Blue Talk') was a participatory art project that connected people in Bosnia Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia, 15 years after the end of the Yugoslav Wars. Conceived by Boris Čakširan, it was a creative journey in which people with mental health problems, theatre artists and psychologists spent time together in each other's home cities. In week-long gatherings, they shared experiences of stigma, trauma and recovery. There were difficult moments but they were managed with professional guidance, so that trust could develop through shared creative work. New artistic performances were presented at the end of the residencies in Belgrade, Tuzla and Zagreb.

The experience was challenging and rewarding for those involved and it inspired further arts activity in the mental health support organisations. But it also reached large audiences through TV and radio broadcasts, press coverage and online. It was central to the final shows that the audience could not differentiate between professional and non-professional performers or know who had experience of mental health problems. In doing so, Blue Talk brought sensitive issues of post-traumatic stress disorder and mental well-being into public space, while enabling people living with these difficulties to be ordinary members of society who can create moving artistic performances.

ence of kind between the dullest work of art and the most inspirational learning experience or community project. Either of those might be preferable to the work of art, but that would be a choice between different things. Part of the difference in kind between learning about art and creating it lies in the power conferred by each activity. Both enable us, in different ways, to discover, process, understand, organise and share our experience. But in creating art, we bring something into existence and in doing that we change the world. When we make sense of life, from feelings, ideas and experiences we may not even know we have, in forms to which others can respond creatively, we conjure up new possibilities in all our imaginations. That is the artist's act and it is a power in the world.

The second defining characteristic of participatory art is the recognition that *everyone involved in the artistic act is an artist*.[63] That idea is not always stated or accepted. It is much more common to speak of artists working with 'ordinary people', 'participants', 'young people at risk of offending' or even 'non-artists'. This language reflects the Enlightenment idea that an artist is a special kind of person, rather than a person who acts in a special kind of way. The Enlightenment and Romantic belief that art is a matter of *being* rather than *doing* has become so ingrained that it can be difficult to see otherwise. But no one is born an artist. We are born with potential that develops (or doesn't) according to what happens to us and what we do. A child may have an innate musical intelligence (in Howard Gardner's term) but they will become a musician only through the acts of listening, practicing and playing.[64] Everyone involved in participatory art is an artist because an artist is defined by the act of making art.[65]

Some people are recognised as artists because of the persistence with which they act as an artist. It allows them to gain knowledge, skill and experience, which, with luck and talent, might make them a successful artist. It will probably make them a professional artist, in the sense that their work is recognised by others and becomes part of a social identity. But art does not depend on persistence. It is possible to create art occasionally, without a body of knowledge, skill and experience. Art created in this way is likely to seem different. It may be less accomplished, for example, or stand outside the mainstream concerns of the art world. But it may also be powerful, urgent and original, because it is its creator's only opportunity to act in this way,

or because it brings a fresh imagination, or because the creator does not know how things 'should be done'. This is one reason why participatory art is *artistically* distinctive, as discussed in Chapter Five.

When someone makes a meal, they are a cook; when they complete a marathon, they are a runner.[66] They might be less proficient than a professional, but their action may be notable in other ways. Participatory art happens when professionals and non-professionals use their different skills, imaginations and interests to create something together that they could not have made alone.

Not everyone will accept these criteria of participatory art. It is true that much participatory art activity, such as the education work of some art institutions, barely involves the meaningful creation of art because of low expectations of what non-professional artists can do. Likewise, professional artists do not always offer empowering roles to the non-professionals they engage in the creative act. Such self-limitation fulfils its own assumptions, just as underfunding participatory art restricts its effectiveness, thus seeming to justify the underfunding. Circular argument is a common abuse of power.

Because participatory art involves a balance of interests, it is full of ambiguities, especially at the edges. As a result, it is easily confused with similar but different activities. Distinguishing between an arts learning experience, a work of art that uses participation as a strategy, a social intervention that uses art as a tool, and participatory art itself is often a matter of judgement. These borders are porous.

Participatory art enacts duality in its creative alliance between professional and non-professional artists. It reinforces that hybridity by crossing disciplinary boundaries to work with health, education, social services, regeneration and other disciplines. Participatory art thrives in liminal space, on margins and borders. One test of its quality is the extent to which it unsettles us, in Karl Jaspers' sense, by requiring us to engage with other people's ways of sense-making. Its elusiveness is not a weakness. It is intrinsic to this form of art and its value. Participatory art is not better than education, social activism or professional art, but it is different, because, in preventing us from resting on our existing models, it demands that we think, feel, talk and share in new ways with other people.

Community art

The roots of participatory art lie in community art, even if it has spread far beyond the ideas and approaches pioneered in the 1960s and 1970s. Community art may not be the movement it was then, but the practice continues because it is theoretically coherent, artistically innovative and socially powerful. It can also be a joy to do, and art thrives when it gives pleasure. So how is community art different from participatory art? The answer requires a more complex definition than for participatory art:

- Community art is the creation of art as a human right, by professional and non-professional artists, co-operating as equals, for purposes and to standards they set together, and whose processes, products and outcomes cannot be known in advance.

This definition contains the two characteristics of participatory art. *The creation of art* is intrinsic to community art and differentiates it from other forms of social action, including education or community development. It is not a social or a political act. Though it may have social and political *consequences*, the act itself is artistic. Art can be used for other purposes, as discussed in the next chapter, and that may be valid and valuable, but it is something else. Community art also involves *professional and non-professional artists*. We want others to treat us on the basis of what we *do*, not who we *are*, because we can only control and, therefore be responsible for, our actions. Anyone creating art is an artist in that act, whether or not they do it professionally, and however we assess their performance and its results.

As I have argued, these characteristics define participatory art. But that definition is intentionally loose so as to accommodate a very wide range of artistic work. From its earliest days, community art has had sharper, more demanding ambitions, based on ideas about art, society and human rights. So my definition of community art includes several other elements. The first, and simplest, of these is that being able to create art is *a human right*. It is something that everyone is entitled to do, without permission or approval, because of Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. That document's claim of equality between people is a foundation of community art practice so professional and non-professional artists must be *co-oper-*

ating as equals. They have different roles and contribute different resources, but everyone who participates has the same rights in the process. They must negotiate, agree and share what will happen, because, in a rights-based process, there is no legitimate basis on which anyone, including the professional artists, can impose their vision or authority on the group.

That negotiation requires that they work *for purposes and to standards that they set together*. A person can act as an artist and do so ineptly, but no one intends or desires to be mediocre. Artists practicing community art, whether professionally or not, want to create something good, but only they, together, can decide what good means. What they are working towards (their purpose) and what level of achievement will satisfy that purpose (their standards) are not for outsiders to determine, though audiences will eventually make up their own minds. But the purpose and standards of community art are integral to the meaning of the work and must be established and agreed by the people who make it.

Finally, and as a direct consequence of the previous two statements, the *processes, products and outcomes cannot be known in advance*. Professional artists can know what will happen in a participatory project only if there is no equality between them and the people with whom they intend to work. In such cases, the purposes and standards have been set before they meet and the process is disempowering or even manipulative. Community art is not a score to be conducted. It is improvisation, like jazz. Its players agree themes and boundaries at the outset: after that, art emerges as they pay attention and respond to one another. Raymond Williams, a democrat, understood this:

> A culture is common meanings, the product of a whole people, and offered individual meanings, the product of a man's whole committed personal and social experience. It is stupid and arrogant to suppose that any of these meanings can in any way be prescribed; they are made by living, made and remade, in ways we cannot know in advance.[67]

Community art is exploratory, innovative, radical and challenging. At its best—and like all art forms it is entitled to be judged on the basis of its highest achievements—it has been the research and development section of participatory art. It has not always been good or successful. Sometimes it has marched boldly into dead ends or

floundered in disaster. But even its failures are interesting. For 50 years, community art has tested ideas and practices that have become established across and beyond the field of participatory art. They may lose their radical, dissenting, emancipatory edge in that transition, but the practice itself continues, undamaged.

There are some intriguing parallels between community art and the protest movements that emerged following the financial crisis of 2007/08, and we shall return to this in Chapter Eleven. In an illuminating paper on the relationship between Spain's 15-M/Indignados movement and the institutional left, Cristina Flesher Fominaya proposes a comparative analysis of the organisational and cultural differences between the two types of political actors. She considers that:

> Autonomous actors distinguish themselves from the practices of the institutional left, rejecting representative democracy and majority rule and instead defending more participatory models, based on direct democracy and self-governance, horizontal (non-hierarchical) structures, decision-making through consensus (if possible and necessary), in the forum of an assembly (usually open), and rarely with permanent delegations of responsibility.[68]

In her paper, Flesher Fominaya presents a table that contrasts what she calls the institutional left and autonomous movements. The parallels with the two approaches to participatory art are not exact—these are political, not artistic movements for change—but they are clear enough to provide grounds for further reflection.

This table, even in the prototype form set out overleaf, highlights how the different aims of institutional participatory art and autonomous community art translates into different forms of practice and organisation. Intention is the central difference between participatory art and community art. Are people being invited to participate in existing artistic work or to join others in making something new? This difference is fundamental, and it has been expressed, since at least the 1970s, in two contrasting cultural policy objectives: the democratisation of culture and cultural democracy. These ideas are discussed in more detail in the next chapter. For now, it is only necessary to say that, because they define different relationships between the professional and non-professional artists involved in collaborative work, they also define the distinction between participatory art and community art.

Flesher Fominaya model	Institutional Left (Participatory Art)	Autonomous (Community art)
Political model	Representative	Participatory
Organizational structure	Vertical with clear division of labour and authority	Horizontal, rarely permanent delegations of responsibility
Decision-making	Negotiations between representatives	Consensus, the group is sovereign
Subject	Unitary or primary identity: professional /participant; artist/target group	Multiple cross-cutting identities. Often take geographic identity as basis of collective action
Ideological base	Cultural democratisation	Cultural democracy
Legitimate actor	Cultural institution, local authority, public service	Individuals acting collectively, NGOs
Acknowledged support	Partner logos as symbol of political stance and responsibility	Limited public acknowledgement. Often without support
Political arena	Public/government	Public (streets, public spaces) and private (personal relations, daily life)
Typical repertoire of contention	Representation of minorities in institutional context. Artistic statements	Temporary or sustained use of neglected space, self-managed collective projects, alternative cultural lifestyle, local politics, cyber-activism
Means/ends	Means are generally employed for institutional ends	Inseparable; means are ends in themselves if directed at social transformation
Social transformation comes primarily through	Institutions	Creating alternatives, cultural resistance
Organization is	Permanent	Contingent, open to continual critical reflection and dissolution
Stance on anonymity	Value artistic authorship	Variable: value collective authorship, recognise personal ownership of stories. Reject art world values
Resources	(Varied) Access to institutional resources, funding, office space, access to mainstream media, legal support	Minimal, limited, contingent, ad hoc and/or rare

Table 1: Differences between the autonomous and institutional left political models, adapted from Cristina Flesher Fominaya (2015: 5)

PELE

Porto is a hard-working, industrial city in northern Portugal. It was hit hard by the Eurozone crisis but tourism is now fuelling a recovery—and there are mixed views about it. On a warm September evening in 2017, a crowd is gathering at a basketball court in Lordelo do Ouro. They're here for theatre, though, not sport. The performers, who have worked with Pele for years, live locally, in social housing neighbourhoods and the city centre. They want to talk about rising rents, gentrification, jobs, airbnb and Uber. It's not all bad. Some people are earning better, but the pressures of change make the show and the discussion that follows lively.

Pele was founded in 2007 by Hugo Cruz, Maria João Mota and João Pedro Correia. Since then, often using Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, Pele has worked across Porto, from the historic centre to the prison, with residents, the deaf community, and workers in the cork and fishing industries. Theatre happens where people live but also in public spaces and festivals. *Mapa* (2013-15) brought everyone together, with five different communities, including Lordelo do Ouro, staging an ambitious production about Porto's past, present and future. Pele's work has evolved beyond theatre to embrace music, visual art and campaigning but it holds close to its original values of democratic inclusion—'a space for social and cultural contact'.

LOWER ŠANČIAI COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

The historic buildings of Kaunas tell an eloquent story of the different powers that have claimed the city over the centuries. Today, a generation after Lithuania's independence from the USSR, and 14 years after joining the EU, it still feels like a place whose future is unsettled. A few kilometres from the centre, the wooden houses of Šančiai line streets that go down to the river. On the higher ground is the 19th century Russian barracks where some locals once worked. Parts have been cleared; some blocks are now apartments; others are ruins.

The Lower Šančiai Community Association was formed to give people a voice in what happens here, and art is its primary medium. Artists have always lived in Šančiai, but participatory work is new. It has enabled people to come together in creative projects that make visible the spirit and desires of the community. There have been installations, performances and parades, creative moments that also raise sharp questions. Projects often take place at the Cabbage Field, a last piece of open ground in the barracks that locals want for a park and community centre. In December 2018, they performed a community opera to restate people's right to the public space. This work is at once ambitious and fragile. Largely without external support, it depends on creativity and goodwill, but its enacting of community is a statement of interdependence and solidarity at a time of rapid change.

The borders of participatory art

These definitions of participatory art and community art are based on my own years of thought and experience: they cannot be authoritative. They are offered as benchmarks that might help you decide where you stand in this territory. Some of the questions they raise are discussed elsewhere in this book but, before leaving the field of definition, I should explain why I do not include contemporary art or amateur art as types of participatory art, even though they seem, in some circumstances, to meet the criteria of professional artists and non-professional artists making art together.

Contemporary art and participation

Participation has become an important aspect of contemporary art, manifest in different practices and an extensive literature.[69] It is often referred to as 'participatory art' but it is not always what I have described in the previous pages, so it is important to untangle these threads. In an essay for the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* that is actually entitled 'Participatory Art', Tom Finkelpearl writes that its value:

> …is the subject of considerable debate, including a lively conversation around the ethics and aesthetics of the practice as well as the vocabulary best suited to describe and critique it. Participatory art exists under a variety of overlapping headings, including interactive, relational, cooperative, activist, dialogical, and community-based art. In some cases, participation by a range of people creates an artwork, in others the participatory action is itself described as the art.[70]

The connections between this work and what is discussed in this book are obvious. As Finkelpearl goes on to say:

> In participatory art people referred to as citizens, regular folks, community members, or non-artists interact with professional artists to create the works.[71]

Antony Gormley's *Field* fits this definition, as it would mine.[72] This is a dense mass of small clay figures made by volunteers to the artist's specification, and was repeated in several places between 1989 and 2003. The process of creation is explained on the Tate website:

> Everyone was encouraged to find their own way of making, following these guidelines: the pieces were to be hand-sized and easy to hold, the eyes were to be deep and close, and the proportions of the head to the body roughly correct.[73]

In 1994, Gormley won the Turner Prize for *Testing A World View (Field of British Isles)*, whose 40,000 figures had been made at a school in St Helens, before being installed at Tate in Liverpool. *Field* has become one of the artist's iconic works, loved by makers and audiences alike, and bought for the nation by the Art Fund.

Making on this scale is demanding and participation in contemporary art is more often performative. Suzanne Lacy's *The Crystal Quilt* (1985-87) culminated in a performance at a Minneapolis shopping centre. It involved 430 older women, sitting at tables and moving their hands at 10 minute intervals to make the pattern of a quilt composed by their bodies in the space, as seen from above. As they sat, reflections on the social condition of ageing women, from the participants and others, were relayed over a sound system. *The Crystal Quilt* took two years to research, and its form, in which groups of four women faced each other at square tables, enacts its social and relational character.[74] At the same time it is an activist work, articulating a political engagement about 'how aging women are represented in media and public opinion'.[75] Its appearance in a shopping mall could also be seen as antagonistic in confronting shoppers with an unexpected and potentially unsettling experience.[76] Like *Field*, *The Crystal Quilt* has come to be regarded as a seminal work in the artist's body of work, and Lacy herself is widely admired as a socially-engaged artist who has made important works with communities.

What, if anything, distinguishes these works from the participatory and community art practice described in this book? In some respects, nothing, as these brief descriptions show. This is art made by professional and non-professional artists working together. However, there is one way in which this work is different. It speaks to and is recognised by the art world. As the curator, Alistair Hudson, says:

> Social engagement within art has still allowed the artist to have the last word. In a way, a lot of community projects, even with lots of people involved, are ultimately about making work that advances an artist's career.[77]

This is authored work, conceived by recognised artists in the framework of their existing artistic and political concerns. Participation defines how the work is made and it might provide enjoyment, open the artistic process to new people, foster community, or bring marginalised people to the stage. But those purposes, where they exist, are enabled by the art world's intellectual, historical and artistic authority. These works are recognised by the art world because the artists who created them recognise and are part of the art world.

The theory and practice of participation in contemporary art varies enormously, but the artist is in control—conceiving, planning, organizing and instigating a work in which others are then invited to take part. The artist is author and the work is understood by the art world, including its critics and historians, as their statement, a part of their oeuvre. If there is a story to be told, it is told about or from the artist's perspective because the participants' contribution, though necessary, does not change the final art in any substantive way. This work often has stated socio-political aims but its place within the power structures of art world discourse raise questions about those claims, as the social anthropologist Kate Crehan observes:

> I am happy to accept that the intent here may be democratic; what I question is: does it in practice translate into new forms of democracy? What form of literacy is needed to participate in this democracy?[78]

Participation in contemporary art can produce beautiful, resonant works like *Field* and *The Crystal Quilt* but, despite its formal connections with the work described in this book, its acceptance of the art world's authority makes it philosophically, politically and artistically separate from participatory art. That separation is why there is no entry for 'community art' in the *Encyclopedia of Aesthetics*.[79]

Amateur art and participation

Amateur art is often seen by policy makers as a form of participatory art, but this misunderstands its purpose which is, as in contemporary art, artistic production. Amateur artists participate in the arts in the same way and for the same purpose as professional artists: to create art. Their work may be less accomplished than that of professional artists, but that is a difference of degree not kind.

The distinction between professionals and amateurs is another consequence of the invention of the fine arts. Until the late 18th century, artists were generally considered craftsmen. They were hired by the powerful and often had limited autonomy over their work. An amateur artist, in contrast, was a member of the social elite who, with no need to earn a living, could claim to be motivated by a pure love of art. For everyone else music, dance, story and craft were expressions of creativity in everyday life, to be shared, honed, used and enjoyed. The relative status of amateurs and professionals began to change when Romanticism reimagined the artist as a free individual, a visionary, even a genius. The status of artists was transformed during the 20th century, and they are now among the most celebrated figures in society. But that change also brought a devaluation of the amateur, the person for whom art was just a pleasure not an existential struggle towards eternal truths.[80]

The field of amateur art is huge and full of variety. It includes orchestras, choirs and theatre companies, craft and associations art, and millions of painters, poets, storytellers, photographers, musicians, dancers and others. Some amateurs are among the most gifted artists in their field, and many cross the boundaries between paid and unpaid work. Professional musicians often work with amateur singers in choral works. Other amateur artists may not be specially talented, but gain and give much pleasure through their work.

The boundary between amateur and professional artist is less rigid than is often assumed. Being paid is not a very meaningful measure when so many professional artists struggle to live from their work. The amount of time an artist gives to their art is also an unreliable guide: there are retired people who spend their days painting and poets who write rarely. There are amateurs who have dedicated years to formal study and professionals who never went to art school. Innovation, like imitation, is found in both sectors, and all aspire to excellence. In the end, it is hard to see the distinction commonly made between amateur and professional artists as being very meaningful. Some amateur artists make better work than some professional ones. They are all artists and only they and those who enjoy their work can say what it is worth to them.

But this artistic production, whether by amateur or professional, and whatever its quality, is not participatory art. Amateur and pro-

fessional artists use the same processes, methods and standards in their common purpose of artistic production. In doing that, they are not concerned with the intentions of participatory art. They accept the art world at its own estimation. The difference between the groups is how much the art world values them in return.

Porous borders

Defining the characteristics of participatory art and community art, and their relationship with other forms of art production, is helpful in understanding what they mean and beginning to think about other questions they raise, for instance about intentions, ethics and art. But as this discussion of participation in contemporary and amateur art has shown, the boundaries between these fields of practice are fluid. Work may start closer to one idea and develop in ways that bring it to another. Interpretations are just that: matters of judgement not fact. But that is another reason why this is such a rewarding field of practice. It confronts us with the restrictions and pathological narrowness of our existing forms.

4 The intentions of participatory art

In some ways, democracy is a fiction that we're trying to realize.

Charles Taylor[81]

Why make participatory art?

Non-professionals

People get involved in participatory art for much the same reasons that any of us decide what to do with our free time. They might be motivated, more or less consciously, by curiosity, friendship, boredom, hope, frustration, enthusiasm or many other feelings. They might want to have fun, feel part of a community, learn something, protest, get a sense of achievement, have a new experience, face a challenge, make a change, get fit, meet people or do something that seems worthwhile. There is nothing particularly special about the decision to participate in art. It is the decision to participate at all that matters. Nor is there anything special about *refusing* participation. Sometimes, for example in a prison project, that may be the limit of a person's choice—take part in this theatre project or stay in your cell. Children do not always have even that much choice. Theatre is just what their teacher or carer has decided they will do today. But even in such highly constrained situations, non-participation remains an option, as anyone who has tried to involve an unwilling person in workshop activity will know. They might have to be physically pres-

ent, but they can still remove themselves in other ways. Withdrawal can be a powerful act, affecting everyone else in the room and changing what happens, or even whether anything can happen at all.

Conditional consent is another possibility, though it is rarely expressed so clearly. For some people it means standing on the edge, present and observing, but undecided about whether to join in. Or perhaps being happy to do some things, but not others: making tea but not costumes, acting but not singing, speaking up in rehearsals but not in meetings. Such half-commitment can be disruptive, because the person is claiming different terms of engagement for themselves, but it need not be. It is a strength of participatory art to offer many different roles and kinds of involvement, so that people choose for themselves if, when and how they want to take part. People often prefer such self-directed paths to the managed progression of more formal education programmes.

Whether people leap in with both feet, test the water first or stay resolutely on dry land, some artists find it hard to accept that refusing their offer is a conscious and legitimate choice, especially if they feel it's based on false ideas. But a community artist must respect other people's decisions, and the values and judgements on which they are based, even when they do not share them. If, when and how people choose to participate in an arts activity is a personal response. It is comparable to any other choice people make about the opportunities they have. But for the professional artist, choosing whether or not to make an offer to potential participants is something else. It is a matter of intention and understanding that intention is key to understanding the practice of participatory art.

Professionals

The reasons why some people—artists, policy-makers, donors or social partners—invite others to participate in the arts shape the practice and its value. The cultural, political, economic and social contexts of participatory art all have an influence, but intention is about ideas: what people want to achieve. What purpose guides their actions and, by extension, how do their actions serve that purpose?

This does not seem to be a simple question to answer. The range of goals declared by people working in participatory art can be bewilderingly wide. In addition to artistic aims, projects aspire to out-

DE SINT MAARTEN PARADE, THE SHARING ARTS SOCIETY

The Sharing Arts Society was set up in 2014 to build on the community art practice that had developed around the 300th anniversary of the Treaty of Utrecht. The cornerstone of its work is the traditional Sint Maarten Parade, which was revived in 2011 and takes place in November. Martin, a figure from Utrecht's Roman past, is remembered for cutting his red cloak with a sword and giving half to a freezing beggar. Much loved in medieval times, he has become a symbol of the modern multicultural city, and an event that works to connect people in shared experiences through art. The procession is magical, with illuminated paper lanterns and sculptures, music, theatre and food.

The artworks are uniformly white and have a striking aesthetic quality. They are made during two months of community workshops in schools, refugee centres, hostels and other social spaces: the promise of inclusion is real. Sports clubs, scouts, brass bands, nurseries and art groups organise their own preparations, and the numbers involved have grown from 1,000 to 7,000 in seven years. Such lantern festivals have become common since they were revived by community artists in the 1970s but the Sint Maarten Parade's ethical and artistic vision is exceptional. It has adopted the Global Goals of the United Nations as a contemporary version of Saint Martin's spirit. In 2018, the parade focused on Goal 16, 'peace and safety for everyone', and made it a tangible vision, at least in one city on one night.

MEN & GIRLS DANCE, FEVERED SLEEP

The show begins in doubt, as adults and children watch one another across a carpet of newspaper. Hands extend invitations. Posture and movement is imitated. Tentative connections are made. In this playground men remember their childhoods while girls play at being grown up. Somewhere in the middle, as their paths cross, they begin to play. For the set, there's only newspaper. Men and girls are in a space defined by the media. In the next hour, they take control of it. What begins as a blindfold or a minotaur's head is tamed and eventually mocked. Laughter, innocence and joyful movement have chased other stories from the room.

Men & Girls Dance is a participatory artwork by Fevered Sleep that has now been created in several cities. But the performance is the heart of a wider process of conversations, face to face, online and in a project newspaper. In exchanges between artists, parents, teachers and audiences, anxieties are acknowledged, while tender memories of childhood are shared and held. Answers are not sought or given, just the offer of exploring the right questions, at the right time, in the right way. The result is a beautiful and courageous artwork that celebrates human beings at their best.

comes in health, education, social cohesion, peacebuilding and much more. Those goals are also expressed in different ways. One project might set them out in a plan with targets and timetable, supported by a theory of change and a logical framework, while another offers only a general statement of intent. But how far can these public statements be trusted anyway? The language of policy-makers does not always reflect the desires, culture and needs of those for whom a project is being planned. What artists say about their projects might be idealism, jargon, or simply a response to expectation.

Nevertheless, this rhetorical diversity can be distilled into three broad, consistent intentions underpinning participatory art, each associated with a different vision of art's social function. They are:

- increasing access to art (or cultural democratisation),
- creating social change, and
- advancing cultural democracy.

These three intentions provide a framework for understanding what is done under the banner of participatory art, and for deciding what might be worthwhile, and why. The rest of this chapter considers them in turn, before looking at the relationship between them.

Theories or intentions?

These intentions could be described as theories. Each is an ideological position that reflects its time and place. They draw on beliefs (e.g. 'art is good' or 'human beings are of equal value') to analyse and respond to social realities. They look at the human world, see something unacceptable and propose action for change. But theory is easily presented, to others and ourselves, as objective, even factual. Its coherence and righteousness are seductive—and reductive. Under cover of theory we can mislead ourselves about motives. Speaking about intentions makes it harder to hide from the ethical dimension of our actions and the choices that define them. The domain of intentions cannot so easily evade its compromises and responsibilities.

By its nature, art is experiential, not theoretical. Without concrete expression, art becomes philosophy. Except in universities, I have met few people engaged in participatory art who speak much about theory. But they often talk about the purpose of their work.[82] They do it in the negotiations with partners and funders that are integral to par-

ticipatory art, and they do it as they think about their practice, peers and inspirations. Thinking about intentions is inescapable if you involve other people in your work because, sooner or later, they will ask you why you are doing it.

Increasing access to art (or cultural democratisation)

> Democratisation is uncontestably one of the principal missions of cultural establishments.
>
> **Jean-Michel Tobelem**[83]

Increasing audiences through participation

Artists love art. They believe in its transformative power because they have felt it themselves, so it is natural that they should want to share their passion with others. That intention is so common among artists who work with people that it easily passes unnoticed. It is why, when Sir Simon Rattle joined the Berlin Philharmonic in 2002, he instituted an education programme, in the belief that 'we must give everybody the opportunity to experience our music'.[84] People who have dedicated their lives to music can usually be counted on to want to share that music with others. Not all want to take on the task themselves or have the necessary skills but it's hard to imagine an artist who does not believe in encouraging a love of art. In the words of E. M. Forster:

> It is impossible to be fair-minded when one has faith—religious creeds have shown this—and I have so much faith in cultural stuff that I believe it must mean something to other people.[85]

Much participatory art is rooted in that desire to share. Classical music is heavily engaged in participatory work, perhaps because learning to play an orchestral instrument takes time, effort and commitment. Access is not something that can be meaningfully offered in (or for) a few weeks. The scale and reputation of El Sistema, operating in Venezuela since 1975, has won international admiration and some criticism.[86] It has inspired initiatives across the world, including Orquestra Geração (Generation Orchestra) in Portugal and In Harmony in Britain, but it is not the only model. Other orchestras, such as the Philharmonie de Paris, have developed their own methods of

extending music education to disadvantaged young people. This approach is now embedded in the programmes of music organisations. Sage, in Gateshead, integrates performance, formal education and participatory work, while working across a wide range of musical forms. Home to the Northern Sinfonia and Folkworks, Sage is a concert hall, a music school, and a community music organisation. In the year to April 2017, Sage sold 264,000 tickets for 451 performances. During the same period 14,758 children, elders, disabled people and others participated in 10,609 music workshops and classes.[87] Such holistic approaches to programming, that encourage people to move freely between concert hall or gallery and workshop space, have become normal in British cultural organisations.

Museum and gallery education can be a distinctive creative practice. The pedagogical approaches of cultural mediation have become more participatory, especially as galleries have responded to the needs of disabled and older visitors. Engage, the National Association for Gallery Education, founded in 1989, has played a critical role in developing and advocating for this practice. Bluecoat, a contemporary art gallery in Liverpool, is typical in its use of participatory art to extend access. Its programme includes Blue Room, for learning-disabled adults, and Out of the Blue, weekly children's art clubs in different parts of the city.[88] It has also hosted participatory dance for people with dementia by Bisakha Sarker and run a visual art project for mothers with young babies.

Such examples show how cultural institutions have adopted participatory art to extend access to their programmes, collections and facilities. The same intention has driven many community art organisations from their early days in the 1960s. Today, it is also the rationale behind Creative People and Places, Arts Council England's major arts access programme. Without access, it is impossible to work towards either social change or cultural democracy.

Increasing the cultural offer through participation

Participation is not the only way of increasing access to culture, as evident in the continuing popularity of lectures, tours and other formal activities, but it is effective because, from a very young age, we learn about art by doing. Children discover its pleasures when they put colour onto paper, bash out a rhythm or mimic an adult. In doing

so, they sense art's potential as a way of organising their experience and communicating to others what matters to them. Most children do not hesitate to play with art when they have the chance, especially when they are encouraged; but many are not. Unable quickly to produce something that satisfies an adult's expectations of good art, too many grow up seeing art as a distant, mysterious world reserved for others with talent and knowledge that they lack.

And that is the problem with the idea of extending access to the arts—it risks implying that people lack knowledge, skill, confidence, awareness or even taste. It defines one person as proficient and the other as deficient.[89] It is true that some people know things others do not. We often recognise a need or desire for knowledge and turn for help to those who have it: that is the basis of adult education as well as much informal learning. But does everyone involved in arts access programmes recognise such a need in themselves?

According to research published by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value, most people make little use of public arts and cultural facilities:

> In 2014 Britain, high socio-economic background, university-level educational attainment and a professional occupation are still the most reliable predictors of high levels of engagement and participation in a wide range of cultural activities, with this correlation being especially marked for those activities that attract significant public funding.[90]

These findings are borne out by other studies, but it does not follow that people who stay away from public cultural provision do not enjoy art. I don't think I've ever met anyone without artistic tastes and enthusiasms, though not always for the art that gets public funding. We watch drama on screen, enjoy music, dance, sing, read and tell stories, make things, paint and draw, take photographs and other things that involve making art. In researching West Bromwich Operatic Society, which has been producing amateur theatre since 1937, I learned that there are almost 50,000 amateur arts groups in England:

> Between them, they have about 6 million members and a further 3.5 million volunteers—so about 15% of the population is active in amateur arts organisations. In a typical year, they promote 700,000 performances or exhibitions and get about 160 million attendances.[91]

And this is just organised arts activity: it is the tip of an iceberg. People's enthusiastic and varied participation in art should not be doubted.

Fun Palaces

> 'A Fun Palace is not a fete. It's not about coming along and having a lovely time. It's not audience development. It's saying to everybody *you can do this; you already do this. You are allowed to make art and science*.'
>
> **Stella Duffy** [92]

A few years ago, the writer Stella Duffy proposed organising an event to mark Joan Littlewood's centenary. Littlewood (1914-2002) was a radical theatre maker whose ideas had an indirect influence on British community art. Among her projects was a grand, unrealised scheme to build a 'Fun Palace' that would make art accessible to everyone, so it seemed fitting to celebrate her birthday by acting on her intention. Since 2014, a small group of part-time activists—staff is too tame a word for their tenacious commitment—has encouraged local groups to organize their own creative events, dubbed Fun Palaces, on the first weekend of October. Like Littlewood, they believe that everyone can be creative. Fun Palaces offer access to art and science by inviting people to share their expertise with one another.

In 2017, 362 Fun Palaces were held in libraries, community centres, parks, churches, schools, museums, and arts centres.[93] Nearly 14,000 organisers were involved, reflecting the diversity of local communities. Two thirds of the organising groups included people from ethnic minorities, one third had disabled members and 20% included people under 18 *and* over 65. Their Fun Palaces attracted 126,000 visitors, who took part in art, craft and science workshops, debates, heritage activities, performances and much more. But the most striking thing about this campaign of culture 'by and for everyone' is that it is strongest in the poorest places. Almost 40% of Fun Palaces were organised in and by people from Britain's 20% most deprived wards.[94] Fun Palaces shows the issue is not, has never been, that people don't enjoy art. It is about whether the state recognises the art they enjoy, and whether they enjoy the art that the state recognises.

Experience and inspiration

We have inherited from the Greco-Roman world, via the Enlightenment, the belief that culture is a special path to intellectual, moral and spiritual maturity. That is the claim and the promise of the fine arts, so access to them is to be encouraged because of their improving potential. As the sociologist, Laurent Fleury, writes:

> If culture is considered in its 'noble' designation, then [democratisation] is a project to convert society as a whole to an appreciation of consecrated works.[95]

It is natural to want others to enjoy and value what is important to us, and many people make participatory art with that intention. They are gifted, motivating activists because they care so much about the work. But with that conviction comes the risk of seeing the task not as introduction, but persuasion. There is an echo of it in how the Arts Council presents its Creative People and Places programme: 'We believe that everyone has the right to experience and be inspired by art and culture'.[96] Experience, by all means—but inspired? It is as if inspiration comes from experience, as day follows night. Experience can be guaranteed. Inspiration cannot. None of us is an empty vessel, waiting to be filled with art and culture. We are independent people with agency. We have identities, values and tastes. We respond to new experience through past ones. If you think you have something worthwhile to offer me, you might start by asking what I have to offer you. This is not a one-way street. As Geoffrey Crossick and Patrycja Kaszynska argue in their study of cultural value:

> We have to think of cultural value beyond the artificial hierarchies of modes of provision and regimes. The evolving ecology of commercial, amateur, interactive and subsidised engagement needs to be better understood, and seen as enriching rather than antagonistic.[97]

Participatory art is a vital way of extending access to the arts, but its legitimacy in that role depends on the mutuality of the invitation. The offer should be made with respect and an open mind, so that people are able not only to enjoy and appreciate new artistic experiences but also to question, reimagine and even reject them freely.

TANZTANGENTE

For 35 years, TanzTangente, has crossed the lines between professional and non-professional dancers, education and performance, art house and community. Originally a dance school, its work now embraces a professional collective, community projects. festivals and regular classes for 270 dance students of all ages. In every dimension of their work, Nadja Raszewski and Daniela Grosset create an open space for different people to communicate in the physical language of dance. They may be students, young offenders, elderly people, theatre artists, children, people with disabilities or professional dancers, but the work is always about finding what each person has to contribute in a spirit of genuine equality. Whether the performers are inmates of a prison or people with Parkinson's, they work creatively and collectively on philosophical questions.

Timeline, TanzTangente's latest production, is typical of this approach. It asks how people of different ages relate to the terms *future*, *present* and *past*. With performers aged between 16 and 80, the piece emerges from the interplay of different experiences and understandings of dance across generations.

BED, ENTELECHY ARTS

Entelechy Arts is a small organisation based in Deptford, a disadvantaged part of South London. Established by David Slater in 1989, it prioritises art-making by disabled and elderly people. Entelechy's work is never grandstanding or self-regarding: tea dances, plays, visual art and craft. But it would be a mistake to underestimate this seemingly gentle practice. It has an artistic, political, even a moral rigour that challenges assumptions about social services—and art.

As people walk down a shopping street, they come across an elderly woman lying in a large metal bed. She is in her night clothes, silent, lost in memories. Stop and talk to her and you'll hear a story; you'll discover that she's an actor and when you leave, it will be with another perspective on the old people you meet. *Bed* was developed over several years by the Entelechy Elders Company to highlight the invisibility and loneliness of old age. It is powerful, potentially distressing, and the performers must hold everything together for hours. There is support, for them and for the public who encounter them, but the work's integrity depends entirely on the quality of the elders' artistic act. The art of non-professional artists, including the members of Entelechy Arts, has a unique quality when it is nourished by direct experience and an urgent need to communicate. At its best, it creates exchanges that can only happen on the border of art and reality.

Creating social change

Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal

Social change is the second major intention of participatory art. In this context, culture's potential as a route to education and development is radically shifted by the ideas of Paulo Freire (1921-1997). Freire was a Brazilian educator and philosopher whose 1968 work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, was published while its author was in exile. In it he re-thought education from a post-colonial perspective, arguing that existing strategies served to reinforce oppression in unequal societies. He compared traditional education to a form of banking, in which the teacher instructs the student by handing over fixed quantities of knowledge to be memorised and stored:

> In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry.[98]

Freire's alternative was a problem-posing model in which teacher and students are co-investigators in a dialogic relationship in which they:

> develop their power to perceive critically *the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation. [99]

This approach 'strives for the emergence of consciousness and critical intervention in reality'.[100]

The English translation of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* was published in 1970, just as the community art movement was forming. Freire's ideas influenced many young artists directly, and also through the work of his friend and colleague, Augusto Boal, who adapted them to his theatre work. Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1974) re-imagined the relationship between actors and audience, or professional and non-professionals. Boal's best-known technique is forum theatre, in which the audience participate directly in finding alternative responses to the situations the characters face. Typically, a complete play is performed without interruption. Then, after an break, the

audience is asked what could be different. The actors improvise the situation along the lines proposed, with an audience member taking the role of the character making a new choice. Boal coined the term 'spect-actor' for this merging of roles. Crossing from seats to stage is, quite literally, an empowering experience. In forum theatre the audience has the right not only to watch but to *change* a story. It's another dynamic of participation, in which everyone present can debate the morality and feasibility of different actions. And for those who propose and then act out solutions it can be life changing.

Both Freire and Boal were imprisoned and then exiled by the military regime that ruled Brazil between 1964 and 1985. Their books were published abroad and their ideas spread during the years they lived in Latin America and Europe. Boal spent several years in Paris, and travelled often to Britain, where he was active in training companies in his techniques. Cardboard Citizens, which has used forum theatre with homeless people for 25 years, regularly hosted Boal's visits to London. The emancipatory ideas of Freire and Boal are key to community art, though not always to participatory art. They make artistic and ethical demands but provide a tough philosophical core to art that aims for social change by empowering people in their own education, rather than through access programmes that mirror the banking model of education. Freire and Boal challenge artists who aspire to change social conditions, even at an individual level, to understand how problem-posing can be empowering.

Geese Theatre

Geese Theatre Company has built its work on these ideas since 1987. Based in Birmingham, the company works with people involved in the criminal justice system—offenders and staff. In 2016/17, Geese ran 42 projects in secure institutions involving 709 young people and adults, as well as training sessions for 4,900 staff. Its mission is:

> To use drama and theatre practice to enable choice, responsibility and change amongst offenders and people at risk of offending in order to reduce crime and re-offending and create safer communities.[101]

This is not an artistic purpose. Geese uses theatre to enable personal change and so reduce offending—an artistic means to a social end. Geese's mission can be understood and shared, in principle at least,

throughout the criminal justice and offender management system. Without that common ground, the company would not even gain access to the people with whom it works: neither theatre nor change would be possible. And drama happens in every session that Geese run. Not the drama of bourgeois entertainment, but a drama of exploration, emotion, confrontation and discovery. Problem-posing drama. Masks are a distinctive feature of the company's practice (as they were in Classical theatre) because they allow people to understand and control the metaphorical masks behind which they hide, sometimes even from themselves. The experiences that emerge from using drama in this way can be challenging and painful for those involved, including the professional artists. To an outsider, they may not look artistically interesting. To those living them, they can be life-changing in ways that watching a show from the stalls rarely is.

Geese's values include artistic excellence. The company 'strives to develop and deliver theatre and drama practice of the highest quality to people and places with the least engagement in the arts'. But it does so because of 'the potential and possibility of individual change'. In the words of Andy Watson, the company's artistic director:

> 'Our work, ultimately, is predicated on a belief in change. That's the driver for everything. I love the opportunity to see change happen—not necessarily because of what we're doing, but because our work can be the catalyst for that change process for people. Just being able to see it beginning to happen in the space is a privilege.'[102]

In the prisons, young offenders' institutions and secure mental hospitals where Geese helps people safely face their actions and vulnerabilities safely, that change depends on the highest possible quality of the artistic process. Nothing less will do.

Personal change and social change

Geese is not alone in taking participatory art into prisons and probation services. In Britain, in the 1970s and 1980s, it was developed by a small number of committed artists, working largely at the discretion of individual governors. In 1990, research by Anne Peaker (a former community artist) and Jill Vincent (a social scientist) led to evidence of the work's social outcomes being considered at a policy level for the first time.[103] In the subsequent years, and despite an often hostile

policy environment, the sector has grown in scale, sophistication and evidential rigour. Today, the National Criminal Justice Arts Alliance counts almost 800 members making participatory art.[104] The Alliance publishes an online resource of academic research and project evaluations to strengthen knowledge of and support for the social benefits of art in criminal justice.[105]

Artists work for social change in many fields other than criminal justice. Similar participatory art happens everywhere, from playgroups to hospices for the dying. But the work brings into sharp focus the ethical tensions in art's potential for change, which are discussed in Chapter Six. There are also philosophical and political tensions, including the difference between individual and social change. That has become blurred as policy-makers personalise social need, but the first does not inevitably produce the second.[106] Indeed, perhaps the question should be reversed: can personal change be sustained without changes in the conditions that made it necessary in the first place?

James Thompson is Professor of Applied and Social Theatre at the University of Manchester and a former Director of the Theatre in Prisons and Probation Centre. He has written with honesty and insight about the tensions of working in prisons and conflict zones. In the 1990s he worked at Carandiru prison in São Paulo, Brazil, where the limitations of methods used in a British context became apparent:

> This project challenges some of the wider assumptions behind the rehabilitation theories popular in the UK criminal justice system. First in Brazil they were not interested in the broadly cognitive behavioural group work practice in the UK. This in itself reminded us that our practice was a product of a very specific political, ideological and cultural moment—it had no straightforward legitimacy outside that context. In Brazil prison education and rehabilitation were framed more in the discourses of cultural and human rights. They argued that there was no point in predicating work on the idea of personal change—as ultimately cognitive behavioural work does—if the extreme conditions of poverty that the vast majority of prisoners come from and return to are not transformed. The theatre programme in Brasilia became about reconnecting people to their society, not insisting that they could change in isolation from it.[107]

Thompson's experience in Brazil highlights the radicalism of Freire's and Boal's visions of emancipatory education through culture. In

identifying and dramatizing the oppressive nature of social power, they revealed both its structures and some ways in which people, working together, can confront, undermine or circumvent it. Both men recognised the social dimension of change with a realism tempered by personal experience of imprisonment and exile.

Advancing cultural democracy

> Let us tell the story… We believe that people have the right to create their own culture. This means taking part in the telling of the story, not having a story told to them. This story of ours… We believe that people have the right to put across their own point of view in their own particular way. This means not being told how to do this by people who don't understand it. Now listen to our story… We believe that people should have the right to reply. This means that people should have equal access to resources to give them an equal voice.
>
> **Campaign for Cultural Democracy 1984**[108]

Towards Cultural Democracy

The first two intentions of participatory art present political and ethical problems, but they are not difficult to understand. It is clear what is meant by increasing access to art or creating social change, even if the implications are open to debate. The problem with the third intention of participatory art is knowing what it means.

The concept of cultural democracy emerged in the 1970s, another outcome of the previous decade's challenge to authority. At the time, doubts were appearing about the effectiveness and value of increasing access to the arts. Cultural democratisation, as it was more formally termed, had been the cornerstone of cultural policy in Western Europe for 30 years, but it had had limited success in diversifying audiences for the high peaks of art. Worse, the idea of opening up culture to the masses was starting to seem paternalistic after the radical artistic and political developments of the 1960s. In the global South, postcolonial thinkers like Freire were rejecting the subordination of their cultural authority. In Europe, elite culture was subjected to parallel critique by sociologists, including Pierre Bourdieu.[109] Artists too were questioning on what basis was Schubert superior to the Beatles?[110] In this upheaval, politicians found it increasingly difficult

to explain why the artistic traditions, practices and tastes of their electors were marginal to cultural policy.

In 1976, the Council of Europe organised a conference of European ministers of cultural affairs in Oslo 'to compare problems of cultural policy in relation to their shared acceptance of democratic values'. One of the reports commissioned for the event was called *Towards Cultural Democracy*. Its author, J. A. Simpson, wrote that:

> Cultural democracy implies placing importance on […] creating conditions which will allow people to choose to be active participants rather than just passive receivers of culture.[111]

Active participants. The community art movement had been campaigning for people to be more than passive receivers of culture since 1968 and cultural democracy soon came to define its political vision. The words that open this section, which express Simpson's idea in more poetic and defiant form, come from a text written by British community artists in the early 1980s. Cultural democracy resonated with them because it evoked a socially just society and suggested a coherent way of working towards it. The problem was that everyone could interpret the term in ways that suited them.[112]

Cultural democracy and human rights

So what is cultural democracy? That is once again a live question, because the term is coming back into use, partly with the growth of participatory art and partly because some of that work is becoming more politicised by social and economic. The answer is no easier now than it was 30 years ago, so this explanation is not intended to be final, even if it does end with an attempt at a definition.

In a democracy, citizens have the right not just to vote, but also to take part in every aspect of democratic life, to express and defend their values, and to try to persuade others of their ideas. That process is not only political.[113] It happens in daily life. Civil society, the network of formal and informal institutions between the family and the state, can enact democratic values in its everyday work. So can the artistic and cultural activity that is central to social discourse. Democracy is expressed in and sustained by a culture that enables people to affirm, express and question their own and other people's values and the relationship between them.

In democratic societies, culture is a vast conversation between citizens about their experience, ideas, beliefs, identities and values. It is a space for encounter, exchange and negotiation, praise and censure, celebration and confrontation. It is mostly free, but there are always limits whose extent and basis are themselves a matter of intense democratic debate. It is where sense is made and community built. It is not always pretty, or just, or fair, but this is how we learn to live with each other.

Cultural life has a profound influence on political life. It was possible to portray, indeed to *represent*, a gay person in art, fiction or theatre long before homosexuality was legalised in Britain. On stage and page Oscar Wilde was safe: in public life and law, he was not. Art's deniable visibility paved the way for tolerance, acceptance and, eventually, equal marriage. Art is a protected space in which to express identity, beliefs and experience because it is ambiguous. It is possible to say something artistically without acknowledging that it has been said. In art we learn to accept the complex reality of all lives, including our own, though we may be unaware of it. Democracy without freedom of expression is impossible. Democracy without an artistic life in which everyone can participate freely, fully and equally is impossible too.

The problem, of course, is that neither our societies nor our democracies live up to these ideals. None of us do. There are always individuals and groups who are out of favour, weak or marginalised—the oppressed of Boal and Freire. They are prevented from taking an equal part in democratic cultural life. Barriers of different kinds stand in their way. Poverty that robs them of time and money for art. Prejudice that blocks their work from being noticed, or funded, or chosen. Lack of training, facilities and resources that prevent them from making art. Indifference, disdain or aggression when they do.[114]

To understand what that means, it is only necessary to remember some of those who are not much seen or heard in the cultural space. Today, in Britain, they include people of colour, teenagers, deaf and disabled people, migrants, even women, among others. Their presence in the media, on stage and in galleries is limited, at least when compared to the presence of white, educated men. The token woman on a TV or conference panel is a familiar example. In their absence, these people may be talked *about*, but cannot represent themselves.

Does anyone really believe that the female nude would figure as it does in the history of European art if women had been permitted to work as painters, and not only seamstresses? Their long exclusion from spaces of artistic production is both symptom and cause of social subordination. It has become unacceptable for white actors to masquerade as black characters but, in reality, a great deal of cultural life involves dominant groups either representing people in their absence or ignoring them altogether. Teenagers are numerous and artistically active but their art is almost invisible in the sanctioned spaces of public culture: theatres, galleries, television and the press. Instead, they are discussed, problematized, *othered*, by those with privileged access to cultural authority. No wonder they paint on neglected walls. Whatever else it may be, tagging is a protest against invisibility.

All this results in a cycle of exclusion produced by and reinforcing prejudice. And it matters. Cultural exclusion played a central role in the great European trauma of the 20th century, as the historian Saul Friedländer observes:

> As peripheral as it may seem in hindsight, the cultural domain was the first from which Jews (and 'leftists') were massively expelled. […] even before launching their first systematic anti-Jewish measures of exclusion, the new rulers of Germany had turned against the most visible representatives of the 'Jewish spirit' that henceforth was to be eradicated.[115]

This expulsion, which began weeks after the Nazi party took control of government, denied its victims any possibility of self-representation in Germany's cultural space, so that there was no counter to the antisemitic propaganda poured by the state into theatres, cinemas and print. In this light, Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights acquires a new force. Participation in the cultural life of the community is not about enjoying the good life. It is an essential safeguard against discrimination and persecution. As the Australian community art company, BIG*h*ART argues 'It's harder to hurt someone if you know their story'.[116]

Defining cultural democracy

A society's cultural and artistic life is a vast conversation about everything that concerns its members. It is critical to our lives because culture, in its stability and its shifts, shapes how we think and act.

THE PORTLAND INN PROJECT

In February 2018, Stoke City Council agreed to lease an empty pub, The Portland Inn, for community use as an art and social centre. It was the result of three years' work by a local artist, Anna Francis, and her neighbours and colleagues. In 2015 Anna had organised summer art workshops on open space beside the boarded-up pub. The next summer she persuaded the council to let her use it for a month. Working with Rebecca Davies, she organised four weeks of dance classes, social events, photography sessions and pottery workshops, for about 600 participants. The idea of the pub as a community space began to take hold.

This is one of the most deprived parts of the city, and building trust in a shared vision has taken time and patience. In that, Anna has had the support of AirSpace Gallery, where she is a member, the British Ceramics Biennial and many residents and friends. The acquisition of the pub by a Community Interest Company vindicates their efforts, but it is just the start. The Portland Inn Project has a long way to go to fulfil the hopes invested in it. But as in all good community art projects, the journey itself is empowering people.

BEALTAINE

Bealtaine is a month-long festival of older people's artistic creativity, with hundreds of activities in communities across Ireland. It was founded in 1995 by Age & Opportunity to support older people's health, wellbeing and social inclusion. Bealtaine lasts for the whole of May, and welcomes the widest participation. In 2017, almost 100,000 people were involved as artists, participants and audiences—the distinction is not always meaningful in Bealtaine. More than 1,700 performances, workshops, exhibitions and other activities were organised by national cultural institutions, councils, arts centres, community groups, libraries and care homes. Three quarters of the audience were over 50 years old. More surprisingly, so were 42% of the musicians, painters, singers and other artists who helped make Bealtaine such a glorious celebration of older people's artistic creativity.

In 2008 the National University of Ireland published research into the health benefits of Bealtaine, concluding that it 'has proven itself to be a major positive force for the well-being of older people in Ireland'.* But this valuable outcome is achieved through artistic empowerment, not therapy. Few people would see Bealtaine as a health programme—and why should they? People participate because it is interesting, satisfying and fun. Happier, healthier lives are a natural outcome of that creative activity.

* Ní Léime & O'Shea 2008: 122

Parliament is the symbolic and actual forum in which formal decisions affecting citizens of democracies are made. Culture is the symbolic and actual forum in which citizens negotiate all that matters to them, including all that cannot or need not be put into law. Culture is the parliament of our dreams. Being able to represent ourselves within that cultural forum is how we can defend our values, identity, experience—and rights. So here is a tentative definition:

- Cultural democracy is the right and capability to participate fully, freely and equally in the cultural life of the community, to enjoy the arts and create, publish and distribute artistic work.

This definition adds to Article 27 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in three ways. First, it recognises that the right of participation in cultural life cannot be exercised without capability. Citizens who do not have access to knowledge, training, space, time and resources to participate in art are effectively denied the right to do so. The playing field is equal only when steps are taken to make it so for all. Secondly, it recognises that participation in the cultural life of the community includes acting as an artist. It is the difference between hearing and being heard, between being 'passive receivers of culture' and its active creators. Thirdly, it adds the qualifier 'fully, freely and equally' as a crucial reminder of the standard to which democracy aspires and the principle of universal human rights.

The deeper implication of cultural democracy—and one reason why it has always had opponents—is that culture, and its meanings, values and standards are not fixed and universal but the result of a continuing process of (sometimes) democratic negotiation between people. Cultural democracy accepts that all art expresses values, and that the just way to live with that truth is to accept that everyone has the right to express their values in art. It does not follow that there are no values or standards; simply that they cannot be enforced by mere authority. Like all ideas in a democracy, they must be defended through argument, persuasion and negotiation. At a time when democracy is idealised for questionable reasons, the theory of cultural democracy is cautious and pragmatic. In 1947, as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was being agreed, Winston Churchill told the British parliament:

> 'No one pretends that democracy is perfect or all-wise. Indeed, it has been said that democracy is the worst form of Government except all those other forms that have been tried from time to time.' [117]

Cultural democracy is not perfect or all-wise, but it may be the least oppressive form of cultural policy. It is the defining goal of community art because, despite its weaknesses, it aspires to empower all citizens to protect their human rights by participating in cultural life.

Recent approaches to cultural democracy

But there are other visions of cultural democracy. In different places and times, this flexible term has been moulded into different forms. There is neither space nor need to go into them all here, but the recent revival of the idea in Britain should be noted because it is influential in thinking about participatory art today. Cultural democracy is now invoked directly, as well as implicitly in discourse about the cultural commons and everyday participation.[118] In 2017, King's College London published a report entitled *Towards Cultural Democracy, Promoting cultural capabilities for everyone.* [119] The echo of 1976 is clear, but the reference to capabilities is a significant advance. The authors renew the case for a cultural policy that goes beyond access to the arts and builds people's capacity for participation in cultural life:

> A world with opportunities to see and hear, yes. But so much more: a world of opportunities to *create*—where everyone has substantial and sustained choices about what to do, what to make, what to be; with everyone drawing freely on their own powers and possibilities; their (individual and collective) experiences, ideas and visions. This is cultural democracy. This is when people have the substantive social freedom to make versions of culture.[120]

This is close to the community art movement's vision of 40 years earlier but the influence of more recent ideas about individual choice and consumption can also be felt. In 1976, the Council of Europe report spoke of rights, equality and disadvantage. Today, there are frequent references to the creative industries, a term that seems to have lost any critical dimension it once had in British cultural policy.[121]

Ideas change with the times, but it is worth tracing their evolution to question current assumptions. A renewed attention to rights, equal-

ity and disadvantage might be just what cultural democracy needs to gain support, especially as these ideas extend beyond academic and policy circles. In September 2017, the Movement for Cultural Democracy was formed by a coalition of artists and activists, who have since published a draft manifesto.[122] Fun Palaces was mentioned in the context of cultural democratisation, but it describes itself as a grass-roots 'campaign for cultural democracy' and believes:

> in the genius in everyone, in everyone an artist and everyone a scientist, and that creativity in community can change the world for the better. We believe we can do this together, locally, with radical fun—and that anyone, anywhere, can make a Fun Palace[123]

There is now, as there was 40 years ago, a spectrum of beliefs about cultural democracy. It attracts artistic radicals, activists and supporters of everyday participation who believe in art's importance and therefore in people's right to create it on their own terms. They may be more successful than the community art movement because of the social change that has happened since the 1970s, and if they can accept an inclusive vision of what cultural democracy means.

Roots and Wings: balancing intentions in a primary school

> Activating a cultural democracy to come requires interstitial practices, one for which intervention, invention, dreaming, and faith form a backbone through which hospitality and friendship can emerge as a strategic praxis.
>
> **Lee Higgins**[124]

These concepts are not always at the front of people's minds when they are planning or making participatory art, but they are present and they give it purpose. At first sight, the arts activity that took place between 2003 and 2013 at Chickenley School (Yorkshire) was quite ordinary. Similar things happen in many schools, though not often for as long or with such commitment as they did here. It began when the head teacher turned to art in the hope of reviving the spirit of a struggling school. Chickenley serves a deprived area and pupil attainment was very low. In 2003, the then head invited an experienced artist, Mary Robson, to help make art central to the children's learn-

ing. So began an adventure that eventually included many other artists, teachers and parents. At its heart was a new art room open during breaks and at lunchtime. Pupils could come and go as they liked and they took responsibility for managing it, with the artists' support. There was a culture of exploration, and children were encouraged to use books, images and other resources as pathways for thinking about and expressing feelings. Naturally, they learned about materials and techniques, but they also learned to direct their own journeys, much like adult artists, and to trust their interests and instincts. Art making became a way to foster more open, friendly contacts within the school. From that came the idea of greetings cards for friends and family. Others went on sale, with the proceeds going to charitable causes chosen by the children. Mike White, a friend of Mary Robson's and a researcher in arts and health followed the project from start to finish:

> Sometimes there could be as many as 40 children in the art room but order somehow emerged in this bedlam as children assisted each other in realizing their art from concept to appraisal. The children devised their own ground rules for behaviour in the art room and, guided by the artists, their activities focused on self, emotions, expression of emotions, and different ways to depict complex messages through a range of art forms. […] It was more than just an activity room, but rather a space to foster empathy, and to model and analyse relationships in a child-friendly way.[125]

The children became interested in self-portraiture, using symbols and metaphors to represent themselves in two and three dimension. One child explained to Mike White:

> 'A self-portrait isn't just a drawing of your face, you know, it's showing what's inside you, your feelings.'[126]

The art room's success led to more ambitious projects around the key moments of transition in the children's school careers, between infant and junior departments at the school and when they left Chickenley at the age of 11 for the big senior school a kilometre away. In the last weeks of their final term, the older children worked with the artists on large, processional sculptures. These colourful, semi-abstract creations were given symbolic names: 'The Waterfall of Wishes' and 'The Fearless Flames of Destiny'. At the end of term, they were carried

through familiar streets to the senior school. As the children walked, they were joined by relatives and neighbours who recognised the parade as an important ritual, marking a moment of growth and a community's hope in giving its children into the care of others. At the high school, the procession was welcomed by pupils who had already made the transition, and their new teachers. After noting their talents, a formal appeal was made by one head teacher to the other: 'Please take care of our children'. The sculptures were installed in the senior school hall before everyone returned to the primary school to look at an exhibition of self-portraits made over the previous year.

Work such as this is often burdened with unrealistic expectations, but of socio-economic inequalities faced by families in this area are not easily overcome. Nonetheless, the effect on the pupils were recorded by school inspectors in 2006:

> The initiative entitled 'Roots and Wings' is an outstanding element which has raised the school's profile locally. Pupils' artistic skills, writing and personal development, for example, are enhanced by its many superb activities. Pupils who are talented in sports or the arts thrive on a curriculum which offers many worthwhile opportunities in these areas. This is reflected in their trusting attitudes and confident bearing.[127]

Roots and Wings ended following a change of school leadership, but the experience was profound for many of the children, teachers and families involved. It gave them the right and capacity to talk about their feelings, to express their hopes, fears and ideas, to share and find common ground, to make demands and express views, to play and find joy in their creativity. The symbolism of the annual parade and exhibitions were moments when children really took part in the cultural life of the community on their own terms. They and their concerns were made visible and claimed respect. Mike White, who saw these children grow and change, observed that:

> The confidence and good humour of Chickenley children are always remarkable, and are so evidently at odds with their estate's reputation in the media as a sink of underachievement and social dysfunction.[128]

For ten years, the children had unquestioning access to art, and social change followed. Respected as artists capable of for imaginative inquiry and creation, they experienced a kind of cultural democracy.

Co-operating across borders

Access to art, social change, and cultural democracy—concepts that define the policy framework of participatory art and the individual intentions people bring to the practice. Each has its own theory, history and tensions, shaping the work that is done but, as Roots and Wings showed, it would be wrong to see them as alternatives. Despite their differences, these intentions are not incompatible. It is one of participatory art's strengths that it can accommodate apparently dissimilar aims. Nowhere is this clearer than in arts and health, where there is growing recognition of the value of participatory art.[129] In 2017, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing published an inquiry report which concluded that:

> The arts can make an invaluable contribution to a healthy and health-creating society. They offer a potential resource that should be embraced in health and social care systems which are under great pressure and in need of fresh thinking and cost-effective methods. Policy should work towards creative activity being part of all our lives.[130]

The arts on prescription scheme financed by NHS Gloucestershire is an example of this approach. Through Artlift, people with various health conditions are referred to weekly, two-hour creative workshops with a professional artist. The sessions take place in a community or studio space rather than a clinical one, and are under the control of participants. An evaluation of the work showed that:

> GP consultation rates dropped by 37 percent and hospital admissions by 27 percent. Taking account of reductions in costs to the NHS against the cost of Artlift interventions, this represented a saving of £216 per patient.[131]

The benefit for the health service is evident: good health outcomes at lower cost. But others involved may have different intentions. The professional artists want to achieve good creative work, while people who attend may come to learn, to express themselves, or to enjoy social contact. The point is that none of these purposes obstructs or diminishes any other. Health outcomes are not achieved at the expense of artistic standards. On the contrary, they are more likely to result from the committed engagement that good art demands.

The binary thinking that pits social outcomes against artistic ones is not supported by evidence. Nor is it reflected in the intentions of many participatory artists. The Enlightenment taught us to see art as detached from and superior to material concerns, but arts and health work shows how unrealistic that is. Paulo Freire wrote that:

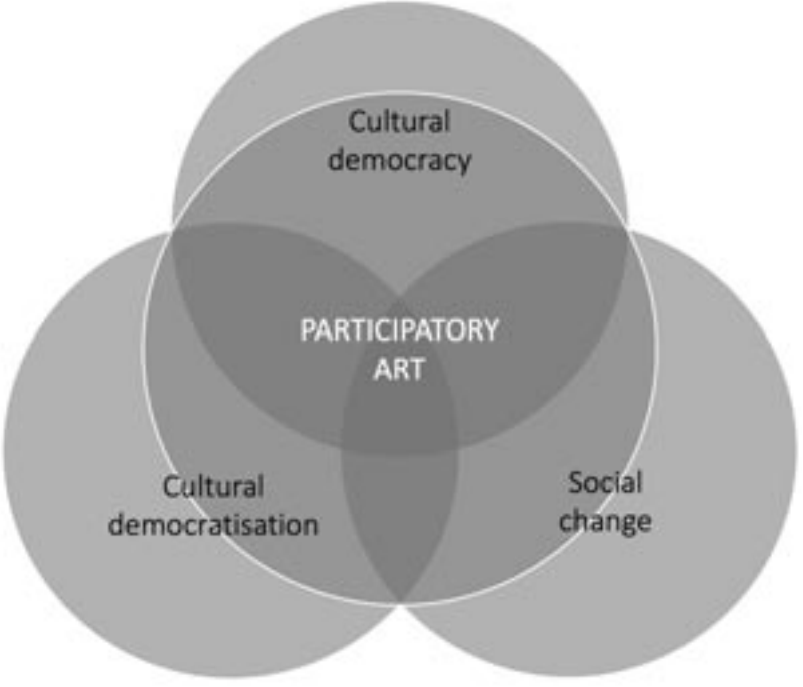
> Education as the practice of freedom—as opposed to education as the practice of domination—denies that man is abstract, isolated, independent, and unattached to the world; it also denies that the world exists as a reality apart from men.[132]

Participatory art, when its intention is the practice of freedom, also understands people and the world as interdependent realities. Human beings have complex needs and desires. Many of those are met only in co-operation with others, with equally complex needs and desires. Maslow's well-known hierarchy of needs, which places self-actualisation at the summit of a pyramid that begins with physiological needs, has misled many into believing that people turn to art only once other, apparently more important, needs are satisfied. The care people put into their clothes is a simple illustration of the falseness of this idea of an orderly progression. Culture is created in the ways we meet our needs, not as a leisure activity on the day of rest.

Participatory art is unstable because it operates between other disciplines, theories and interests. Since everyone enters its space from one or other existing territory, they bring established—but different—conceptual systems to guide what they expect, do and see. In fact, like people approaching the same mountain from different sides, each has their own image of it, all true and all incomplete. A nurse, a musician, a researcher, a politician and a manager might each form different ideas by observing the same art on prescription session. They might disagree about its value and, more profoundly, about the basis on which it might be valued in the first place. It is only through dialogue that we can resolve or live with those differences.

The different intentions people bring to participatory art help explain why it can be hard to understand in a world of professional specialisation. So does the instability of those intentions, both within organisations and over time. There are different intentions *between* project partners, and *within* organisations too. A gallery and a hospital working together on a participatory art and health project may have

discussed and agreed their organisational goals, but individuals within each will have their own investment in those goals. There are health professionals who are passionate about art and artists committed to social change. And, since change is inherent in participatory art activities, their ideas may also shift during the course of the project, because of their own experience or because of how the project itself alters conditions for everyone involved. The same is true of the non-professionals who take part. Their initial reasons for doing so may adjust as a result of the experience itself.



The intentions of participatory art define a territory of overlapping purposes within which organisations and individuals position themselves, and then adjust their positions. This territory can be represented graphically: in this representation, the three intentions of participatory art can be seen to overlap, either in pairs or together at the centre of the circle. The positions occupied by individuals or organisations are defined by how close they are to each intention. The

central circle of participatory art is smaller because it is, of course, possible to advance each of these intentions through other means than participatory art. Participatory art's strength is that the instability of intentions is not problematic. It is simply the outcome of the coalition of interests that defines every project. It is also what makes the practice so rewarding, because it requires everyone involved to open themselves to other ideas, experiences and values. It is what allows new responses to be found. The risks come from not understanding where you are in the territories, or why. In participatory art, it often matters less where you stand than that you are aware of the choices you make.

5 The art of participatory art

> In any movement towards liberation, it will be necessary to deny the normative authority of the dominant language or literary tradition.
>
> **Seamus Heaney**[133]

The difference of participatory art

Questions of quality have dogged participatory art since its emergence as community art in the 1960s. The underlying reason is the challenge it—especially in the form of community art—presents to established cultural power. It is not easy to make an attractive case for privilege, so defence of the status quo has usually been masked as a defence of standards—'extending participation in the arts is a good thing but, unfortunately, it produces mediocre art'. In 1980, the Regional Director of the Arts Council gave an interview to the community arts magazine, *Another Standard*. Asked what 'has been the single greatest weakness of community arts', he replied:

> In the initial stages too great a reliance was placed by community artists on the social aspects of their work, though I detect an increasing concern among community artists for the quality of the work being produced. And that is important. If the ACGB is to argue […] that a greater sum should be available for community arts, consideration of the artistic value of the work has to be uppermost.[134]

That view has been prevalent in the arts world for most of the past half century, but it is slippery. To say that 'artistic value has to be uppermost' implied that community artists did not care (or not enough)

about the quality of their work. But there was no evidence for that and it was not true. Community artists worried deeply about their practice and its standards. Like all artists, they believed fervently in art's value: that was why they wanted everyone to be able to create it. The idea of offering third-rate art to people living in third-rate circumstances would be more than cynical. It was against everything community art stood for.

In a 2016 interview for the London Community Video Archive, Maggie Pinhorn recalled dealing with those issues in the 1970s:

> 'I was always on about the product because I felt that it wasn't good enough just to make videotapes. What were they like? What was the content? What was it about? Where was the analysis? And don't believe that people can't sit down and criticise their work and understand it and get better. […] I felt it was really important to aim high and to have a high standard of endeavour whatever one is working on. […] I'm going to give it my all, whatever I'm doing, because I feel that's what people deserve and they should have, and they should expect and they should demand from me.' [135]

The point is not that community artists then, and participatory artists now, do not care about artistic quality. It is that they have a different idea of what quality means from that of the art world and its institutions. The creative partnership of professional and non-professional artists produces work that demands to be read and responded to in its own terms. Participatory art is not a less good version of what professional artists make. It has other meanings that are embodied in its form. That is why the Association of Community Artists named their magazine *Another Standard.* As Owen Kelly, one of its leading thinkers, wrote in 1985:

> We argue that what is needed is a genuine cultural pluralism, [in] which the idea of 'a scale of values' is replaced by the idea of many localised scales of values, arising from within communities and applied by those communities to activities they individually or collectively undertake.[136]

There are at least two ways in which participatory art is unique, and in that uniqueness, different from work made in the fine art tradition. They are, first, the fusing of professional and non-professional creativity and, second, the balance between process and product.

LAB MOLKE

In April 2015, the milk quotas which had governed dairy farming in the European Union for a generation came to an end. For better or worse, many rural families faced an uncertain future. It was in this context that Titia Bouwmeester began an exploratory theatre project with a community in Friesland, in the northern Netherlands. The nearby city of Leeuwarden was preparing to be European Capital of Culture in 2018 and had made community art central to its concept. Through Titia's work, which uses documentary approaches to highlight social change, the project team wanted to build relationships with the farming community.

Over the summer, nine artists spent time on dairy farms, learning about the life, helping where they could and listening to their hosts. They came together to exchange impressions, and develop ideas for a theatre piece. There was a single performance at the end of August 2015, for a gathering of local families. It took place in cow sheds, barns and under the great Friesian sky. In their fusion of performance art, song and theatre, the artists were the outsiders, reflecting back to the community with whom they had been living impressions of its life. In doing so, they allowed fears about change to be spoken and the ancient heritage of dairy farming to be honoured. New memories were inscribed in land, animals and people who share a mutually dependent proximity. The trace of this lovely work lingers with the community involved.

GEESE THEATRE (see page 70)

TALENT OP DE VLUCHT, FADA THEATRE (see page 89)

Professional and non-professional artists

> Form isn't an overcoat flung over the flesh of thought (that old comparison, old in Flaubert's day); it's the flesh of thought itself. You can no more imagine an Idea without a Form than a Form without an Idea. Everything in art depends on execution.
>
> **Julian Barnes**[137]

Fada Theatre (introduced in Chapter One) was formed in 2015 by two young Syrians living at the refugee centre of Alphen aan den Rijn in the Netherlands. Ahmad al Herafi and Ramez Basheer had successful theatre careers before the civil war, though they met only during the perilous journey to Europe. The other members of the company, mostly in their late teens and early twenties, had no previous performing experience. It was the shocking suicide of a fellow detainee that sent Ahmad and Ramez back to theatre. They decided to use their skills to communicate the refugee's experience to the citizens of the country where they sought protection. They began by running open theatre sessions at the centre. Over a period of months, a group was established and a play created from their individual and common experiences. When I saw *Talent op de vlucht* in March 2017 it had been performed 60 times in the Netherlands. The actors had been granted asylum, and Fada was working with Dutch supporters to become a permanent theatre company.

After an opening montage evoking a life of peace, the play alternates between a sea crossing in an unstable, overloaded boat and scenes of civil war. A deaf man tortured because he can't understand his interrogators. A girl fleeing a forced marriage. A dentist losing hope when those he has helped turn away in his own time of need. Lovers divided by religion. It is performed in Arabic—the actors are still learning Dutch—but with surtitles that allow audiences to follow the narrative. The stage is bare; there are few props. Visually, the production depends largely on lighting effects. The performance mixes physical realism with symbolic, almost ritual passages, in an unrelenting, repetitive structure that suggests war's boredom and terror.

On the night I saw *Talent op de vlucht,* the audience reaction was warm, but not wholly so. I was impressed and moved by the performance, but some of those I spoke to afterwards were unenthusi-

astic, even critical. That difference of opinion is not the issue, though we shall return to it. The more important point is how *Talent op de vlucht* differs from a professional theatre production.

The first difference is that the actors cannot be separated from the play because they are telling their own stories. A performance about the Syrian Civil War by a professional company might be a powerful piece of theatre but it could only be a feat of creative imagination. The members of Fada Theatre do not need to imagine the scenes they present. They remember them. They are bearing witness. Not as they might conceivably one day do in a court of law, where simple standards of veracity are applied. Here, they testify as artists. They must be truthful, but not literal or even factual. It's fine to exaggerate, simplify or adapt events because this is art. We want them to use their technical, intellectual and emotional resources to help us experience something of the truth. Like all artists, they're performing feats of creative imagination, but their starting point is lived experience.

In this situation, the criteria and standards of the theatre critic are of limited use. Most of these actors are untrained, except through their work with Fada. The standards of professional actors are not a useful benchmark for assessing their performances. The most recent theatre school graduate will be a more skilful and experienced actor. In Chekhov, the young professional should easily outshine the refugee. But in a play about the Syrian civil war? No professional can match the refugee's authenticity. In this story, the performers have a moral authority inaccessible to trained actors.

That is true, if somewhat differently, of other aspects of the production. Someone spoke to me of weaknesses in staging and design, but is it fair to compare this work with that of an established theatre, endowed with financial, technical and creative capital? The production values are not what you can get elsewhere, but they reflect the realities of the play's creation. They speak of the destitution of refugees, and their courage in using the flotsam of survival to make new life. Like the performance, they are inseparable from the meaning of the art being offered to the public.

A perception of weakness can invite condescension. It's a good play—for refugees, amateurs, considering what they been through… Such responses express the othering that assigns to some people a subordinate position, while simultaneously reinforcing the speaker's

own superiority, conveyed in the claimed right to judge. No one, least of all an artist, wants to be applauded for overcoming weaknesses others have defined. We want our work to be considered fairly, with an open mind. If that means not applying the criteria and standards of fine art to participatory art, it is not because of limitations in the quality of the work. The limitations are in the criteria and standards.

Talent op de vlucht is not a professional theatre production: it is participatory art. Its meaning is changed by the methods and reasons of its creation. It is not possible to watch this play in the comfortable security of a European theatre unaware that the performers are refugees. Their representation of suffering and need cannot be separated from them as actors or people. In this moment of artistic creation, the migration crisis ceases to be an abstract political or moral debate. It is in the room. Fada Theatre is a claim of recognition by marginalised, unheard people, but it is not simply a political claim. That could be made by marching in the street. It is an artistic act, whose character and sense are defined by the need of those who make it to express themselves as only theatre allows. In the co-creation of professional and non-professional artists, participatory theatre creates a work neither could have made alone.

Professional artists bring skill, talent, knowledge and experience to making art. These are rich resources on which to draw. Professionals know how to do many things, and they have a self-awareness born of a long cycle of expression, reception and reflection. They are aware of their peers, living and dead, and they work, if not always consciously, with reference to the ideas and tastes of the great world of art. All this enables them to work effectively. A professional artist can be relied on to create something that is, at the very least, competent and sometimes exceptional.

A non-professional artist has none of this experience or expertise. They may not have thought much about art before the opportunity to participate presented itself. They may not have created anything since they were children. They lack the facility that comes with training and practice. But they do have things the non-professional artist has lost or may never have had. They have an open mind. Unaware of what is currently thought good, they make art in their own style. They bring the questioning freshness of the beginner's mind. If they belong to social groups under-represented in cultural life, they have

new ideas and insights. In bringing disabled performers to the stage Candoco permanently enriched the language of contemporary dance.

Non-professional artists bring *need* to their work. They have reasons to be involved: why else would they make space in busy lives to do something difficult and new? The residents of Lordelo do Ouro in Porto made theatre with the artists of Pele because they wanted to talk about how the growth of tourism was affecting their everyday lives. The Syrian refugees at Alphen aan den Rijn wanted Dutch people to know what they had been through. Non-professional artists have stories, feelings and ideas they need to share. Through participatory art they transform what matters to them into an act in the world. They may not want to create art again, but they have done what was needed. They do not want to be artists—which is another reason why it's a mistake to look at their work as if they did.

Professional and non-professional artists have different relationships with art. For the first, art is a job, a way of life, an identity. For the second, it is an exploration and a response to urgent needs. When they work together, sharing their different assets, they create something unique, which could not have been created in any other way. It will not always be successful—even in its own terms—but, whether the intentions are artistic, social, personal or political, it cannot be judged as if it were the work of professional artists. Everything that matters about *Talent op de vlucht* arises from the interaction and difference of participatory art.

A different aesthetic

> This is not a conventional play and will not come to life if treated as such.
>
> **Joan Littlewood**[138]

Debate about the relative importance of process (how art is created) and product (the resulting art work) is central to participatory art, but it was not always a meaningful question. Until relatively recently, art was mostly thought of as an object, especially in the domain of fine art. The word signified a painting, sculpture, book, composition, performance or similar *work of art*. What mattered was the artefact, especially if it was rare, fragile or costly to produce, and therefore a

tradable holder of financial value. The simultaneous development of fine art and industrial capitalism is not a coincidence. There is a symbiotic relationship between art and markets. But markets require saleable goods. They deal in products, not processes. Those who enriched themselves in the 19th century's growing art markets had little interest in artists' working practices or living conditions.

Because community artists wanted to involve people in creating art, they thought about the processes involved. Where, how, even when it was made became important questions. So did ways of making, since the techniques acquired through long training were closed to a novice with limited time. Such practical concerns shaped the artistic and aesthetic character of community art in the 1960s and 1970s. Screen-printing was used (rather than engraving or lithography) because it was simple, quick, cheap and visually striking.[139] Carnivals and community plays with music were created because they offered a role or a task for everyone. Video was adopted because it brought media production within reach.

Community artists found that the creative process became more interesting outside the privacy (or obscurity) of the studio. With imagination about methods and materials, art could be made anywhere—in a school, community centre, park or street. Artists started to think of a workshop not as a place but an activity. The process of creation could be as exciting as what it produced, especially when it was opened to the unpredictable input of non-professionals. Some artists came to see the product as little more than the trace of a shared creative experience, which was the real value of their work. Moveable Feast, a Devon-based group of artists, describes itself as 'the workshop company' and shows the continuing vitality and increasing sophistication of this practice. The innovative character of these artistic experiences helps explain the art world's reservations about quality, but a little curiosity would have revealed that art had not been dismissed, just relocated.

A focus on activity also helped community art separate itself from the art market. Its products resisted commodification: murals, media, print and performance. Impermanence was a principle for many of the first community artists. Sue Gill, a founder of Welfare State International, still feels strongly about this after a lifetime's work:

> 'Certainly, there was absolutely no desire to leave behind a trail of physical objects. There are enough bloody statues. We have nothing like that. We've got an archive in Bristol University, but it's scripts, papers and photographs. I don't think there's a single piece of costume or anything, usually because they were such crap anyway; they were recycled, they were set fire to or whatever. The last thing you would want to do would be to leave permanent pieces of work everywhere.'[140]

With little money and a commitment to accessible processes, community artists used cheap, recycled and scrap materials. For some, that became a deliberate rejection of art's aesthetics of power. As a young community art worker (knowing nothing of Arte Povera), I sought:

> A new aesthetic, where the poverty of the materials used forces us to recreate and renew […] an art which in its essence embraces the values we claim to uphold, an art for a post-industrial society, an art which, if nothing else, will show in its very nature, that there are other ways of being creative than those of the mass-media and the established art idioms.[141]

The aesthetics of community art were also shaped by its inclusion of voices little heard in the elite art world, including those of feminists, people of colour, working class communities, LGBT activists, disabled people, travellers and others. The Notting Hill Carnival began in 1966 as an affirmation of Caribbean culture and is now Europe's largest street carnival. Thousands participate in its Mas bands, working for months to make the most striking costumes.[142] Similar events now take place in many European cities, and their style is part of contemporary culture as well as influencing outdoor and circus arts. In a different register, Graeae's innovations in staging accessible theatre have produced a remarkable new aesthetic. By integrating British Sign Language and audio description within performances by deaf and disabled actors, they create unique theatre experiences. In both examples, the co-creation of professional and non-professional artists produces forms that ask audiences to recognise their specificity.

By intention, necessity and chance, community art processes made a new language for art, expressed in products unlike those valued in the art world. The subversion of its early years has been tempered, and some participatory art now aspires to conventional production values. The sense and consequences of that are questionable. Even

so, and despite the passage of time, the artistic quality of participatory art remains contentious. Many see it simply as second-rate, when it does not conform to accepted ideas. But meaningful assessment of the quality of participatory art needs understanding of its intentions and processes. Examining it through the lens of fine art is pointless. Participatory art is not always good: what is? Community art is especially risky. As an experimental practice, it inevitably produces unsuccessful work, even in its own terms. But that is the point —participatory art is entitled, like all art, to be judged in its own terms. And, like all art, as a practice and a form, it should be considered on the basis of its highest achievements.

The importance of process

Concern with process is a defining characteristic of participatory art and for many people it is as important as the art it produces. One reason, as we have seen, is that it produces art that is formally, aesthetically and philosophically distinctive. But participatory artists also see the process as intrinsically valuable. Shared creative work enables people to learn from and about one another because they bring different histories, identities, imaginations and desires to the act. Together, they face obstacles and share talents, make demands, become friends, develop skill, knowledge and confidence, explore their place in the group and discover new stories about themselves. Such things occur spontaneously in the process of co-creation. It also generates new artistic ideas and forms, especially in the more open practice of community art, so that the final work may be quite unlike what was expected at the start.

Not all participatory art places the same emphasis on process. *We're here because we're here* was conceived by Jeremy Deller to mark the 100th anniversary of the Battle of the Somme. On 1 July 2016, hundreds of soldiers in First World War uniforms appeared in streets, shopping centres and stations. Throughout the day, they marched, stood and sat silently. Sometimes they sang 'We're here because we're here because we're here…' to the tune of Auld Lang Syne. Anyone who spoke to them received a small card with the name of a soldier who had died exactly 100 years ago. The work got a huge public response, especially in social media where it touched millions. Its

power, originality and visual quality depended on a process that involved months of secret preparation by the 1400 volunteers who took part. They trained with professional artists in theatres across the UK, under the overall direction of Rufus Norris, Artistic Director of the Royal National Theatre. They developed the performance skills needed to maintain a silent presence for the work's 12 hour duration. They also researched the life of the soldier whose card they carried and in whose memory they stood. The work could have been performed by professional actors, but it would have had a different quality and meaning. By recruiting volunteers, the artists echoed the battalions who signed up in 1914, and something of their innocence and vulnerability. The participants of the 2016 work contributed to its creation not just in their performance, but throughout the process and its subsequent ripples.

We're here because we're here was an authored work by established artists. As such, it stands at one end of the participatory art spectrum, where the process, though integral, is only a means to the product. The professional artists knew what the final work would be, and there was little scope for the non-professionals to influence it. At the other end of the spectrum, it is the product that may be hard to see. That is often the case in the quiet participatory art now happening in care homes, hospitals and day centres. In such places, sessions are often regular, but short. For elderly people, a weekly hour of dance, singing or painting is appropriate to their level of energy and the institutional timetable. To an observer, such activity may seem devoid of artistic product or quality, whatever their health benefits. But in the hands of a skilled artist the most unassuming of these workshops can be a truly artistic experience. It centres on the creative act each person is capable of making. That might be ambitious, perhaps in working towards an exhibition or a performance. It might be so modest that an outsider would not notice it. The moment when a person abstracted in dementia connects with a remembered tune and chooses to sing along can be profound. It is small, humble even, but it is an instance of self-expression, an artistic act that affirms our human value. It is for such moments that many participatory artists work with the most frail or vulnerable people.

If these projects mark ends of a spectrum, between them lies the great range of participatory art, where the product and the process

SOCIEDADE ARTÍSTICA MUSICAL DOS POUSOS

In 1873, a group of politicians, businessmen and writers founded an association to promote music and the arts in Pousos, a district of Leiria in central Portugal. In 2018, SAMP celebrates 145 years of uninterrupted activity during which successive teachers have passed on their creative knowledge to the next generation. As a teenager, Paulo Lameiro learned to play the trumpet in the SAMP band. He also learned about people and what they could achieve when they came together in their diversity. After studying music and sociology in Lisbon, he returned to Leiria to direct the association. Under his leadership, it has become an ever more powerful resource.

The heart of SAMP's work is still instrumental tuition and the concerts given by the philharmonic orchestra, choir and swing band. But to this Paulo and his team have added projects that reach every part of the community, from concerts for babies to work in prison. They have produced Mozart operas with young offenders, even taking them to Lisbon to perform in *Don Giovanni*. Most extraordinary, perhaps, is the programme of music for the dying and bereaved, which helps fill the space left by people's diminishing religious observance. SAMP succeeds because it changes with the city to which it belongs. It is not part of this community. It is the community, and music is how the people of Leiria navigate the joys and sorrows of life.

TOINEN KOTI, FINNISH NATIONAL THEATRE

Jussi Lehtonen is an actor and director at the National Theatre in Helsinki. He also manages its touring programme to care homes, prisons and closed institutions. Through that experience he has learned to value theatre's capacity to disrupt unequal social relations by helping people see situations from another perspectives.

In 2017 Jussi invited actors seeking asylum in Finland to work on a production with Finnish peers. Most had professional training, but some, including the singers, did not. *Toinen koti (Other home)* used a documentary theatre form to explore how actors could inhabit one another's experience. He had anticipated differences between Finns and refugees, but not the tension that emerged within the second group. Mistrust and anger flared between people who had fled different sides of the same war. The group included Christians and Muslims, Sunni and Shia, Kurds, Syrians, Druze, Iraqis and Iranians: their differences were not trivial. Some found it too difficult and left the project. But over the months, most built a basis for respect in their relationships. Their disagreements gradually became those of actors concerned with their place in the play. They grew into a company of equal members because their co-created art depended on each of them. *Toinen Koti* opened in 2017, during the centenary celebrations of Finland's independence. Against the odds, its success with audiences and critics made it a moving symbol of a changing nation's changing ideas of home.

are in creative equilibrium. As with intentions, the balance shifts between and within projects. It is affected by the people involved, the situation, the work they have set out to create, the expectations of others and much else. And it shifts, as a tightrope walker shifts their weight, responding to what is happening and how people feel about it. But the best work never sacrifices one for the other. Process and product are yin and yang in participatory art, stable only in mutual dependency. The process is a territory of creative empowerment validated by the public act that is the product. As Maggie Pinhorn says:

> 'There comes a point whereby it needs to be shown, and it goes up on the wall and people feel validated that 'I did it'. It's very important that people's work is validated and isn't just brushed off as being, well, it can't be any good because it's just a community video.' [143]

Thinking about artistic value

There does indeed come a point where art needs to be shown. Unless it is presented, in performance, exhibition, online or print, art has no life. It becomes an act in the world when it is freed from the artist's control.[144] After that, its future depends on how people respond to it. Martin Creed's *The lights going on and off* can speak to someone who sees it as art: to another person, it might be read as an electrical fault. Ursula K. Le Guin, observed that:

> The writer cannot do it alone. The unread story is not a story; it is little black marks on wood pulp. The reader, reading it, makes it live: a live thing, a story.[145]

The curious signs we have invented to convey stories—the marks you are deciphering now—are only a means of communication. Stories exist only in our minds. The same is true of all artefacts. They facilitate the communication of things we need to share but cannot express in any other way. However, the usual formulation, *artist > audience,* does not adequately express the nature of that communication because it imagines one side as active (the communicator) and the other as passive (the recipient). Reception theory understands audiences as active participants in how art's meaning is developed. An artist's work is not fixed. It is filtered through the situation, experience and imagin-

ation of those who encounter it and is invested with sense and value accordingly. So I see this relationship as linking *creator* >< *recreator* in a shared process of meaning-making:

> As you read a book word by word and page by page, you participate in its creation, just as a cellist playing a Bach suite participates, note by note, in the creation, the coming-to-be, the existence, of the music. And, as you read and re-read, the book of course participates in the creation of you, your thoughts and feelings, the size and temper of your soul.
>
> **Ursula K. Le Guin**[146]

The reader applies their own creative imagination to understand and feel something of what the writer intended. However, Tolstoy's confidence that art can enable them to experience 'the same feelings as the man who expresses them' was misplaced. Whatever we feel as we read his novels, it cannot be what a 19th century Russian landowner once did.

This matters because when we consider the artistic quality of participatory art, and of products such as *Talent op de vlucht*, we cannot rely on a common standard. At the heart of community art's dissent is the refusal of a universal, objective idea of quality, especially one determined exclusively by a dominant social group. The argument about quality that has characterised this debate since the 1960s is actually about the meaning of art. And it is fierce because it is also a struggle for power—who has the right to define cultural value. Community art is an emancipatory movement because it aims to democratise that right—that is what it means by cultural democracy. The counter-argument is that opening the question of artistic value to debate would lead to relativism and the rejection of standards altogether.[147] But no artist works without standards. If all things are equally good (or bad) creative practice is meaningless. Participatory art is not relativist. It recognises that artistic value is subjective and therefore that everyone is equally able—and equally entitled—to decide what it means to them.

Art's meaning and value is a matter of negotiation and, since democracy, though imperfect, is the least inequitable means we have for negotiating with each other about value, art must be open to democratic debate. Again, this does not mean that there are no stan-

dards, only that there is no legitimate basis for any group to impose their standards on all. Some art works have been admired and valued since their creation, but that does not make them universal. The continuity of their appreciation is important and deserves recognition but there may be many reasons for it, including the social reinforcement of a culture's established values. The rediscovery of neglected artists, or indeed whole social groups such as women artists, underlines the instability of cultural value. Van Gogh's paintings, which he struggled to sell during his lifetime, now fetch astronomical prices. Sir Walter Scott, the most financially-successful and influential novelist of the Romantic era, is little read today. Art lasts principally because people discover ways of making it resonate in conditions that their creators could not have imagined. This should not concern us. It is the unending construction of meaning on which human societies depend. What should concern us is whether and how people participate in that process. What should concern us is cultural democracy.

Artists who accept these ideas (and many don't) still need structured ways of thinking about quality, to guide their practice, explain their ideas and reflect honestly on their work. In 2000, I developed a simple approach to support the Arts Council of Ireland's assessment process.[148] The idea was to highlight specific aspects of artistic quality (as currently understood within the funding system) to make them easier to consider and discuss. Today, I see the five elements as:

- **Craft:** the technical and artistic skill demonstrated by the work. Is it well made?
- **Originality:** its relationship to the unique conditions of its creation. Is it true to the maker?
- **Ambition:** its aspiration, scale and openness. Is it worth doing?
- **Resonance:** its relevance to what people are concerned about. Does it speak to me?
- **Feeling:** its non-rational effect and ability to linger in the mind. Does it move me?

The intention is not to reach a definitive judgement, but to facilitate structured reflection and dialogue. The first three elements are more objective because it is possible to make comparisons with other work of a similar kind. The knowledge of a professional artist or critic is

relevant because they have more experience of where the benchmarks of good performance might be. Still, the response of someone with less knowledge might lead them to rethink those benchmarks. The fourth and fifth elements are entirely subjective, and make it possible to express how we have been affected by a work of art. Many who were surprised by First World War soldiers on their morning commute found it emotionally affecting. But the piece could not have the same resonance in a society that did not experience the First World War, or one that has made different historical and cultural sense of that event. The work's artistic success is inseparable from its context and the personal response of those who saw it.

These five words are a tool for enabling the debate that is central to cultural democracy. In everyday use, they can be a framework for conversation between people who have seen work together. This is how I might use them to talk about my response to *Talent op de vlucht*:

- **Craft:** The work was well made, though somewhat repetitive; the performances were especially powerful;
- **Originality:** Its structure and style were unusual, and not all its ideas convinced me, but the play did articulate its creators' vision;
- **Ambition:** The production values were constrained by resources, but its hope for peace and reconciliation were impressive;
- **Resonance:** It confronted urgent moral tensions in ways that included the audience; it was generous to human weakness;
- **Feeling:** The play has stayed in my mind over subsequent months, though I have forgotten performances I've seen more recently.

None of these opinions is *true*. Another audience member might disagree with my judgements and interpretations. With better knowledge of Dutch or Syrian theatre, they could offer me a wider perspective, but that would not invalidate my own. A theatre critic sitting through his tenth production of *Hamlet* might feel it was rather tired, that all this had been done before. A teenager seeing the play for the first time might have an exhilarating night. One response is not more true than the other, but hearing about other productions might help the young person deepen their knowledge—and the teenager's enthusiasm might help the critic remember that theatre's power does not depend only on originality.

These criteria for artistic quality were not conceived with participatory art specifically in mind. They could apply to all forms of artistic production and to participatory art as one of those. But what about process? What quality criteria could frame the process of participatory art? That is more difficult because there are different ways of looking at it. For instance, process could be assessed on the basis of how the professional artists do their work. Are they well-trained, is the concept strong, is the preparation good etc.? Attempts have been made to draw up performance standards for participatory art. Much of this is uncontroversial—no one thinks it's good to arrive late for a workshop, without preparation, tools or materials. But ethical questions go much further and involve difficult, often complex questions, as discussed in the next chapter.

Here we are concerned with the artistic quality of process. If the process is itself art, we could apply to it the same quality criteria discussed above, but there are aspects they do not cover. So I suggest four more, specifically related to the artistic quality of the participatory art process.

- **Experience:** The extent that people enjoy taking part. Is the process rewarding?
- **Authorship:** The extent that it enables co-creation. Who recognises themselves as an author?
- **Empowerment:** The extent that people gain control, within and beyond the project. Are they strengthened by the experience?
- **Humanity:** The extent that it produces kindness, solidarity and trust. Does everyone feel valued? [149]

These ideas are less simple than the previous set and they could certainly be improved. But such conceptual tools have value insofar as they help us think about what we are doing and why; its effects and consequences; its value to ourselves and to others; ways in which it might be different or better; and other, equally restless questions raised by participatory art practice.

Cultural democracy might be an idealistic policy goal. But it can be created through the agreement of a group of people in participatory art projects. It exists when it is sustained by an artistic process that prioritises people's experience, authorship, empowerment and

humanity. And when this happens it is not because these things are easily or simply achieved but because by working together to achieve them we build, even temporarily, cultural democracy.

6 The ethics of participatory art

> There has been, in other words, a gap between theory and practice with respect to the ethical criticism of the arts throughout the twentieth century […] It is only since the late eighteenth century that the view took hold that the aesthetic realm and the ethical realm are each absolutely autonomous from the other.
>
> **Noel Carroll**[150]

The ethical implications of co-creation

The idea that art is independent of ethics is recent, and it is hard to sustain in the context of participatory art. Human action involves ethical choices. Artists face the same choices as everyone else but they must also deal with some that are particular to their work. Because art creates meanings and affects people, artists are responsible for what they create, though not for how others interpret or respond to it. In open societies, that responsibility is generally understood to be personal. Things are more complex when people work professionally with, or in the service of, others. The actions of doctors, teachers, researchers and counsellors are governed by law and regulation because their interests do not necessarily coincide with those of their clients. Their decisions affect other lives and in some circumstances they must set aside their personal views and be guided by principles established within their profession or by law.

Participatory artists face similar ethical dilemmas because their actions can also affect the lives of those with whom they work. They are not doctors or teachers, but their position has parallels. Ethical questions inevitably arise from participatory art's intentions. Who defines the aim and, implicitly, the problem it is supposed to solve? Are the intended beneficiaries aware of this thinking? Have they consented to the possibility of change or even harm? What commitments have been made, implied or assumed? What responsibilities do the professional artists recognise? In short, whose interests are being served by a participatory art project?

Whether the intention is to improve someone's access to art, their social situation or their exercise of democratic rights, the idea of change is embedded in participatory art—and that is deeply problematic. So it is essential to be aware of the ethical issues that arise when any of these intentions prevail. In different ways, each introduces inequalities of power and the danger of creating dominant and subordinate relations. There are layers of moral complexity in this but I have always held to a simple underlying principle:

> It is unethical to seek to produce change without the informed consent of those involved.[151]

The philosophical basis of this principle is articulated in Bernhard Schlink's novel, *The Reader*. As the story progresses, the young narrator is shocked to see a woman he once loved on trial for war crimes. He knows something that could help her defence, but he knows too that she does not want this fact to be made public. Should he intervene? Fortunately, because this is a novel, he can put the problem to his father, who is a professor of philosophy.

> When he answered, he went all the way back to first principles. He instructed me about the individual, about freedom and dignity, about the human being as subject and the fact that one may not turn him into an object. 'Don't you remember how furious you would get as a little boy when Mama knew best what was good for you? Even how far one can act like this with children is a real problem. It is a philosophical problem, but philosophy does not concern itself with children. It leaves them to pedagogy, where they're not in very good hands. Philosophy has for-

JA SAM MUZEJ, AKCIJA

The National Museum of Bosnia and Herzegovina stayed open during siege of Sarajevo (1992-95), despite suffering damage and casualties. After the war it was repaired with international support. However, no state entity accepted responsibility for its operation, and in 2012 lack of funds forced its closure. But the staff carried on: they came to work, unpaid, to protect the collection. In 2015, Akcija, an independent cultural NGO, launched *Ja sam Muzej (I am the Museum)* to show the city's solidarity with the museum's dedicated workers.

The campaign started with an exhibition by Zijah Gafić of 38 portraits of the employees, alongside personal stories of their dedication, love for their job and current working conditions. Citizens were invited to join the workers in a 'guarding shift' at the Museum in a gesture of camaraderie. During August and September 2015 more than 5,000 people volunteered, while local art organisations and individuals donated a cultural programme to the museum. This ranged from literary works about the institution by notable writers, gifts of equipment and adopting objects for conservation. The campaign attracted media coverage, in print and online, and citizens were encouraged to write to the responsible ministers of culture. Alongside simultaneous political and diplomatic efforts, *Ja sam Muzej* resulted in the re-opening of the Museum on 15th September 2015 with three years guaranteed public funding.

THE LAWNMOWERS

The Lawnmowers have been working as an independent theatre company since 1986. That's a real achievement since all the members have learning difficulties. Each week about 100 people take part in singing, dance, percussion, theatre outreach, youth theatre, the Hip Hop Skool and the Krocodile Krew, who DJ at monthly club nights. Above all, they come to make theatre about their own lives. Their sharp, funny, sometimes darkly humorous plays talk about the rights of people with learning difficulties, and provide material for workshops with their peers, and training for those who work with them.

The latest project asks what it means to live well in old age as a person with learning difficulties. *A Dead Good Life* is the work of five artists who have worked together for many years: Nick, George, Andrew, Debbie, and Andy (in rehearsal above). They are supported by non-disabled artists (including me) in a shared process. Ideas might come from anyone, but they must be accepted by everyone. We set out to make a play, but it has turned into a film, because that will enable the Lawnmowers to reach a wider audience online, where resources about the health, social and financial issues in the story can also be made available. Shooting starts in January 2019, with filmmaker Bryan Dixon. What will happen, and how the final work will look, is uncertain but that's because all the Lawnmowers are artists, professional in the true sense of the word, who trust their art to reveal itself in the act of creation.

gotten about children.' He smiled at me. 'Forgotten them forever, not just sometimes, the way I forget about you.'

'But…'

'But with adults I unfortunately see no justification for setting other people's views of what is good for them above their own ideas of what is good for themselves.'

'Not even if they themselves would be happy about it later?'

He shook his head. 'We're not talking about happiness, we're talking about dignity and freedom. Even as a little boy, you knew the difference. It was no comfort to you that your mother was always right.'[152]

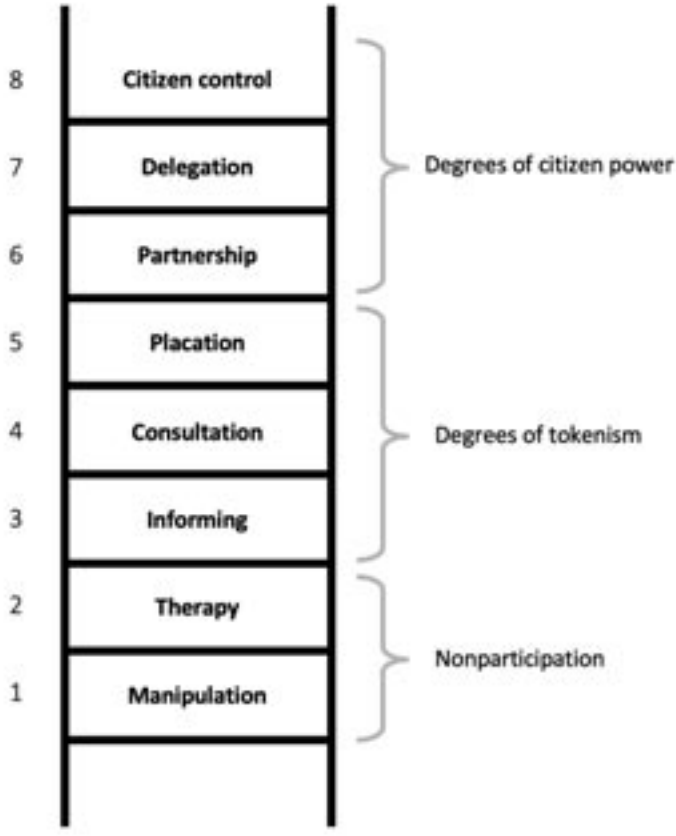
Participatory art is about dignity and freedom. Art creates change, but it should be in the hands of the person who experiences it, not at the command of another, whether artist or funder. Art, as the Classical philosophers knew, is a means of *self*-development. The difficulty arises because participatory art is a shared process. There are always inequalities of power when professional and non-professional artists collaborate. The financing of participatory art by state and other actors introduces further and more dangerous inequalities of power because they are remote or invisible to many of those involved. This chapter looks at some ethical issues inherent in participatory art.

Citizen participation and inequalities of power

> The idea of citizen participation is a little like eating spinach: no one is against it in principle because it is good for you.
>
> **Sherry Arnstein, 1969**[153]

Degrees of participation

In 1969, Sherry Arnstein published an article about citizen participation in US urban renewal and anti-poverty programmes. Her analysis of how power was, and was not, shared with the people supposed to benefit from these programmes, has proved enduring. It was influential on the first community artists and remains so today, not least because of the visual clarity of its metaphor: the ladder of citizen participation.[154] Arnstein identifies eight levels of participation, corresponding to degrees of citizen power, grouped in three categories:



Eight rungs on a Ladder of Citizen Participation (after Arnstein 1969)

In Arnstein's scale, non-participation (*Manipulation* and *Therapy)*, is used to secure public acceptance of decisions that have already been made. Tokenism (*Informing*, *Consultation* and *Placation)* offers degrees of dialogue, but power to decide on action remains with government or institution. Only in citizen power (*Partnership*, *Delegation* and *Citizen Control*) do people have partial or full control over the planning, implementation, management and financing of a programme that is intended to benefit them. Arnstein's model exposes the gap between the rhetoric and experience of participation.[155] As she says, no-one is against participation in principle. It's the practice that is difficult because it involves sharing power.

This issue is central to participatory art because inequalities of power are created in the act of co-creation. The professional artist is in a dominant position for several reasons. First, where art is concerned, they have more skill, knowledge, experience, confidence and ease. Second, they probably initiated the project so they understand it better than anyone else. Third, they are the hub through which everything passes, directly connected with everyone from commissioner to caretaker. Fourth, they are most heavily invested in the project, at least initially. Together, these factors give professional artists huge authority, which they can use to empower or exploit, support or manipulate. Good intentions can mask but not justify actions that effectively subordinate people to the wishes of those with power.

The practical issues are often complex, so artists must make choices about courses of action. The boundary between placation and partnership is not the clear line implied in Arnstein's ladder. It shifts with situations and people. Part of a professional artist's role is to carry other people's doubts about what they can do, encouraging them to take risks that, from an experienced perspective, are not as great as they seem to the person concerned. The professional artist may give someone enough confidence to go on stage, so that they give and enjoy a great performance. But I have also seen a director persuade someone to perform against her wishes, because withdrawing would 'let everyone down'. There can be no consistent answer about when and how hard to push someone, but a professional artist must understand the risks of misusing their power.

Sharing power

Spencer Tunick's photographs of naked crowds in city streets depend on mass participation. The thousands who take part, including some who travel far for the chance, seem to have little input into the final work. All that is required is their presence. Even so, the experience can be intense, as Hannah Tomes, who contributed to Tunick's 2016 *Sea of Hull* commission, explains:

> As we took his direction, Tunick transformed a disorganised crowd of civilians into beautiful art objects. We were asked to look forward and upwards, no smiling or laughing please, to make his photograph as serene as possible. We became a sea of silent, blue monoliths, facing an almost

> invisible lens. We became water flowing through a city previously flooded by it. And although we moved as one, each of us felt anything but anonymous—a powerful combination in the current climate.[156]

Fevered Sleep also make a precise offer of participation, but one with more scope for creative input. *Men & Girls Dance* celebrates playfulness while confronting social fears. The piece involves five professional male dancers and seven or eight girls. It has been created in several cities and each performance takes months to prepare, because it depends on a relationship of trust. The young dancers change the choreography through their physical presence and personalities. The rehearsal weeks are used to explore how the new participants' individuality will be incorporated into the existing structure. As a result, every audience sees a different work of art.

For Nadja Raszewski, director of TanzTangente, a community dance organisation in Berlin, the experience of being directed as a dancer helped shape her ethos for working with non-professionals:

> 'I never felt good in situations when somebody with a dominant authority told me what to do and used me as a dancer. "I have a real artistic vision and I use you as human material to bring it on stage." Even when I was a kid, I was somehow against it. I had to find out—especially when I was working in theatres—that the spirit was very different behind an artist and somebody who was making community projects. Even when I'm working with professional dancers, my working is very similar to when I'm working with kids or with non-professionals, because, for me, it's absurd to use them as paint. It's not blue, or red that I can just paint on a wall. That is material. But this is a human being.' [157]

Three projects; three approaches to power sharing. The critical issue, in ethical terms, is how inevitable power inequalities can be acknowledged and negotiated. That is central to the quality of process and product in participatory art. Whether the offer of empowerment is limited or ambitious, it must be honest, so that everyone can make an informed choice about whether to participate. It may also need to be reassessed as work develops.

Power relations within a group are delicate enough, but power can also be exercised from outside, for instance by funders or the institution where the work is being made. Institutional rules can deter-

mine what happens in a project, as any artist who has worked in a prison will know. Norms and expectations are less coercive in health or education settings, but they can be equally influential. Institutional control can also be exercised covertly, for instance by not acknowledging that a conflict of interest even exists.[158] Such omissions can be damaging and hard to identify. Important decisions are often made before a project begins by funders, commissioners or local authorities. Aim, outcomes, 'target' group, location, art form, duration and more will have been agreed by the time potential participants hear about an opportunity, so the only real decision they may have is whether or not to take part. Such projects do not get far up Arnstein's ladder.

The power of payment

The complexities of power sharing are illustrated by the problem of who is paid for their participation, and why. Like many freelance workers, what I get paid ranges from a lot to nothing at all, according to the commissioner's resources, what I've been asked to do, and my own wish to do it. My choices about what work to accept balance interest and need, but at least I get to choose. What about non-professional artists? Should they be paid for their work? If so, on what basis? And what are the consequences of paying them?

Until recently, the question of paying people to be involved in community art did not arise because there was barely enough to pay the professionals. It was assumed that people benefited by their participation, so payment was neither needed nor appropriate. But if people are recognised as non-professional artists, equally implicated in the act of creation, things look less clear. Restoke is a participatory art company that brings 'people from all walks of life alongside professional artists to co-create ambitious performances and programmes, driven by the stories, lived-experiences, skills and commitment of those who take part'.[159] In 2016, Restoke created a site-specific piece called *You Are Here*, involving 15 people who had moved to Stoke-on-Trent from other countries. It was only later that the company asked itself whether all the performers, and not only the professionals, should have been paid for the week. They are now exploring how to share the available wages equitably in future work.

In other projects, non-professionals do get paid. That is most common in work by companies for whom participatory work is new or

tangential to their main work. For instance, in a project with Syrian refugees at Sala Beckett in Barcelona, everyone who participated was paid, albeit not very much.[160] Such arrangements may be essential when people are living in precarious situations, with people being paid travel expenses, a per diem allowance, or at least being provided with meals. But even such limited remuneration can bring difficulties with tax authorities. Disability arts organisations are committed to supporting people's participation and valuing the professional quality of their work but have to deal with the constant risk that any payment is seen as taxable income and could lead to a withdrawal of welfare entitlements or even sanctions.[161]

The difficulties are not only practical. Paying people to participate in an art project changes the balance of power, and not only in positive ways. In 2000, the artist Santiago Sierra paid four prostitutes 'the price of a shot of heroin to give their consent to be tattooed' in a Salamanca gallery.[162] If nothing else, Sierra's action demonstrates the power of money and the ambiguities of how consent can be obtained and given. In participatory art, when people may be contributing some of the most precious things they have—their own stories—paying them can effectively be disempowering. Being paid can make someone lose control over their own participation or even prevent them from withdrawing consent. Money can be a powerful way of exploiting people. Such issues are not easily resolved. They run into society's broader inequalities and injustices: art is not immune from the corrupting forces that operate in every other field. Artists making participatory work often involve people with less power and freedom than they themselves have. While we might not be able to escape the ethical and political tensions such inequality creates, by talking about the tensions we can at least give people the dignity and freedom of making their own choices in difficult situations.

The project cycle and empowerment

One way of navigating these inequalities of power is to see that artistic activity is only one stage in a participatory art project. It does not begin at the first meeting between professional and non-professional artists and end with the performance or exhibition they create together. The art might be the most visible, celebrated and enjoyable part of the work, but it depends on a process with four distinct stages:

1 **Conception**—development of the idea, its aim, objectives and anticipated outcomes;

2 **Contracting**—negotiation and agreement of mutual obligations and benefits;

3 **Co-creation**—making and presenting artistic work; and

4 **Completion**—reflection, evaluation and future planning.[163]

Since decisions are made and power exercised at each stage, it is very important who is involved, but the people intended to benefit are often present only in co-creation. From one perspective, this is understandable. It might not be possible to contact potential participants until there is a coherent offer to which they can respond. They are also unlikely to be able to participate effectively in planning a project which, by its nature, is intended to increase their capacity for just that type of engagement. A person who has never made participatory art cannot negotiate on an equal basis with people who have. When those present include people who manage services on which they depend, the possibility of an open discussion recedes still further. Such inequalities in people's control over their own lives often guide the work's rationale and cannot be wished away. But to pretend they don't exist is to reinforce them.

The exclusion from planning and evaluation of the people who are the reason for a project's existence is inconsistent with the expressed values of participatory artists and public bodies. The political principle, 'Nothing about us without us', was used by the disability rights movement precisely to challenge the paternalism that prevented them from making decisions about their own lives and services. How can actual inequalities of power between people involved in a participatory art project be reconciled with a commitment to overcoming them? One answer is in the recognition that participatory art can be an empowering process.

The concept of empowerment was central to community art in its first decades but it is less common in today's policy environment.[164] I have met artists who dislike it because it seems condescending, as if they were giving power to someone. But power is not a finite resource. It need not be gained at the expense of others. Empowerment can be supported by creating conditions in which people gain power

over themselves and their circumstances, as explained by Marie-Hélène Bacqué and Carole Biewener:

> Empowerment expresses two dimensions, that of power, which is the root of the word, and that of the learning process by which power is gained. […] It implies a process of self-realisation and emancipation of individuals, recognition of groups and communities, and social transformation.[165]

These degrees of empowerment—individual, group and societal—are mutually reinforcing. Community art recognised the potential of group empowerment and social change from its origins in the political and cultural radicalism of the 1960s. That thinking has retreated since the 1980s and, if it is concerned with empowerment now, participatory art tends to see it as an individual process. It is true that personal change is easier to enable and observe, as participants (non-professional artists) gain skills, confidence and knowledge. Bacqué and Biewener speak of 'apprentissage', which translates literally as apprenticeship. I have used the more open 'learning process', but there is something precise and culturally significant in the tradition of apprenticeship, through which young people gain mastery over materials and techniques on their journey to adulthood. The foundation of empowerment in community art is a similar acquisition of skills in art materials and techniques that opens the possibility of using the power of art itself. Not everyone goes very far on this journey. Most non-professional artists have no desire to become professional: they have other concerns in life. But some do and, crucially, community art intends that all should have that choice.

It also intends that empowerment should go beyond individuals and support people to create or strengthen community. That happens as people get to know one another, share skills, ideas and resources, develop empathy and trust through shared experience, and recognise common interests and identity. Putting on a community art event can be a path to other forms of collective action. In 2017, after the Farnham Fun Palace, the people involved decided to convene a Fun Palace Parliament, as Carine Osmont, one of the makers, explains:

> The Parliament was an invitation to anyone and everyone who was at the Fun Palace to talk about what we would like politics to be like and what we can do about it on a local, small yet vital level. We all took a pledge to

CATHY, CARDBOARD CITIZENS

It starts with a confrontation between a landlord and his tenant, Cathy, who is bringing up her teenage daughter. It ends, after a succession of crises, confrontations and losses, with a question to the audience: how could this be different? The four actors give electric, gripping performances. It's impossible to know who is a trained professional and who is a member of Cardboard Citizens, brought to theatre by the experience of homelessness. The play itself, inspired by the 50th anniversary of Ken Loach's landmark film, *Cathy Come Home*, draws on real stories. It shows how little has changed since 1967. But it is after the interval that Cathy turns into a different kind of participatory theatre—Forum Theatre, followed by Legislative Theatre, two of Augusto Boal's inventions.

The audience that has just watched the play are invited to suggest how Cathy or her daughter might respond to the situation. They step on stage and act out their idea, while the cast improvises in response. Often, what seems to be a way out, turns out to be a dead end. It's the law that has failed. Now the audience suggest ideas for legislation that might improve things: politics in action. Cardboard Citizens have been using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques for nearly 30 years. They make outstanding theatre, while supporting vulnerable people through grim times. And they work politically for meaningful change so that one day there might be less need to make theatre about homelessness.

LIVING HERITAGE

Living Heritage (2000 and 2005) was one of many cultural programmes run by international donors in Eastern Europe after the fall of Communism and the Yugoslav wars. Initiated by the King Baudouin Foundation, it operated with local partners in Bosnia Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Macedonia and Romania. I was part of the programme team and came to see it as a benchmark of successful culture-led community development. The 140 projects it supported involved historic buildings, museums, dance, music, folklore, crafts, food, even natural heritage. We learned that a project's focus was not the key to success—what was, and what came to define our concept of heritage, was that it mattered to the people concerned.

The other critical success factor was that the programme gave money directly to communities, and supported them in using it through training and guiding principles. Grants were small, but they were often the only money a group had ever received, and the mutual trust that resulted was hugely empowering. It was cultural democracy, and it led to the most impressive results I have known, in some very fragile places. Fifteen years later, many of the people involved have sustained and built on their work, and in Bulgaria local work has been showcased in a national Living Heritage Festival. Small steps, tested practice: exceptional results.

> go beyond our words and the first initiative was the Demo Café: some of us got more concerned with local politics, attending council meetings for example. Others discovered the existence of community initiatives like the Eco-cinema where people bring food to share and watch short films with a green theme, or Transition Town Farnham, or Farnham Local Food (community supported agriculture). The change initiated during the Fun Palace is very slow but 'sustainable' as they say. Because it involves people whose opinion is not usually sought and once we realise we have the right to speak out and the capacity to change things (again on a small but vital level), well good luck trying to take that back from us! I hope we have a second Fun Palace Parliament this October so we can build on the progress made and hopefully get more people involved, and not just for the Fun Palaces weekend.[166]

This illustrates how individual empowerment can lead to 'recognition of groups and communities'. But such change does not happen unless a commitment to power sharing extends to all the stages of a project—as it does in the best Fun Palaces.

Social transformation, as envisaged by Bacqué and Biewener depends on people being able to participate in the conception, contracting and completion of the whole project. If the first two levels can be achieved through the co-creation of a participatory art project, the third type of empowerment depends on people being involved in the other stages of the project. When they work as equals with those who make decisions that affect their lives, on the conception, contracting and completion of projects, participatory art can begin to overcome its own inequalities of power. Without that, participatory art promises degrees of emancipation it cannot deliver.

The problem, as already noted, is that involving people in the first two stages of the project cycle is often impractical. The solution is in the term 'cycle'. If the project is seen as a single event, then its potential for change is indeed limited to what individuals can get from the experience. Participatory art often is of this transient nature, but community art is not. One reason why its pioneers saw community as being primarily geographical was their commitment to building lasting relationships with people through art work that developed over time. So the fourth stage of the project cycle, which is concerned with evaluating process, naturally opens questions about what people

want to do next. It returns to the first stage, but this time everyone who has participated can be involved and, thanks to the experience, knowledge and confidence they have gained, they will be better able to contribute to decision-making. These ideas are not new: I wrote about them more than 20 years ago.[167] Nor are the theories of empowerment and community development. But it is important to return to them—like going back to the first stage of the cycle—because our situation changes all the time, and we need to review how to use the tools we have to meet our present needs.

That is the theory. In practice, it can be supported by asking critical questions at each point in the cycle, such as these:

- **Stage 1: Conception.** Whose values does the idea reflect? What assumptions does it make? What governs the choice of art form, duration, beneficiaries, artists, location? What results are expected from it? Who by? What risks does it involve and for whom? When and how might the idea change?
- **Stage 2: Contracting.** Whose intentions does the project serve? Are they understood and shared by everyone involved? Who will decide when and how far they are fulfilled? What responsibilities do the people involved have towards each other? What commitments and promises are being made or implied?
- **Stage 3: Co-creation.** How is the work planned and who is involved? What control do people have over their participation and creative contribution? Who benefits from authorship and in what ways? What risks might the non-professionals face? What would failure look like? What might be its consequences?
- **Stage 4: Completion.** How will the project be brought to a positive conclusion? What help or support might the non-professional artists need to move on? How will people reflect on the experience, share and process their ideas and feelings? If the work is to continue, how might it change?

Within the larger cycle, there will often be steps back to the previous stage. For instance, contracting will engage the non-professionals as they discover what participation involves, and that could require some changes to what has already been agreed with funders. Unanticipated situations, crises and successes, can also make it necessary

to go back to earlier stages. In one project I know, that happened when a key partner decided it was no longer able to play a central role: weeks of rethinking and negotiations followed.

None of this happens without the commitment of professional artists, part of whose skill lies in using their power, as little as necessary, to create conditions that empower others. That can be done in many ways, but it often requires creating space for others to occupy. Professional artists are a big presence in any group. It is normal to look to them for answers. Artists often feel they should be positive and know the solutions. But their competence can have a disempowering effect on others. Sometimes, saying that you don't know what to do is all that is needed to allow someone else to suggest an idea. Before long, the problem is resolved by the group. This is something that Stella Duffy has learned over the years she has been encouraging others to create Fun Palaces:

> 'I've got much better at saying I don't know, and believing that's all right. What's lovely about saying "I don't know, why don't you try?" is that complete strangers are trying things and telling us what worked and what didn't, so we're getting all this knowledge we can pass on to others.' [168]

In such small ways the balance of power can shift from professionals to non-professionals. In power sharing, the role of the professional artist is often to create a space in which participatory art can happen—and then carefully withdraw so that others can take control. As Tom Shakespeare says of disability rights:

> Rather than experts determining what is best for people, people should use their own lived experience to determine the shape of provision. This is the principle of 'expertise by experience', which accords closely with the key disability movement slogan of 'nothing about us without us'.[169]

Participatory art and change

> Art makes you feel better! Lives of people and communities across England can be transformed by arts and culture.
>
> **Arts Council England**[170]

> There is no reason to expect that works of art will produce behavioural changes in their recipients, since behaviour is a product of many and varied conditions which cannot be created or modified through art.
>
> **John Carey**[171]

Art can have deep, life-changing effects, but it does not therefore follow that those effects can be predicted, planned or controlled, nor that they should be. As we have seen, our response to art is personal and subjective. A pair of teenagers can react very differently to their first experience of Shakespeare. One might be inspired to go to drama school, while the second is bored and resentful. Ten years later, their feelings and interest in theatre might be reversed. Charles Darwin loved Shakespeare in his youth but, as he wrote in his autobiography, he later found it 'so intolerably dull that it nauseated me'.[172] The point is that our response to an artistic experience is *ours*, and as such it cannot be controlled by anyone else.

Art exists only in the space we create by responding to the work of an artist. Their talent, even genius, is not of itself sufficient. It is an offer that comes alive when someone accepts it. In that acceptance, it is changed. Our response is influenced by personality, culture, education and experience but also circumstance, such as where we are, when and with whom, and by transient feelings, if we are tired, hungry or heartsick. That is why even an artwork as apparently fixed as recorded music can be so moving one day and irritating the next. We recreate the music each time we listen. And that being so, it cannot bring about foreseeable or consistent changes in people.

In what sense can we speak of art changing us? The critical difference is between something happening and something being made to happen. Just because we desire or even intend something to happen, it does not follow that we have *caused* it to happen, even if it does. The best that a participatory artist can do is to create the conditions in which change can happen.

Take confidence as an example. Many artists believe that people gain confidence through participating in creative activity. There is a reasonable theory to explain why this change might occur. To make art with others, people need technical competences and crafts, organisation, teamwork, imagination, creativity and life experience. It is reasonable to expect that someone who develops such abilities in a

supportive situation, and demonstrates command of them in public, will gain confidence and self-esteem.

In Place of War is an organisation that works to support just this process of individual empowerment through its resource centres in conflict zones, as Co-Director Ruth Daniel explains:

> 'With the cultural spaces, we're providing a physical space where anyone can come in and create. It's a place where people aren't necessarily artists yet, but a few things have happened at the end of the process. One is people developing basic skills and more confidence. The second is people going out and getting a job that they couldn't get before, because of this programme. The third—and the one we most want to happen—is that people start a creative business. That's the change we want to see. There are different levels to that change, but these are outcomes we measure our success by.'[173]

These differently levels can be seen in the work of cultural spaces in Congo, Palestine and Zimbabwe, each run by local artists, and equipped to help young people develop their potential in music and digital media.[174] In 2016, In Place of War helped train more than 200 young people in music and the creative professions. Its intentions span cultural democracy and social change, and its method is to provide facilities, resources and guides. It is for the young people to decide whether, how and why to make use of that offer.

Like education, art cannot guarantee *individual* outcomes, but participatory artists have a lot of control over the standards of their work. If, like In Place of War, an artist intends that people should be able to gain skills and confidence with their support, then they must not only make resources and training available, but also consider how they work. Treating people as equal partners, responding positively to their ideas, being honest about what can and cannot be offered, devising achievable routes for learning, ensuring safe, equipped spaces for work—these are all standards that will increase the chance of positive change. Although the nature and extent of that change is beyond the artist's control, and not everyone will benefit in the same ways or to the same extent, the quality of the process will make a huge difference to the probability of success.

The ethics of change

> Community music facilitators are challenged to ask themselves, (1) on whose terms this musical activity is happening, (2) whether those are appropriate to the cultural context in which they are operating, and (3) whether the intervention is acting as another colonizing endeavour or promoting a more positive sense of self-determination for participants.
>
> **Brydie-Leigh Bartlett and Lee Higgins**[175]

Change triggered or facilitated by participatory art does not end with the project itself. Since change occurs in human contexts, its future consequences are liable to be unstable and produce further change. How, in this context, is it possible for an artist to act ethically? By what right does she set out to produce even the conditions of change? And what responsibilities does she have towards those who may be put in the path of change, without being fully aware of that possibility or its effects?

> In the mid-Seventies, the project for which I was working ran a small creative writing group, which was mostly attended by young women. At the end of the first year, I was surprised to notice that at least 50% of the group had either separated from their husbands/partners during that period, or were considering doing so. It took me a little while to understand that if women are working regularly in a context that is challenging and affirming, they may not confine their increased self-confidence and self-esteem to three hours on a Wednesday afternoon. The possible verdict in terms of advocacy of the transformative powers of the arts: high for those agencies interested in self-actualisation, low for those promoting traditional family values. As our major funders at that time were the Arts Council of Great Britain and Devonshire County Council, I did not feel it was the most useful statistic to highlight in the annual report.[176]

This experience, shared by community artist Gerri Moriarty, perfectly captures the complex ambiguities of social change. It shows how outcomes occurred that were neither foreseen nor intended and that they affected more people than those who chose to take part. In that complex situation, only the people concerned have the right to assess the costs and benefits of their participation. Did the artist have any obligation to take account of these potential effects of her work? It is hard

A BAO A QU

A Bao A Qu is a small Catalan organisation, founded in 2004 by friends passionate about sharing their love of cinema, art and contemporary thinking. They created 'Cinema in Curs' (Cinema in Class), a programme for primary and secondary school students and their teachers, that takes place during school hours. The year-long course involves creative workshops, learning about film culture and teacher training, all led by professional filmmakers. The students make their own films, on themes such as friendship, moving home, the city or family relations. Their work is screened at specially curated festivals in a Barcelona cinema, so that young people's vision is in the mainstream of the city's cultural life.

A Bao A Qu is now working in other parts of Spain, in Germany, Chile and Argentina. It has created a parallel photography project and a European programme for teenagers outside school to sustain their engagement with cinema. Despite its local and international achievements though, the organisation is not financially secure. Although filmmaking involves the acquisition of skills and knowledge, A Bao A Qu engages young people emotionally, not technically. They see cinema as poetics, *'a way of knowledge, of thought, emotion, amazement, interrogation of ourselves, the others and the world'*.* The quality of the young filmmakers' commitment and of the work they create is a testament to the seriousness of that vision. This is participatory art in which everyone is expected to fulfil their greatest potential.

* Aidelman & Colell 2014: 25

VALLEYS KIDS

Valleys Kids shows how close community art and community development can be, especially when work is rooted and sustained. The organisation began life in 1977 as Penygraig Community Project and has grown to be an important resource for several post-industrial towns north of Cardiff. Its programme spans youth work, training, family support and local regeneration, with participatory art running through it like the letters in a stick of rock. The Sparc youth arts programme runs dance, drama and art groups, works with local schools, and offers placements, peer learning and mentoring. Young people use art to raise issues that concern them, such as the closure of Rhydyfelin youth club, which became the subject of a film and a residency by the teenagers at Tate Modern in May 2018.

Valleys Kids has no difficulty in combining art, empowerment and community work.* Co-founder Margaret Jarvis says: *'I won't claim it's just the arts, but they played a major role in changing people's perceptions of themselves, and their community.'*** Change has come with enormous effort and commitment by local people, but the future is never secure. Programmes come and go, forcing the organisation to adapt its work in response to the changing priorities of potential funders. The 40 year story of Valleys Kids shows how local conditions can be improved by, with and for whole communities, and the integral role of art in that change.

* Matarasso 2004: 72; ** Talfan Davies 2008: 258

to see how, even if she had been aware of them, she could have advised the potential participants. It is in the nature of personal change that we cannot understand how it might affect us before it has, so even if we have been told about and consented to possible risks, we might feel differently after we've experienced them. They have changed us, and we choose differently as a result.

Educating Rita (1983) is a film based on Willy Russell's play of the same name. It traces the relationship between Frank, an English professor (Michael Caine) and Rita, a young hairdresser (Julie Walters) who signs on for an access course in literature. Over the months, Rita's ideas change wildly, not only about the culture she sets out to acquire but also about herself. Her marriage ends. She makes new friends, but wonders what price she, and they, are paying for their education. *Educating Rita* is a moving portrayal of the realities of personal change. In Rita, Willy Russell put something of his own experience, as a working class boy who found a way from cutting hair to studying and then writing literature. His film is a valuable lesson for anyone who hopes to bring about change through participatory art.

Is there a way through this tangle of ethical dilemmas and responsibilities? I think so, and this is a rare question on which I have never felt much doubt. I do not like work that tries to change other people, if only because I find the idea of anyone trying to change me intolerable. Those who recognise that participation in art is good for us (at least potentially) are sometimes accused of 'instrumentalising' art, but that is a specious idea. Human beings instrumentalise almost everything, in the sense of making it serve their purpose. The history of our relations with other animals and the natural world is defined by instrumentalisation. Visit a farm if you doubt it. However, most cultures, most of the time, accept that human beings must never be instrumentalised. Making people less important than some idea or purpose is the mark of dictators and ideological terrorism: it leads, sooner or later, to death. The concept of human rights was invented precisely to resist such crimes. And the definition of a crime against humanity is to instrumentalise people. Human beings are an end in themselves. Anything less is an attack on their freedom and dignity. For that reason, if for no other, participatory art must never be seen as a way of changing people, especially not to make them more acceptable to whoever is organising or paying for the project. People

change with the experience of participatory art, just as they do through education, sport or voluntary work. But there is a world of difference between giving people access to the resources for personal growth and trying to change them, without their knowledge or consent, into the people you want them to be. It's the difference between teaching and learning, between instruction and empowerment.

Participation in the cultural life of the community is a human right. It has no associated responsibility. People do not have to demonstrate improvement to justify the costs involved. I am cautious about the possibility of informed consent but being honest about difficulties people might face is essential. It requires sensitivity about what to say, how, and when, if the equality of a relationship is to be protected. One approach is to integrate those discussions in the creative process, so that everyone has a voice and experience to share. In this way, it might be possible to see consent itself as a process, or what in social science research has described as 'rolling informed consent'.[177] Change, after all, is something that can happen to everyone who enters the transformative space of participatory art, including the professionals.

At the end of Willy Russell's play, Frank comes to regret how Rita has changed through his teaching, because he himself no longer values what she has acquired. Half-drunk, he challenges her:

> Found a culture have you, Rita? Found a better song to sing? No—you've found a different song, that's all—and on your lips it's shrill, hollow and tuneless.[178]

They part in anger, but in the final scene, she returns to thank him after she has sat the exam he didn't want her to take:

> I had a choice. I did the exam. […] An' it might be worthless in the end. But I had a choice. I chose, me. Because of what you'd given me I had a choice.[179]

That is a solid ethical foundation on which to build a practice in participatory art. It is enough to give people choices about their own education, culture and development. That is empowerment.

The vulnerability of professional artists

An artist once told me how a teenage girl had revealed during a theatre workshop that she was being abused at home. The story came during a class on community art that I was teaching, and it had a similar, if less serious, effect on my session as it had had on hers. Abstract ideas and principles were suddenly thrown into harsh light. Theories about workshop practice were tested by a situation that demanded an appropriate, informed and, above all, *human* response. The artist who related the experience had neither the training nor the institutional support to handle the crisis confidently. She had to improvise and was left feeling unsure and vulnerable.

Most of this chapter has been concerned with the ethical questions that arise when artists work with non-professionals, but, as this experience shows, the professionals face risks of their own. Fortunately, most are not as grave as this, and there are things that can be done to mitigate them, by artists themselves and by the institutions that commission and finance their work. In thinking about this, it is useful to distinguish between hazards and risks. A hazard is something that can cause harm. A risk is the likelihood that it will cause harm. Artmaking can expose people to many hazards such as working with blades, power tools, chemicals or at height, all of them safe when correctly handled. Professionals should be trained in the proper use of hazardous materials, tools or techniques that they use. That knowledge is part of what makes them a professional. A trained dancer knows how to move without causing strain or injury. If they are working with a group of elders, they can be expected to understand the hazards involved and plan choreography that minimises the risk of harm. Today, the hazards and risks of involving non-professionals in art practice are generally well recognised and many artists prepare a risk assessment when planning a workshop or project.

But professional standards are not limited to understanding hazards and risks. They cover many other aspects of practice, such as values, competences and behaviour. In 2014, ArtWorks Alliance published a Code of Practice for artists working in participatory settings, written by Kathryn Deane. Drawing on models from counselling, therapy and teaching, as well as participatory art, this offers a clear set of commitments:

As an artist working in participatory settings, I commit to:

- being skilled in working with individuals and groups
- being well prepared and organised in my work
- having appropriate artform skills
- taking responsibility for my actions
- undertaking safe practice
- evaluating and reflecting on my work
- maintaining my professional competence [180]

This is useful in helping participatory artists reflect on their practice and responsibilities. It rightly focuses on what is within the artist's control: their skills, training, preparation and behaviour. It implicitly recognises the distinction between hazards and risks. The commitment to 'undertake safe practice' is a marker for a range of important issues from handling tools to safeguarding of vulnerable people, the specifics of which vary between situations. The ArtWorks Code of Practice is therefore best seen as a guide that requires further work to define specific actions and commitments. That has been done for community dancers by People Dancing, the UK development organisation and membership body, whose Professional Code of Conduct is aligned with the ArtWorks Code of Practice and:

> translates the core values of community dance into standards of ethical and responsible practice to which community dance professionals adhere. It enables them to be clear and upfront about how they go about their work, their ethical stance on how they approach their work, and the expectations people can have of them in terms of their professional behaviour, actions and attitudes.[181]

In this code, the commitment to undertake safe practice is expanded to a list of 13 items ranging from having relevant insurance to:

> I set, agree, and monitor clear and appropriate personal boundaries to ensure the integrity of my relationships with participants and employers.[182]

The development of such serious thinking shows how participatory art practice has matured. It is critical to safe working but it cannot prevent all problems. There might still be a teenager who wants to talk about her family situation, but an artist supported by a code of

conduct will have training and a plan for how to deal with the situation. The result will be not only better support for the vulnerable person concerned but also for those who have been unwilling witnesses and for the artist who has had to deal with the crisis.

For historical reasons, community dance and community music in the UK have been well supported by professional membership organisations for more than 30 years. They reduce the isolation and vulnerability of individual artists, provide training, and develop practice in their fields. In other countries, and other fields of practice, the position of participatory artists is often more precarious. When they are freelance and underpaid, as many are, they struggle to find and pay for support themselves. Peer review may help mitigate this. In 2014, I worked on a pilot to explore how a process of guided reflection could provide some support to artists.[183] Among other things, we drew on the practice of supervision used by counsellors and psychotherapists as a model for mutual support within a peer group. The experience was positive and the method has been adopted by some artists, but it still depends on their own time and investment.

Professional artists making participatory work will continue to face undue risks and burdens until the institutions that commission their work accept more responsibility for supporting artists and the ethical and inter-personal dimensions of their practice. At present, they are concerned mainly with the social outcomes, artistic interest or political value of participatory art. Because there is a sufficient supply of artists willing to do the work, commissioners have set contractual conditions that expect high outputs at the lowest cost. They need to take more interest in how the work happens, how its effects occur and how the work will be sustained.

III

Where does participatory art come from?

KCAT Arts and Study Centre (2018)

7 Making history

it is noh mistri
wi mekin histri
it is noh mistri
wi winnin victri

Linton Kwesi Johnson[184]

The ideas outlined in the preceding chapters might seem novel, but their historical roots are much deeper than is often acknowledged. They are the latest expression of a struggle for cultural freedom pursued for centuries, alongside and in support of a much greater struggle for political emancipation that has achieved, despite the reverses of 20th century dictatorship, a gradual rise of democracy in Europe. The legitimisation of some forms of artistic creation, and the exclusion of others, can be seen as an effort to control culture's sense-making potential in that conflict. If this seems like a big claim, it is only necessary to consider the use made of art by successive structures of power—aristocracy, church, totalitarianism and commerce—to see its importance in sustaining some narratives and suppressing others. Indeed, the idea that universal participation in art is new and questionable is itself a narrative advanced by an established order resisting change. The history of participatory art is as long and as rich as the history of elite art, which it contests for being partial, not untrue. It is not necessary to reject Beethoven to celebrate the creativity of popular music. It is not art that is in opposition here, only the social interests that create it. People involved in participatory art stand on strong foundations. They add to a tradition whose artists may be less known but are not worth less. Participatory artists are not *arrivistes*,

overturning convention for personal advantage. They are democrats, building on the unselfish efforts of millions who have worked for centuries to make art truly available to everybody.

Part Three tells that history. It does so at greater length and in more detail than some readers might wish, but it seems necessary because the story is so neglected. However, I am a community artist, not a historian, and I'm conscious of the limitations of these chapters in that respect. My hope is that they will encourage others, better equipped than me, to follow this sketch with the substantial account this history deserves.

My account aims for objectivity and accuracy, but it is unavoidably partial in two connected ways. The first is that it is principally the history of participatory art in Britain, and more specifically, England, though the philosophical context is European. The justification for focusing on Britain is historical and practical. Britain was the first country to industrialise and so to create an urban working class with cultural aspirations that could be met, in part, through the new cultural products of industrialisation. Community and participatory art cannot be understood without reference to the invention of fine art in the late 18th century, the resistance to its exclusivity from the early 19th century onwards, and the social, technological and political changes of the 20th century. So Britain was also one of the places where the community art movement developed in the 1960s as the latest expression of cultural emancipation. Although it was part of a broader cultural revolution in Western societies (including the American Civil Rights movement and the 1968 protests in Europe) community art's emergence was facilitated in Britain by the art world's relative independence from the state.

The second and more pragmatic reason for telling this story from a British perspective is that it is the one I know. The emergence of community and participatory art is still an unwritten chapter in the history of art. What academic attention it has received has been mostly from a sociological or cultural policy perspective: historians have been largely silent on the subject.[185] The people involved, intent as they were on creating art and social change, have only recently begun to reflect on their experience.[186] Archives and memoirs are starting to appear, but they tend to be documentary rather than analytical. We are still at a stage where the testimony of witnesses is a

LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD

'Knife, Fork and Typewriter' was made by Simon Piercey in 1990, during a community art project in a large psychiatric hospital. The institution was closing, as national policy moved towards care in the community. Simon, and thousands of other hospital residents in Britain, were leaving places where some had lived for decades. The new life that awaited them was, to say the least, uncertain. For two years, East Midlands Shape (the organisation I led at the time) helped residents and service users respond artistically to this enormous life change. Writer, Rosie Cullen, and photographer, Ross Boyd, worked with them to create poetry, life writing and images that were published in two books and an exhibition.

The work was painstaking and intimate, almost always one-to-one. Fewer than 100 photographs were made, because the conversations and thought behind each one were so careful. In both texts and photographs, there were sensitive decisions about what to make public. The project took place in and around a hospital but it had no therapeutic intent. Its purpose was to empower people to express their feelings about life changes they were obliged to undergo in art. It was a conscious exercise in cultural democracy. When the exhibition was installed at the Department of Health in London, the voices of those affected by their decisions could be heard directly by policy-makers. And, because this is art, Simon Piercey's photograph speaks as eloquently today as it did when it was made.

THE LIGHT SHIPS

Transported is a Creative People and Places programme operating in the Lincolnshire fenlands, where much of England's food is grown. In 2014, they invited ideas for participatory art projects in a dozen villages. The communities were scattered and diverse, but they all had an ancient and beautiful church, although not many people regularly attended services. My proposal was to begin a conversation about the meaning of what was still a precious, shared space. For weeks, I sat with residents in the churches, and listened to what they said. People spoke about family, custodianship, social change, voluntary work, faith, culture, loss and much else. I photographed the people and the churches, remembering all those, like the photographer Edwin Smith, who had been here before me. Voices were gathered into an oral history of church and community in this distinctive, isolated land.

The book was launched as winter deepened, with celebrations in Gosberton, Whaplode and Wrangle, that also included an exhibition of local art, film screenings, poetry, bell ringing and an organ recital. The books are now on sale to visitors, raising a few more pounds for the unending task of conservation. These light ships are lasting expressions of a community's culture, cocreated over centuries by the people who live around them. Telling their story meant putting my craft in their service in search of truths they would recognise.

principal resource for anyone wanting to know how community art developed. This chapter is written from that perspective because, after a discussion of their historic roots, it describes events in which I participated or observed. But its focus is not on my own work, except with regard to social impact discourse in the late 1990s. Rather, I have sought to trace developments historically, while acknowledging that I do so from the perspective of someone who was an actor in some of the events.

This history could be told from different perspectives and about other events. The emergence of community art in Australia, the United States or France, the work of Paulo Freire and Augusto Boal in South America, and community theatre in postcolonial development, are other histories that should be told, but they belong to other people. The history presented here is one interpretation of what happened in one place. But I hope that, in mapping this territory, it also provides an approach and some landmarks that can help readers find ways through their own pasts.

It will be evident that my interpretation of the recent history of community art hinges on three dates at suspiciously neat 20 year intervals: the late 1960s, the late 1980s and the late 2000s. They look like turning points in the long argument between the art world's Purists and Democrats. The late 1960s saw the invention of community art in Britain. The late 1980s saw it adapt to survive in a neoliberal climate. The late 2000s saw it rise in societies under extreme pressure. These moments are marked by major historic crises—the cultural change of the Sixties, the fall of the Berlin Wall (1989) and the financial crash and recession (2007-08).

But there is also a human explanation for this cycle. Community art has been driven by the young, impatient with existing practice and hungry for change.[187] Their challenging energy makes cultural and political institutions defensive, so it is hard to earn a living as a community artist. Young people can go far on relatively little, especially when they share their resources, but as they get older and acquire dependents they need more security. In the late 1980s, many of the first generation of community artists moved on or adapted their practice. In doing so, they made way for a new generation of young artists, with their own formative experiences and ideas about practice. Generational change is not always so clear, but community

art had a strong starting point in the baby boomers and the 1960s. It can also be seen in countries where community art took off in the past 10-15 years. The young people leading that work have much in common with the first generation of British community artists. There is similar creative energy, ambition and commitment; there is hope and courage too. There is more freedom than security. With few organisational models or artistic precedents, these young artists are working out for themselves how to make art with people. They are making history and, in making it, they are rewriting the past and inventing possible futures.

8 Deep roots (before 1968)

People get ready, there's a train comin'
You don't need no baggage, you just get on board

Curtis Mayfield[188]

The invention of fine art

Many beliefs about art's nature, purpose and value are quite recent, historically speaking. They belong to the 18th century and the European Enlightenment, when new ideas about humanity, God and social relations arose in a context of industrialisation, revolution, colonialism, war, empire, nationalism and nascent modernity. They were developed by philosophers searching for alternative systems of meaning to religious faith. They are associated with ideas about the citizen, endowed with human rights protected by law, in a self-governing democracy emancipated from royal and ecclesiastical authority. It is in this revolutionary context that art came to be idealised as a self-aware, questioning and individual practice that equipped man—few Enlightenment philosophers thought about women, except women—to act autonomously. Its greatest embodiment and lasting symbol was Beethoven, the musician who used his own genius and the new economic conditions to free himself from the system of artistic patronage that had once literally imprisoned Bach.

It would be hard to overstate the importance of the new ideas about art that appeared during the late 18th century. They led to some of the greatest artistic achievements produced in any culture. They enabled and were influenced by Romanticism and then a succession

of other artistic movements, each engaged with the past and future of art itself. The new discourse between artists, philosophers and cultural institutions shaped the modern world, not least through a sometimes difficult relationship with its emerging consumer economy.

It also created a new distinction between the 'fine arts' valued by the wealthy elite and the lesser 'folk', 'popular' and 'commercial' art supposed to be enjoyed by everyone else. The history of participatory art can be seen as part of a long effort by the majority to regain control of their own artistic lives. In *The Invention of Art*, the philosopher Larry Shiner writes about artists, writers and others who formed a:

> Radical resistance to the deep divisions of the art system, sometimes on behalf of craft in the sense of functional or popular arts, sometimes on behalf of the older union of art and craft in the sense of trying to reintegrate art and society or art and life.[189]

This is not only a question of art. Cultural rights have been inseparable from civic and human rights since they were claimed during the American and French Revolutions.[190] In re-imagining art as an emancipatory practice Enlightenment thinkers linked it with the new universal human rights. If art is a path to development of the self—and therefore of the individual's capacity to play a full part in society—on what basis could access to that path be denied to any citizen?

Actually, that is not so hard if you have a limited view of who is a citizen. The Enlightenment saw citizens above all as male. *The Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen* was adopted by the French revolutionary assembly in 1789, but women had no vote in France until 1944. Enlightenment philosophers mostly believed that women lacked the capacity for both citizenship and art. Jean-Jacques Rousseau denied that women could possess genius because they always lacked 'the celestial fire that emblazons and ignites the soul, the inspiration that comes and devours', while Immanuel Kant, to whom we owe so many of our ideas about aesthetics, believed that 'if a woman did possess a vigorous mind, it would be against nature were she to express it publicly'.[191] Neither *The Declaration of the Rights of Woman and the Female Citizen* by Olympe de Gouges (1791) nor *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* by Mary Wollstonecraft (1792) had much effect on such ingrained, self-serving prejudice.

The disqualification of women from citizenship and artistic practice was the most obvious but not the only injustice embedded in Enlightenment thought. Indeed, rather than listing the disenfranchised, it is simpler to list those who could expect to enjoy fully the new 'universal' rights: white Christian men with property and education.[192] Unsurprisingly, most successful and recognized artists have also belonged to and served this social group although, since artistic talent is found in the whole population, others have broken through: Mary Shelley, J. M. W. Turner and the Chevalier de Saint Georges are among those who rose by their genius in the late 18th and early 19th centuries.

This intertwined history of artistic theory and political rights is an important narrative in its own right, but its particular relevance to participatory art is in showing that there has never been only one way of creating, experiencing and understanding art, or of thinking about its place in society. The dominant history of Western art, with its tales of individual genius and narrow standards of taste, is not fact. It is a version of events, and a questionable one at that. It has denied the legitimacy of artistic work that it does not control or benefit from. When denial became unsustainable, as in the case of photography and jazz, it has quietly assimilated new forms and ideas. Mostly, though, it has othered the artistic practices of large sections of society through labels such as craft, folk and entertainment, with the deliberate aim of devaluing their creative and sense-making power.[193] In these circumstances, it is not surprising to find a long tradition of resistance to the cultural hegemony of elites, expressed in claims for the value of other forms of artistic expression and in organised access to cultural education.

Pacification

Education is central to the Western concept of culture, a word rooted in the idea of *cultivating* knowledge, capacity and understanding. To be a cultured person is synonymous with being well-educated. Until the emergence of the modern nation state, access to culture was a private matter, available mainly to the few with time and money to devote to materially unproductive pursuits. The very rich might spend a year or two on the Grand Tour, visiting the high places of European art and shipping home crates of sculpture and paintings for display

in their palaces. Many of these treasures are now in public museums and galleries, where they are presented simply as culture—often through access programmes—rather than the taste of one social class and a moment in history. The idea of universalism, so important in human rights, is slippery when applied to cultural value.

The great majority of people, however, did not have the leisure to cultivate their taste in such costly ways. For them, access to culture meant acquiring the tunes, dances, crafts and tales in whose everyday living creativity a community's identity was held. In Derbyshire, among other things, they absorbed the art of well-dressing. They learned art by being part of the group or, if they showed particular aptitude, from an established maker or performer happy to pass on a tradition to its next custodian. Rural life, especially in winter, had time for such pleasures. The year had many religious holidays in pre-Reformation Europe, each with its own cultural manifestations, including the guild plays, pageants and processions that are one foundation of European drama. At such times, and in less formal gatherings, it was expected that everyone would contribute to the occasion and its rituals, as is still the custom in many cultures.

Access to culture became a public concern with industrialisation and the expansion of cities. The impulse came both from the bottom and the top of society, but with very different intentions. The Enlightenment idea of culture as 'the best which has been thought and said' (in Matthew Arnold's famous phrase) was becoming accepted across the classes, but they had very different motives for increasing access to that excellence. [194] In 19th century Britain, property owners, industrialists and politicians were fearful of large urban populations; the memory of the French Revolution was vivid. Some saw culture as a means to pacify or civilise their mistrusted employees. The Museums Act (1845) and the Libraries Act (1850) allowed local taxes to be raised for institutions that might draw people away from more volatile habits, such as drinking and debate. As the 19th century progressed, rich European cities endowed themselves with a cultural infrastructure of heroic proportions, its quasi-sacred architecture often inspired by medieval churches or the temples of ancient Greece and expressing cultural authority in every stone.

These buildings and their collections form such an important (and visible) part of today's heritage that other sides of Victorian cultural

WELFARE STATE INTERNATIONAL

Founded in 1968, Welfare State presented its final show in 2006. In the intervening years this fluid group of artists sought 'an Alternative, an Entertainment and a Way of Life'. They camped on a rubbish tip in Burnley, toured Britain in caravans, made a film with bikers, raised the Titanic, revived the lantern procession, burned the Houses of Parliament (in effigy) and played at barn dances, giving audiences ground-breaking, unforgettable experiences. Their poetic art was anarchic and political, with a passion for nature ahead of its time. It mined music hall and mystery plays, ritual and circus, popular culture and the avant-garde to create an aesthetic repertoire that electrified community art for two generations.

Welfare State is often described as a theatre company, but its members were mostly trained in other artforms. They learned by doing, searching only to create something meaningful with a particular community. Explorers themselves, they welcomed all who wanted to share in their journey. And those who did often left with a flame of inspiration that illuminated other companies, and other places. Creative generosity made Welfare State very influential artists. They preferred the edge to the mainstream. They abandoned spectacular outdoor performance when it became accepted and profitable. They worked in poor neighbourhoods, avoiding theatres and galleries. Above all, they created memories not monuments, convinced that a better future depends on empowering people to make their own art.

CHÓR POLIN

POLIN, the museum of the History of Polish Jews, opened in 2013 on the site of the Warsaw Ghetto. Its construction in such a space, and with such a purpose, was not simple. Poland's past and its meaning for today are sharply contested. The institution also needed to build a relationship with local residents and with the people of Warsaw and Poland. That has been done in several ways, including through participatory art.

The POLIN Choir is among the most ambitious and sustained of these initiatives. It was established in June 2014 by Ewa Chomicka, Head of POLIN's Laboratory of Museum Practices, to sing at the opening of the core exhibition. *Home* told the story of Jewish migration into Poland through texts and music from several traditions, woven into a powerful performance created with Sean Palmer and Kuba Pałys. Since then, the choir has developed new and more ambitious work, rooted in its members' own experience of xenophobic times. *Dialogue*, performed at POLIN in June 2016, saw an increasingly confident choir singing about refugees, flight and safety, making connections between recent wars in Poland and the current one in Syria. Not for the first time in POLIN's life, the results were controversial, especially on social media. The strength of those involved—artists, local people and institution—in standing for their values is as impressive as the quality of the art they make together.

philanthropy are easily overlooked. However, participatory programmes existed before the term was invented. In the years before the First World War, the Oxford and Bermondsey Shakespeare Society created annual productions with mostly illiterate boys in south London.[195] One report on their activities states that the participants' passion for drama:

> Lies in their keen enjoyment of the acting as a form of expression and legitimate self-display, and the intensely valuable training of the team spirit dictated by everyone merging his own wishes and convenience in the requirements of the whole cast—punctuality for rehearsals, thoroughness at dull spade work, striving for corporate effect rather than individual brilliance etc. In fact, the value of our yearly production (which I'm certain that is very great) is much the same as the value of a good football team–only it appeals to a rather different type of boy who would probably not be interested much in football.[196]

That was written a hundred years ago but, allowing for differences of tone, it could be a modern evaluation report about community theatre. Research into the social value of drama in prisons, factories and offices was also published in the 1920s and 1930s, proving not only that participatory art was happening then, but that there was serious concern about its educational and social value.[197]

Emancipation

> I do not want art for a few, any more than education for a few, or freedom for a few.
>
> **William Morris, 1877**[198]

Employers might hope to protect the existing social order by providing access to culture, but the working classes had other ideas. Many among them, especially the skilled workers who saw culture and education as paths to social mobility, were inspired by the prospect of emancipation through art, culture and education. Industrialisation was transforming the means and economics of cultural production, bringing books, prints, ceramics, musical instruments, fabrics and other applied arts within many people's reach. Aspirational working people pooled meagre resources to create libraries, institutes and as-

sociations under their own control. Amateur choirs and orchestras flourished, and drama groups performed the classics of world theatre. In Victorian Huddersfield, 15% of young men belonged to a Mechanics' Institute, while in the village of Ripley one in five inhabitants attended an institution that met in a hay loft.[199]

In these ways, working people invented approaches to mutuality that have shaped amateur art and adult education ever since. They also showed culture's potential in political activism. Cultural institutions gave working men and women access to more than books and classes. They were forums in which to voice opinions about current issues. These self-help organisations were engines of what might today be called peer learning or consciousness raising. Manual workers gained organisational skills in establishing and managing them, while amateur dramatics help a person become an effective public speaker. Most surprisingly, at a time when a married woman could not own property, many of these societies welcomed both sexes and encouraged them to mix. The 19th century libraries, institutes and associations created by and for working people showed that access to culture could be individually and collectively empowering.

The Salford Lyceum, in a town close to Manchester that then had an estimated population of 40,000, is representative of such bodies.[200] It opened in January 1839 and aimed:

> To provide a system of juvenile and adult education for both sexes of the most numerous portion of the community, and to extend more widely the taste and means for moral and intellectual cultivation.[201]

Within a year the Lyceum had 2,017 members, including 167 boys and women, each paying eight shillings a year. In their first Financial Statement, for 1839-40, the directors reported a small surplus on a total expenditure of £500, and expressed their confidence in the power of collective action:

> The subscription, under judicious management, will, to a very great extent meet the current expenditure, although to do this the union of large numbers is indispensably necessary. [202]

It had a library of 1,500 volumes, with about 400 in circulation at any time, a news room supplied with journals 'of all political opinions', and held regular concerts, musical meetings and social events:

> The following classes for males were in operation: reading, arithmetic, writing, grammar, geography, elocution. Classes were also held for females in arithmetic, sewing, and embroidery. Classes for vocal and instrumental music met every week. An essay and discussion society held its meeting each alternate Thursday. The directors held several tea parties; the amusements consisted of glees, songs, recitations, musical promenades, accompanied by an instrumental band. During the year, 32 lectures were delivered on various subjects, as astronomy, oratory, comic literature and ballads, geology, natural theology, anatomy; 21 of these lectures were given gratuitously.[203]

Salford Lyceum was educational, informative and enjoyable, just as the BBC would aspire to be in the next century. It was also empowering. In 1843, Robert Lowes, a warehouseman and Lyceum member, led a successful campaign to persuade Manchester industrialists to give workers time off on Saturday afternoons, as well as Sundays. His success established a precedent that was widely followed. One of his arguments was that working people would be able to use the time for educational and cultural activities. We may have Robert Lowes to thank for the tradition of Saturday afternoon football matches.[204]

This flourishing intellectual and cultural life was not unique to Britain. Comparable efforts at self-improvement were being made across and beyond Europe.[205] When most of the world was ruled by empires, national consciousness could be more safely expressed in culture than politics. In Bulgaria, the distinctive library and cultural club known as *chitalishte*, (of which there are more than 3,000 today) emerged as an independent democratic movement under Ottoman rule. It highlights again the emancipatory intent of working people's cultural action during the period. There was a close connection between reading novels and thinking about social issues, between amateur drama and public speaking, between self-organisation and political organisation. The cultural empowerment of British working people was an important factor in the Labour movement. It was not only individuals who were transformed by access to art. It was the fabric of industrial society. Anyone who doubts the change potential of community art should consider the history of working class cultural life in the past two centuries.

The cultural legacy of total war

> 'Early community arts practitioners were very conscious of drawing on radical arts history and of using this history both as inspiration and practical source of information. We did not suffer from collective amnesia.'
>
> **Gerri Moriarty, 2014**[206]

Two centuries of work by those at the top and at the bottom of society have created a double legacy for access to the arts. European societies have been endowed with great assets including museums, concert halls and libraries, systems of universal education, public service broadcasters like the BBC, and the amateur associations that introduce millions of young people to artistic practice. Less tangible, but equally important, are the beliefs, attitudes, precedents and habits that shape how these resources are managed and used. Together they now form a vast landscape of opportunities to discover art.

Access may be offered in prescriptive or permissive ways; it may be formally or loosely organised; it may be passive or participatory; but it is always in the belief that art and culture are good for us. If cultural philanthropists practised the access policies of their time, working people, in bodies like the Salford Lyceum, were inventing cultural democracy before the name. Both worked towards versions of social progress in their cultural activity. Language changes but there is remarkable continuity in our ideas about the role and value of culture. As Eleonora Belfiore and Oliver Bennett say in their intellectual history of the social impact of the arts:

> Instrumentalism is, as a matter of fact, 2500 years old, rather than a degeneration brought about by contemporary funding regimes.[207]

This long history feeds the roots of participatory art, which continues to resist the idea of art as a sacred domain that needs protecting from everyday concerns. But before turning to recent history, it is necessary to sketch the world from which it came and against which it reacted—the catastrophe of total war in the 1940s and the moral and cultural reconstruction of the 1950s. The young people who created community art in 1960s Britain were born during those years. They benefited directly from the new public culture and welfare services of the post-war period. They accepted its progressive values and tried to advance

them through a socially-engaged, sometimes political practice of art. The generation that followed them reacted against this idealism and sought to mark the difference by calling their work participatory art.[208] But none of these developments would have happened as they did without the war and the welfare state created to heal its wounds, both of which profoundly changed European culture.

The Second World War required the mobilisation of whole societies. For the first time, the mass media—especially radio, press and cinema—was used by governments for ideological purposes. In Britain, which had not faced major social unrest during the pre-war years and fought to defend democratic freedoms, it served the national purpose to support the arts with minimal interference. The War Artists' Advisory Committee was established to produce work reflecting British identity and values. More than 300 artists were commissioned to document life on the home front, buildings at risk and military operations; several, including Eric Ravilious, were killed while on WAAC commissions.

Their work had a humanism and aesthetic originality that distinguishes it from the bombast of contemporary Fascist and Communist art.[209] Some, such as Stanley Spencer's paintings of Clydeside shipbuilders, had a direct influence on community artists a generation later. In Britain, wartime art looked for heroism in ordinary people, and the results were exhibited to equally ordinary people by bodies like the British Institute of Adult Education.[210] Visionary publishers like Victor Gollancz and Allen Lane (Penguin) expanded the market with cheap editions of good books. The principles of adult education were applied to the services by W. E. Williams at the Army Bureau of Current Affairs.[211] The performing arts were supported by the BBC, a new Council for Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) and the Entertainments National Service Association (ENSA), all tasked with sustaining morale by catering to the population's wide range of tastes.[212] Many people's experience of the war was coloured by these concerts and broadcasts, which forged a more democratic culture in which state, cultural institutions, business and citizens all began to feel they had some ownership.

A welfare state

It is remarkable that during this national crisis the British government was working on a new social contract to eradicate 'squalor, ignorance, want, idleness, and disease'.[213] The Beveridge Report, published in 1942 with the war's outcome still in balance, laid the foundation of a welfare state that would give universal access to health care, social security, employment and education. A new interest in culture, nurtured by the BBC, CEMA and ENSA, commercial publishers, cinema and adult education, saw an exceptional growth in people's engagement in the arts and education during the post-war decade.[214] In 1946, a new Penguin translation of Homer outsold Agatha Christie, while in 1952 a paperback on the Hittite civilisation sold 50,000 copies in three months.[215] Allen Lane of Penguin Books was one of many in government, business and civil society who believed in:

> The notion of the 'New Jerusalem' that was to arise from the ashes of war, a happier, healthier and more egalitarian society in which universal education would create both greater practical advantages and more refined tastes, with a keener intellectual curiosity.[216]

The fine arts and their 'more refined tastes' took an important place in the project. The BBC's first director, John Reith, had wanted the corporation to 'offer the public something better than it now likes'.[217] In 1946, his vision was fulfilled by the creation of the Third Programme, an alternative to the Light Programme so highbrow that its opening broadcast included an almost postmodern self-parody entitled 'How to Listen, including how not to, how you ought to, and how you won't'.[218] Although it never attracted large numbers of listeners, the Third's mix of classical music, world theatre and academic lectures brought great art to millions with no other access to that culture. Many of those who would form Britain's cultural elite in the second half of the 20th century discovered their vocation in this lush and free alternative to the meagreness of post-war austerity.

In 1946 CEMA became the Arts Council of Great Britain and state funding was given to the arts for the first time consistently, permanently and as a matter of policy.[219] ENSA, whose workplace concerts had drawn on music hall and variety, was abolished by the Ministry of Labour in 1945. Some of the performers employed during wartime

FESTIVAL DE MÚSICA DE SETÚBAL

In 2010, when the mayor of Setúbal was approached about starting a music festival, she was dealing with the fallout of the financial crisis. This industrial city on Portugal's Atlantic coast was struggling to provide basic services and though there were no funds, the council offered help through its staff, venues and schools. The organisers turned weakness into strength. The festival would be rooted in Setúbal's natural riches and the musical diversity of its people. With support from a charitable trust and a director experienced in community music, the festival focused on voice and percussion, recycling rubbish for instruments. Today, they can count on up to 1,000 professional and non-professional musicians in the opening parade. Singing is the other cornerstone, with hundreds of children learning to compose and perform their own songs, sometimes in concerts with classical artists.

In 2014, the festival created the Ensemble Juvenil de Setúbal, which includes music students, disabled people and local musicians, and creates a new language from European, Latin American and African traditions. The Ensemble adapts existing pieces to its unique palette, stretching the form in new directions. It has played at the festival and in Lisbon, and is now the city's official youth orchestra. The Festival has brought joy to thousands of young people and made Setúbal proud. It invites the best visiting artists it can afford—but only if they share local people's excitement in exploring the city's characterful musical flavours.

WE'RE HERE BECAUSE WE'RE HERE

Early on the morning of 1 July 2016, commuters in London, Glasgow, Sheffield and other British cities were surprised by small groups of soldiers passing among them. Unarmed, in the uniform of Tommies, they sat waiting, or walked in file. They were silent. Anyone who spoke to them received a small white card on which was printed a name, rank and regiment. Beneath, were the words 'Died at the Somme on 1st July 1916'. Merging performance art and social ritual, *We're here because we're here* was conceived by Jeremy Deller for 14-18 Now, an arts programme marking the centenary of the First World War. It was developed with Rufus Norris, Director of the National Theatre, produced by 25 theatres and arts organisations, and involved 1600 professional and non-professional artists.

For months, volunteers had learned about the lives of the soldiers they were representing and rehearsed for their performance, while keeping a secret that was only revealed to the media on the evening of the day itself. The soldiers were present in 42 locations, from Shetland to Southampton, but they were seen by millions through broadcasting and especially social media, where countless photographs were shared. In blurring boundaries between art and life, *We're here because we're here* suggests how new technology might open new possibilities for participatory creation.

went on to make successful radio and television careers, among them Spike Milligan, Harry Secombe and Peter Sellers whose 'Goon Show' on BBC Radio was a 1950s foretaste of the youth challenge to come. The demise of ENSA was met with satisfaction by staff of CEMA now setting up the Arts Council, with its high-minded vision. Increasing access to the arts was central to the organisation's mission of:

> Developing a greater knowledge, understanding and practice of the fine arts exclusively, and in particular to increase the accessibility of the fine arts to the public throughout Our Realm[220]

Despite subsequent amendments—in an important symbolic change, the words 'the fine arts exclusively' were replaced by 'the arts' in 1967—this remains the Arts Council's purpose, expressed in its current mission statement 'Great art and culture for everyone.'[221]

The welfare state transformed the lives of British working people during the 1940s and 1950s, bringing them new quality of life, including more, better and cheaper cultural provision. But the idea that people could participate in creating art, or that working people's own culture was worthwhile, remained marginal to cultural policy. Amateur theatre companies thrived, as they had for decades, but the Arts Council had no taste or funds for them.[222] Even within the 'fine arts' there were plenty who shared Herbert Read's discomfort in a world with 'little liberty, no equality, and only the fraternity of the barrack room'.[223] By the mid 1950s, some of that discontent was being expressed by young writers like John Osborne and Kingsley Amis, though it would later become clear that their revolt was conservative.[224] It was from the left that the new voices and ideas prefiguring community art were heard.

Among them were pioneers of participation, such as Joan Littlewood, who in 1953 brought Theatre Workshop to the war-shattered slums of East London, and Arnold Wesker, who set up Centre 42 in 1960, first to run regional arts festivals and then as a popular art centre in the Roundhouse, a disused train shed in North London: [225]

> Centre Forty-two will be a cultural hub, which, by its approach and work, will destroy the mystique and snobbery associated with the arts… where the artist is brought in closer contact with his audience, enabling the public to see that artistic activity is part of their daily lives[226]

To this idealism, the Secretary General of the Arts Council—the same W. E. Williams who had done so much for adult education during the war—responded with an article in the *Daily Telegraph* entitled 'Art is for a Minority'.[227] The cultural battle lines of the 1960s were drawn.

Arnold Wesker and Joan Littlewood were artists and socialists who saw art as a human right and as a means of education and consciousness-raising.[228] In this, they and their allies built on the legacy of Robert Lowes, the Salford Lyceum, Ripley Institute and every cultural initiative that aimed to recover art as a part of everyday life with emancipatory possibilities. That struggle had been fought uphill since the beginning of the 19th century. Its aspirations would shortly explode in the cultural revolution of the 1960s and the innovations of community art.

9 Community art and the cultural revolution (1968 to 1988)

Got my hand on the freedom plow
Wouldn't take nothing for my journey now
Keep your eyes on the prize, hold on

Mavis Staples[229]

Hopes and failures of a movement

In late-1960s Britain, the young people who created what they called community art saw themselves as a 'movement'. That says something about their vision and ambition, but it is too simple to take the word at face value. Like other artistic movements, community art was more like a flag to which people rallied than a coherent theory or programme. People came to it for their own reasons, not always acknowledged or understood. They sometimes had little more in common than being in the same place at the same time, and seeing in art a way to challenge orthodoxy. Whatever else community artists achieved, they never agreed a shared idea of community art.

Their project was political in the sense that it rested on ideas about society and how it might be better. Specifically, the community art movement rejected what they saw as an elitist art world that had no interest in, and meant nothing to, most people. Some argued that the capitalist art system sustained widespread inequities of power and

social justice. A minority believed that putting the means of cultural production into the hands of working people was a revolutionary act that would raise consciousness and contribute to the overthrow of capitalism. Such an ideological spectrum is common in progressive politics, and community art was firmly on the left in 1970s Britain. But it could never be more than a loose alliance. Indeed how broad that alliance should be, and whose work it should include, was central to the philosophical arguments that flared when community artists met. The stricter voices condemned those who did not agree with them for lacking courage and theoretical discipline. They, in turn, were criticised for rigidity and for not listening to the people the movement professed to serve. The debate shaped the community art movement for 20 years and, at its best, it brought energy and integrity to its thinking.[230] As community artist Sally Morgan wrote in the 1990s:

> Critiques of community arts tend to dwell on the extremes. Some have pointed the finger at the 'naïve pragmatists', others railed against 'naïve politicos'. In my opinion the strength of the movement lay in the continual tension between these two wings.[231]

The radical position was set out by another community artist, Owen Kelly, in his influential book, *Storming the Citadels, Community, Art and the State* (1984):

> The role of community artists within this wider struggle is threefold. Firstly, we must engage in projects which explore alternative models of cultural production, distribution and reception. Secondly, we must maintain a clear analysis of what we have done, and what we are doing, and the ways that it fits into a revolutionary programme aimed at the establishment of cultural democracy. Thirdly, we must persuade others to join with us in a series of widening alliances that can encompass capitalism and its systemic oppressions.[232]

The publication of *Storming the Citadels* coincided with a political struggle whose outcome would define Britain for the next 30 years. In March 1984 the National Union of Mineworkers began a strike against pit closures that brought hardship, civil unrest and bitter division.[233] When the strike ended a year later, organised opposition to the government's policy of deindustrialisation and privatisation all but ended too. Not long after, the Soviet Union began its slow dis-

integration and the ascendancy of neoliberal economic and social politics seemed assured. In July 1986, the Association for Community Artists gathered in Sheffield to debate *Culture and Democracy*, a new manifesto close to the ideas of *Storming the Citadels*.[234] Members disagreed both about the substance and how the manifesto had been produced and presented for adoption. Meetings were convened and solutions proposed but the resolutions eventually passed put the Association in breach of its own constitution. The following year it folded and with it the idea of community art as a movement with a national voice.

Culture and Democracy looks innocuous today. The text is long, theoretical and has few concrete proposals, but its ideas do not seem very controversial today, a further a sign of participatory art's normalisation. But the problem was not really the manifesto. The movement was exhausted, angry and disillusioned after 20 years of struggling for recognition. In 1986, its ideals were out of step with changes in British society. Mines, steelworks, shipyards and factories had been closing for years. Cities were losing industries that had once defined their social fabric and culture. Monetarism was the new orthodoxy. In Sheffield, a group of artists who had dreamed of changing the world saw that it had indeed changed—but not as they had hoped. Three months later, government deregulation of financial services would cement economic globalisation (and create the conditions for the 2007-08 financial collapse). In such a world, it is not surprising if artists who had grown up in a progressive welfare state should ask themselves what they were doing and what community art was for.

The development of an art form

This version of British community art's radical failure has become orthodoxy since 1986, insofar as those events are discussed at all.[235] There is truth in it, but its simplicity is misleading. There is another history, more complex and better at explaining why, if community art lost in 1986, it went on to win under the banner of participatory art. So let's return to the late 1960s and look at community art's development not through its theories but its practice. From this perspective, the field looks less like an ideological spectrum than a number of loose groupings—'friends and allies' in a phrase of the time—de-

fined by the social background, education, friendships, artistic vision, locations and the personal lives of those involved.[236]

The best contemporary picture of that world comes from a book by Su Braden. She had worked on Pavilions in the Parks, a programme to show art 'where people naturally take their leisure', but was dissatisfied by an approach that left unchallenged 'the assumptions generally held by both 'artists' and 'non-artists' about their respective roles'.[237] Exchanging cultural democratisation for cultural democracy, she co-founded Walworth and Aylesbury Community Art Trust in London. Her 1978 book, *Artists and People,* gives an overview of the various ways in which artist were making new social roles for their work. As she writes in the opening pages:

> The essential nature of art is in question in the 1970s. Concern for the separation of art and artists from the rest of society, expressed by a growing concentration on new ways of putting art and artists back into social contexts, may be seen as the stamp of this decade.[238]

Her insight has proved true, not just for that decade but for the entire period since she wrote it. It was an idea shared by many young graduates who rejected the art world's monetary and political values, but not necessarily its aesthetic and theoretical ideas. Ken Turner, a co-founder in 1968 of Action Space, describes his work today as:

> 'A response, an immediate response, to the gallery system, to conventional ideas, to institutions, and I had to get out of all those things that were constricting.' [239]

John Fox, who co-founded Welfare State International in Bradford the same year, recalls that:

> 'In 1968, there were a lot of counter-cultural students, stroppy and excited about getting art, whatever it was, out of middle-class situations, out of the theatres and into the streets. It was all heavily influenced by the Situationists, by Marcuse, by the Hornsey School strike and by Paris. You felt you were part of this and at Bradford College there was this immensely volatile, anarchic, creative hub, and everybody was into some sort of social action.' [240]

In the late 1960s, many young artists were forming groups with art college friends and like-minded allies. Some, like Free Form and Ac-

X-CHURCH

In 2006, when he saw St John the Divine up for sale, Marcus Hammond imagined the redundant church as a space for contemporary art. A huge, half-finished slum-gothic hall in the most deprived part of Gainsborough, it seemed a good project for an artist who had already converted a former warehouse into studios and a gallery. But in this community were people who'd lived beside the church for decades, and who had a claim on it that went beyond ownership.

So began a long journey, as Marcus Hammond, local residents and a growing network of others with something to give, got to know and understand one another. There was no plan, and no funding, except a grant to turn the parish room into a café. Now open daily (except, ironically, on Sundays) it is run by volunteers, and provides free meals on Saturdays to anyone in need. The only principle seems to have been mutual respect and a desire to say yes to whatever was asked or offered. Band rehearsals, health groups, dance sessions, resident curators, youth nights, a writers group, wrestling, table-top sales and contemporary art exhibitions rub shoulders in a space that belongs only to everyone. Against the odds, x-church has become the community space the area so badly needed, a maverick, independent wonder. And it has made a meaningful place for art in it all.

CAFÉ STORIES

In 2013 public space in Egypt was tense. In July, a coup d'état ended the presidency of Mohammed Morsi and security forces were everywhere. It was not an obvious time to present an impromptu dance performance in a working class café, but for Hatem Hassan Salama that context made it vital to protect space for sympathetic encounters. In his show, a dancer, a musician and a storyteller imagined how stories were told in the days before language. It offered spectacle, humour and fantasy, but also tested conventions. The event was planned with the café owners, but not advertised or announced because Salama wanted an audience of regulars. He hoped the show would spark conversation and it did. In the cafés where it was presented about 50 men, young and old, stayed to debate art and its place in social life. The talk ran on for more than two hours. Insecurity and a curfew brought the project to a premature end, but for a moment, the artists had made space to meet and exchange respectfully.

Hatem now lives in Berlin, where he works on a cultural exchange programme between Europe and the Arab world. That is not easy, but his experience in Alexandria makes him confident about his fellow-citizens' hunger to participate: *'The strongest thing I got out of this is that people do have the energy,'* he told me. *'They are very starving to have access to culture, and they are willing to invest their energy to make it happen.'*

tion Space, adapted the aesthetic language of post-war Western art—abstraction, performance and conceptualism—to temporary work on housing estates.[241] Others, including the painters who formed mural workshops in Wandsworth, Greenwich and elsewhere, drew inspiration from Mexican muralism and artists such as Edward Burra and Stanley Spencer to forge an accessible, narrative style capable of expressing political ideas. The artists who established Paddington Printshop, See Red, Interchange and other community printshops raided visual sources as varied as constructivism, playbills, rock music graphics and the posters produced in Paris during May 1968.

Projects used photography in their work, but there were also specialist documentary photographers and filmmakers, such as Amber Collective in Newcastle. They were passionate about recognising working class culture, through their own work, through commissioning and through novel forms of co-creation with the people whose lives they documented. They wanted to reach large audiences, including on television, but not if that meant compromising their political and artistic vision. Amber continues today, still working as a collective and still holding to its values.

Innovative technologies inspired the first video workshops, including Mediumwave (which counted Owen Kelly as a member), the Basement Project, and the Social Arts Trust, which in 1982 ran a short-lived community television project in Gateshead. Like other community artists, video makers sought an aesthetic language that would distance their work from commercial product and formally embed the culture of its makers.[242]

Plastics and vinyl enabled the construction of inflatable structures by Action Space, Inter Action and others. Brightly coloured and mobile, they attracted attention and occupied a usefully ambiguous territory between sculpture and play object. Play itself became a creative concern, nourished by the post-war adventure playground movement and by more playful approaches to art. There were simpler reasons too for community artists' interest in play. Children with curiosity, energy and time on their hands were a natural audience for young artists, and helped draw in parents wary of anything 'arty'. Some artists, with young children of their own, were interested both in play and inclusive models of work that involved people of all ages. Su Braden contrasted the very masculine results of the art world's at-

tempts at outreach with 'the more organic development of the Community Arts movement, which has resulted from at least equal numbers of female initiatives'.[243] In the early days of contemporary feminism, that made a profound, though underestimated, difference to what work was done and how.

In all the diversity of their ideas and practice, community artists shared a common purpose of creating innovative, exciting art. But they struggled to communicate that to cultural institutions and local authorities who assumed, on the basis of where and with whom they worked, that their motivation was social. This institutional focus on social objectives already clear in how people saw Free Form's first projects in 1969 and 1970:

> It is significant that, as early as these first events, it was often the projects' promised social benefits, rather than their purely artistic value, that were attractive to funders. In other words, it was the artists' potential expertise in addressing social problems, rather than their specific artistic skills, that made their projects fundable.[244]

The idea that art can have a social or an aesthetic purpose but not both limits some people's understanding of participatory art today.

Theatre and community art

Theatre's common ground with community art was ambiguous.[245] The performing arts have their own culture and economy, shaped by collective work and live presentation, but in the 1960s, British theatre makers were as concerned as other artists to rethink their relationship with society.[246] In 1953, after years of agitprop in northern England, Joan Littlewood moved to the Theatre Royal in Stratford East (London), where she sought to make art part of local working class life. Although she struggled for official support, her political and aesthetic ideas influenced other theatre makers and community artists. Few had a venue like Littlewood, and those who wanted to reach different audiences often toured community halls, schools and the new arts centres. In 1980, Naseem Khan described current thinking about community theatre:

> The defining characteristic of community theatre is 'participation'. This can […] take two broadly different directions—one in which the artist participates much more fully in his/her local community; the other in which the community participates much more fully in the creation of art.[247]

Joan Littlewood had straightforward ways of participating in her local community. Others had to be more inventive. Alternative theatre companies, such as 7:84, Gay Sweatshop or the feminist Red Ladder, imagined community not as place but as a consciousness of shared identity or interest, an idea that would become increasingly influential in the latter part of the 20th century.

In Scotland, John McGrath's 7:84 company was concerned with national identity and socialism.His 1973 play, *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, used the format of the traditional *ceilidh* and was performed in village halls across the Highlands, before being broadcast by the BBC. The play touched many people's sense of cultural identity, but it was also important in showing how theatre makers could 'participate much more fully in their local community'. McGrath's use of the ceilidh format and interest in people's everyday concerns created a play that spoke to communities marginalised by the metropolitan theatre world.It was a model that would influence the practice of many theatre companies and contribute to the innovations of the rural touring sector in the 1980s.

But it was those who invited the community to make theatre with them who had most in common with community artists. They drew on a long tradition of people's theatre, including pageants, amateur drama and even the biblical plays of craft guilds. This kind of community theatre found new energy and forms during the 1970s. Rooted in place and memory, it was less polemical than 7:84 or Red Ladder, which made political theatre for and about (though not necessarily with) communities of identity. For that reason community plays have been seen as 'aesthetically unadventurous and ideologically reticent'.[248] Ann Jellicoe, then the best-known producer of community plays, did avoid politics in her work, which she created in a comfortably conservative part of rural Dorset. Writing in 1986, at about the same time as the Sheffield conference, she argued that:

> If we set out to challenge the basic political feelings of the communities we serve, we will alienate large sections of them and lose their support. […] Politics are divisive. We strongly feel that the humanising effect of our work is far more productive than stirring up political confrontation.[249]

For some, then and now, this is self-serving, liberal compromise. But that is too simple. Democracy is nurtured in many ways, and politics is more than polemic, as John McGrath understood:

> Theatre is, or can be, the most public, the most clearly political of the art forms. Theatre is the place where the life of society is shown in public to that society, where that society's assumptions are exhibited and tested, its values are scrutinised, its myths are validated and its traumas become emblems of its reality.[250]

Between the poles of Kelly's radicalism and Jellicoe's refusal was a territory large enough to accommodate many ideological positions and artistic practices. That was—and is—possible because the people who make community art have equally diverse ideas, and good art comes equally from their common ground and their disagreements. Their work is often political in McGrath's sense because it enacts values in the processes of co-creation—not least a belief in community—and makes the intangible public and therefore debatable. It is the essence of democratic social life.

The community plays developed in Milton Keynes from 1974 by Roy Nevitt, Roger Kitchen and others are typical of community theatre in these years. Kitchen was a community development worker and Nevitt a drama teacher both working in Milton Keynes, a new town built to answer England's post-war housing shortage. This was a community in formation, whose population would grow from 40,000 in 1967 to 255,000 in 2016.[251] It combined the inhabitants of existing settlements with people from London and elsewhere. In this context, Kitchen saw oral history as a way to open public conversations and dispel the idea that a new town has no past. Nevitt, who taught at Stantonbury Campus school, had set up a community drama group with a focus on documentary work and it was natural to combine forces. They also had the support of Inter-Action MK, an offshoot of the London organisation, which was one of several community art projects set up during the 1970s in British new towns.

The annual community plays at Stantonbury are less well-known than those of Ann Jellicoe but they began earlier and continued longer, growing with the town whose evolving story they told. If the influence of Littlewood's *Oh! What A Lovely War* (1963) was discernible in the artistic form of these musical plays, their stories were celebratory rather than satirical. The second production, *All Change*, established a method of research into local history. The subject was the arrival of the railway industry in 1836 and its parallels with the new town then being built. The drama group outlined its hopes for the play in an early proposal:

> Could our group, we wondered, by an honest and imaginative exploration of the facts of the first great change, help people to find meaning in their experience of the present day one? [252]

This is not an obviously political subject. It is not *A Woman's Work is Never Done* (Red Ladder, 1973) or even *The Cheviot, The Stag and the Black, Black Oil*. But the intention expressed in the *All Change* proposal is absolutely political in McGrath's sense of being 'where the life of society is shown in public'. The community theatre made in Milton Keynes enabled people living in a rapidly-changing town to discover their own and each other's history, to develop common ownership of past and place, and to do both in collective, artistic work that made public their ideas. It also helped them acquire new skills and knowledge, build confidence and social contacts, think, imagine, be creative and express their ideas, and be recognised for their achievement. Opening these pathways to empowerment is itself a political act. At the time, some believed that art which took overtly political form was the most powerful expression of community action. It certainly could be, as the best of the work showed. In 1975, Carol Kenna and Steve Lobb of Greenwich Mural workshop painted a mural with residents of Floyd Road, in South London, who were campaigning to save their street from redevelopment. The mural and, more importantly, the houses are still there, one example among hundreds that illustrate the political potential of community art in the first generation. However, without inclusive democratic debate and the emancipatory processes of Boal and Freire, political work risked preaching to the choir rather than changing minds.

The community plays at Stantonbury were sustained for many years. In 1984 they led to the creation of the Living Archive, an oral history project which continues today, as do the Stantonbury Drama Group and Inter-Action MK. Every community art project is different, shaped by particularities of people and place, but the work done over 40 years in Milton Keynes is characteristic of the first generation of community art in Britain—creative, humanist and resilient. It does not appear in books about British post-war art or theatre because it is not concerned with the kind of aesthetic innovation valued by art history. Its innovation was in how art was being made, by whom, and with what intention. Its value is in its continuing presence over decades in thousands of people's lives.

That continuity can be found across Britain. When I moved to Nottinghamshire in 1982, I joined the East Midlands Association for Community Arts. The association has long gone, but many of its members are still at work, including City Arts, Soft Touch, Junction Arts, Corby Community Arts and Charnwood Arts. The same is true elsewhere: Community Arts North West (Manchester), London Print Studio, Mid Pennine Arts (Burnley), The Nerve Centre (Derry/Londonderry) and Valley and Vale Community Arts (Bridgend) are just a few of the groups that have survived since the 1970s through changes of staff, location and even name. It is not unusual to see them celebrate their 40th and 50th anniversaries, with exhibitions, events and online archives tracing the evolution of their work.

The resilience of these organisations and of individuals who have dedicated their lives to participatory work, deserves respect in human terms, but it also testifies to the vitality of their practice and the demand for it among the communities with which they work. Programmes and priorities have changed with local concerns, the strengths of the arts workers, the available resources, and the times themselves. But these projects have also helped millions find new life chances through new skills, confidence and social networks. They have contributed to wider change because they have changed lives, and they have changed too in the process. Always on the margins, their survival may be their most profound political act.

10 Participatory art and appropriation (1988 to 2008)

> One good thing about music, when it hits you feel no pain
> One good thing about music, when it hits you feel no pain
> So hit me with music, hit me with music now
>
> **Bob Marley**[253]

From community art to participatory art

The winding up of the Association of Community Artists in 1987 marked the end of community art as a movement. There were no more national conferences and the association's magazine, *Another Standard*, ceased publication.[254] But ideological differences had obscured the deeper problems. The Arts Council had passed responsibility for community art to Regional Arts Associations which had far fewer resources and would eventually be wound up anyway.[255] The metropolitan authorities were abolished in 1986, and with them went their generous funding of community arts in London, Manchester, Glasgow and elsewhere. In 1988, the Community Programme which provided employment opportunities for unemployed people (including many young community artists) was wound up. East Midlands Shape, who worked with disabled people, had to close a programme in Derby's hospitals that had employed 20 young artists. One by one, it seemed, the old doors were closing.

By the late 1980s, the shift in British politics seemed irreversible. Deindustrialisation, privatisation of social housing and the marketization of public services were transforming the places where community artists worked, making their activity at once more necessary and more fragile. Monetary policy was fuelling a consumer boom and the cultural economy was expanding. However, the Arts Council's grant-in-aid reduced steadily during the 1980s and it was told by government to seek business sponsorship instead. The organisation began to adopt economic arguments in its own reports (*A Great British Success Story*, 1985) and commissioned research to show that culture had a value, not just a price (*The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain*, 1988).[256]

Community artists were out of place in this monetarist culture. Their ideas of empowerment, cultural diversity and social justice were rooted in another politics. The 1990s were the most precarious period community artists in Britain had yet faced and some decided to move on. Now in their thirties and forties, many of the pioneers had young families and needed more stability. Some took jobs in arts management, education or local government. Others, disappointed by the political turn, left the arts altogether.

Those who stayed dug in and thought hard about where to stand in this new world. Welfare State International had grown from a street theatre group to a professional company doing spectacular outdoor shows with giant puppets, music and pyrotechnics. When 15,000 people came to see a show in South London, the company saw that they were in danger of becoming purveyors of spectacle. In 1985 they settled permanently in Ulverston to concentrate on work in and with the communities of south Cumbria. In Newcastle, Amber were finding it hard to sell their films in a more commercial TV market. Documentary photography was not fashionable, and they lost Arts Council funding for their gallery. But the collective stuck to its principles and, like Welfare State, renewed its commitment to relationships with the people marginalised by socio-economic change.

For many community art groups, the experimentation of the 1970s gave way to methods and projects that could be relied on to produce results demanded by the diminishing pool of funders. As Kate Crehan says of one London group:

MORE MUSIC

In an old billiard hall a few hundred yards from the Morecambe seafront, people are busily making music. There is a class of children in a singing workshop, a drummer in a practice room, a band rehearsing. In the hall upstairs, there's a sound check for a gig. Everywhere the daily business of running an independent community music centre goes on—a few staff, some freelance tutors and a great crowd of willing volunteers. Pete Moser founded More Music in 1993 after years as musician with Welfare State. He started with little more than experience, energy and commitment to this down-at-heel holiday town on the Lancashire coast. He was familiar as a one-man band, banging and flapping down the street like a modern pied piper. He still uses the kit, in schools and community centres, to show that music is about joy, laughter and sharing meaningful sound.

In 2018, Pete retired and More Music is moving forward under a new director, always at the heart of local life, a place of friendship, creativity, and fun. It has helped countless young people find a direction, and offered mutual support in times of need. Its Baybeat street band, kite festival and lantern parade make the most of the seaside location, but More Music has also marked Holocaust Memorial Day and the 10th anniversary of the Morecambe Bay Cockling Tragedy. In all this, it has allowed the town to recover some of its own spirit in hard times. More music, more life.

MULTISTORY

The boundary between making art and not making it can be surprisingly blurred. Multistory is a community art organisation that makes art 'by, with and for the people of Sandwell', a disadvantaged, post-industrial borough west of Birmingham. In recent years, it has developed a programme of commissions in which documentary photographers and writers work with local people, but the non-professionals may not touch a camera or write a word. Even so, the art that emerges is different from what the artists usually make. Time and trust are key resources in Multistory's work. Listening, building a relationship and being open, on both sides, to the possibility of change. In this way, Multistory has enabled prisoners, people with disabilities, abused women, and other marginalised people to work with artists of international stature like David Goldblatt, Susan Meiselas and Margaret Drabble.

The stories that emerge, in text and image, are powerful. They meet most contemporary ideas of great art. But they belong to all those involved in their creation, because their artistic power is placed at the disposal of the non-professionals. The result is art that no one could have foreseen because it emerges from the encounter between people.

> From the mid 1980s on, Free Form's major focus became projects that could help those living in impoverished neighbourhoods improve their built environment not only physically but socially, albeit in relatively modest ways.[257]

Free Form's strategy was adopted by many other groups at the time. The work was rewarding and valued by communities, but it provided a shaky income, as annual funding was replaced by project grants. Trying to meet core costs through endless projects is exhausting, though it remains economic reality for many community artists.

The pace of technological change was picking up. Screen printing had been important to community printshops and to groups like Telford, Nottingham and Corby Community Arts, but it was slow and expensive compared to the new alternatives.[258] Some, like Paddington Printshop, adapted but others, including the feminist collective, See Red, closed.[259] Murals were also going out of fashion in a more commercial and glossy public environment. The public art commissioned by urban regeneration programmes offered new possibilities, but there was little scope for politics or community development. On the contrary, wounded by deindustrialisation, local authorities preferred uncontentious work, decorative, abstract, or drawing on local history. The involvement of residents did not always go beyond consultation or participating in workshops, while the ideas would be worked up by an artist. Antony Gormley's landmark *Angel of the North* (1998) inspired many imitations in places looking to renew their image, but not all gained local affection. Across Britain, former industrial towns acquired a lot of unobjectionable public art.

The past seemed more than usually important in British cultural life at this time. In 1992 the government established a Department of National Heritage (not a Ministry of Culture), one of whose tasks was to oversee the creation of a National Lottery to raise money for the arts, sport and heritage. Community artists found themselves doing more work rooted in local history but treading warily around recent memories. Memorialising the mining industry was one thing: art about the Miners' Strike was another. Community plays, mostly in the style developed by Ann Jellicoe, reached a high-point of popularity. At least 128 were produced between 1986 and 1995, compared to 32 in the previous decade and 38 in the following one.[260] But they were

often commissioned to mark anniversaries: after the show the caravan moved on. The idea of developing work over years, and thus building lasting relationships with a community, was fading.

New attitudes to cultural identity and politics also affected community art during the 1990s. In the 1970s, community artists had most often imagined community in terms of place, so they worked with everyone who lived in a housing estate, a borough or a town. Many of the original groups took their names from places: Islington Bus Co., Northampton Arts Development, High Peak Community Art, Docklands Community Poster Project and so on. But as the demographics and culture of those places changed, artists focused more on communities of interest—people who saw themselves (or were seen by others) as having common experiences. More work began to be done with groups defined by ethnicity, gender, sexuality, age and disability. Funders increasingly specified the 'target groups' they wanted artists to work with. The language of remedialism entered the discourse of participatory art, separating it from the rights-based approaches of the first generation of practice.[261]

In all these changes, one thing was consistent. Quality remained an unresolved conflict in the relationship between community artists and the arts establishment. In 1999, Sir John Tusa, then director of the Barbican, wrote that:

> Arts funders, even their peer groups, need to be ready to tell a wannabe dance company that they are not good enough to warrant funding as a full-time, independent dance group; or to tell an ethnic arts group that their work might be satisfying in an anthropological way, might have a certain local, social value, but fails by the artistic standards applied to others.[262]

This absolute confidence in what art was worthwhile was shared by most of those in positions of power, though they might express it more delicately. For them, community art did not meet professional standards because, by definition, it was not by professionals. The argument that it was testing standards and ways of making art that were more meaningful to a changing society was not recognised, or condemned, in a phrase of the time, as 'dumbing down'. By the 1990s, the only basis for funding community art was that it 'might have a certain local, social value'. Artists committed to participatory work

responded by distancing themselves from their own past. As usual, that required new language so they began to speak of participatory art. The phrase seemed fresh and neutral, but language is not innocent. With the change in terminology, came a change of thinking. The dream of cultural democracy was replaced with a language of access and individual change. As I have written elsewhere:

> The path from 'community art' to 'participatory art', whilst seen as merely pragmatic by those who made it, marked and allowed a transition from the politicised and collectivist action of the seventies towards the depoliticised, individual-focused arts programmes supported by public funds in Britain today.[263]

Disdained by the arts establishment, participatory artists turned to new allies. They found some in the urban regeneration programmes set up to aid the recovery of stricken industrial cities. These semi-autonomous bodies worked mainly on training, investment and infrastructure. But they recognised the need for community development and environmental projects, including public art. From the mid-1980s, the link between urban regeneration and participatory art grew steadily but, in places struggling to build a post-industrial life, the art became quieter and more serious.

Community art's move towards explicitly social goals and partnerships allowed the art world to feel vindicated in their reservations about its value. The Arts Council saw this reliance on social funding as justifying, rather than a consequence of, its own limited support. In the words of historian, Robert Hewison:

> Community artists were regarded as inferior to 'artists'; real artists would be judged primarily on questions of aesthetic quality and only secondarily on questions of social purpose.[264]

Urban regeneration initiatives were important but other new opportunities were also opening. People in education, social care, health and criminal justice were starting to see how art could support their work. The learning went both ways and would prove influential in subsequent years. In taking art into schools, adult training centres, care homes and hospitals, artists gained insight into other professional cultures. In the 1970s, it had been possible to argue about aesthetics and cultural democracy with art institutions, but that

discourse meant nothing to a health manager concerned with patients' wellbeing or a head teacher focused on attainment. A new language was needed.

Community artists had always been concerned with the effect of their work. Now they began to learn concepts and terms from other professions through which to articulate the benefits. Their beliefs and assumptions were also tested by professional cultures with rigorous but different expectations. The new situations demanded new ideas and ways of working. Participatory art became more person-centred, in line with the services with which it worked. In this, it was carried along with the rest of civil society in Britain. During the 1990s, many charities (and most British community art organisations are charities) became involved in delivery as government put public services out to tender. Voluntary organisations which once saw their work as additional to the services provided by the welfare state found themselves providing those services, and drawn into an increasingly tight web of management controls. These changes were not always easy to understand at the time but, in any case, a weak participatory art sector had little choice but to take on at least some of these new relationships. The question was whether it was possible to do so while remaining true to its own values and standards.

The impact of social impact

In the mid 1990s, community art in Britain was marginal, underfunded and fragile. That changed because of two things: a huge flow of new arts funding from the National Lottery established in 1993, and the election of the New Labour government in 1997. Community art was not alone in feeling the change. The entire state-supported arts sector was transformed by the resources that followed these events. Between 1997 and 2010, Arts Council England's grant-in-aid increased by 81% above inflation, from £186 million to £449 million.[265] It gained a further £1 billion from the National Lottery between 1994 and 2003, much of which went to revive run-down venues and create new ones, such as Baltic and Sage in Gateshead, intended as cornerstones of post-industrial urban renewal.[266] Although the circumstances and effects of this increase in public spending on culture were particular to Britain, they were part of a global trend driven by an

economic model centred on information, consumption and culture. Iconic buildings such as the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao (1997) came to symbolise a new, aspirational, postmodern society, in which people's work, leisure and identity are conspicuously entangled with art. The nature and meaning of this 'cultural turn', as it has been called, is a matter of academic debate, but its importance may be understood from the single fact that China opened 451 new museums in 2012.[267]

This context is important in explaining that the rising fortunes of community and participatory art since the 1990s—its normalisation—is inseparable from the growing importance of art generally, in a world that sees culture as central to wealth creation, identity and social cohesion. Participatory art is becoming normal because increasingly educated and prosperous populations enjoy art and are less willing to concede cultural authority to others. But that has been enabled and accelerated by culture's new place in society, economics and politics. It is vital to recognise this historic turn, even if we cannot yet understand all its effects, because it puts doctrinal disputes about art practice into another perspective. The transformation of the British cultural landscape in the past two or three decades is a local expression of a global phenomenon, and participatory art's normalisation within that landscape is the incidental result of historic change.

It did not always feel like that to the people involved. On the contrary, in the period after 1999, as arts funding increased sharply, the question of participatory art acquired a disproportionate importance in British cultural policy debate. The money from government and the National Lottery went overwhelmingly to theatres, contemporary art galleries, and other cultural institutions, including many new venues. Even so, what did trickle down to participatory art was bitterly contested. Despite its new resources, the art establishment seemed unable to accept that any arts funding should support the participation of non-professionals and those uninterested in the 'mainstream offer'.

The new funds did make a huge difference to a cash-starved participatory art sector. What also made a difference was a report published in 1997 called *Use or Ornament? The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts*. As its author, my interpretation of the work's origins, findings and reception cannot be impartial, but it is informed and, given

the work's continuing influence, it is a necessary part of this story. The origins of *Use or Ornament?* lay in my work as a community artist since 1981, and especially six years spent as director of East Midlands Shape (1988-94). Shape made community art with disabled people, prisoners and people in hospitals and was 80% financed by social partners. So I was used to thinking about art from the perspective of social services, health and criminal justice professionals and I did not believe that doing so interfered with its artistic quality or its political resonance. We had, for example, undertaken programmes on South Asian dance and disability, and on how national policy had affected the lives of mental health service users. So, the research was a way to think about my own field of practice and to understand the positive outcomes that I had witnessed directly over the past 15 years. I was frustrated by the lack of interest in community art. Only three books had been published on it, all by practitioners.[268] Specialists in the history, theory, and aesthetics of art seemed to share the establishment's low opinion. I also hoped to redress the minimal attention given to social issues in research such as *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain*. Above all, *Use or Ornament?* was a practitioner's response to the precariousness of participatory art in the 1990s. After 30 years of practice, it was still marginalised and misunderstood. The study did help change that but, in doing so, it revived the old argument about its value.

Use or Ornament? was based on case studies from the Outer Hebrides to Portsmouth and a total of more than 50 projects including community art, public art, museums, arts centres, urban regeneration, digital technology, amateur activity and traditional arts. Working papers on evaluation, performance indicators and experiences in other countries were also commissioned. This broad vision sought to place community art in the wide range of participatory work, partly for its own sake and partly because of the low esteem in which it was then held. I led the project, undertook much of the research and wrote the final report, as well as two of the nine working papers. But it was a large programme to which more than 25 other researchers and academics contributed. It used a multidisciplinary methodology that combined fieldwork, participant observation, interviews, discussion groups, documentary research and surveys. Published in June 1997, the research found that:

- Participation in arts activities brings social benefits;
- The experience of participation is unique and significant;
- Relationship is more significant than form;
- The social impacts of the arts are complex;
- Social impacts are inevitable but not necessarily positive;
- Participating in the arts brings risks and costs;
- Arts projects can provide cost-effective solutions;
- Social impacts are demonstrable.[269]

Use or Ornament? was the first substantial study of the outcomes of participatory art in Britain. There had been reports into individual projects, as the evaluation culture began to take hold, but even the best were limited in scope. By including such a wide range of practice, from folk music education in rural Scotland to the York Mystery Plays, the study clarified some of the common ground that defines a practice. People working in participatory art welcomed its ideas and findings, and it had a positive effect on support for their work. Its tone and proposals were modest. Risks, costs and counterarguments were considered and the difference between potential and result was repeatedly stressed. The study made clear that positive outcomes were not inevitable but depended on several factors, including the quality of practice. It noted that many benefits were associated with participation, not art, and asked what art might uniquely add to participation. The report's lasting importance may have been to establish a conceptual framework for understanding the outcomes of participatory art. Its ideas about personal development, social cohesion, community empowerment, self-determination, local image, identity, imagination, vision, health and wellbeing remain current.

It happened that the report was published soon after the election of a new Labour government and its findings were mentioned in speeches by the new Secretary of State for Culture, Media and Sport.[270] But the idea that it changed government policy, widely suggested then and since, is naive.[271] Ministers took office with a manifesto commitment to cultural democracy developed over years.[272] At most, *Use or Ornament?* provided evidence for ideas they already held. In 1998, government ordered a review of the contribution of art and sport in reducing social exclusion, to which several community artists, including me, were asked to contribute. It seemed briefly poss-

ible that our work might finally be understood, but what change followed was superficial. New funds came to participatory art, from cultural and social sources, but that was due to the overall increase in budgets. There was no change in spending priorities nor much better understanding of participatory art's distinctive value.

Use or Ornament? received some sharp criticism. Naturally, its ideas were open to question and debate about the artistic, philosophical and political issues of participatory art would have been valuable. Instead, critics attacked the research methodology so as to discredit the findings without having to address them.[273] This was an early indicator of how policy and research into participatory art would get side-tracked in subsequent years. Crucial questions about how and why arts participation touches people's lives, and how policy and practice should change as a result, have been neglected. Instead, technical issues of evidence have dominated discourse. Proof of the impact of the arts has become the Holy Grail of cultural research, as if it would finally silence questions about their value. Ever more sophisticated (and costly) initiatives have been put in place to evaluate participatory art, but the results have produced few significant advances. This was misguided for several reasons.

First, the question of *whether* participating in the arts had an impact was essentially settled by *Use or Ornament?* The criticisms of my work did not show that its conclusions about the complex but largely positive outcomes of participatory art were wrong. The key questions that followed were to do with how they were produced, how they compared with those of other social programmes and arts experiences, and what could be learnt about how to conceive, plan and deliver successful projects. Secondly, the application of concepts from the natural sciences (such as proof, measurement, impact etc.) to social experiences and especially to art is problematic. There is no end to the knowledge we can produce about people's experience of participating in the arts (if we are willing to pay for it) but very little of it can be proved. Thirdly, the value of art is a political question, as Kjølv Egeland recognised in 1976.[274] Whether, to what extent, in what ways and for what reasons, someone thinks it is important depends on their beliefs. It is also comparative, since value is assessed in relation to how resources are expended in reaching different goals. Whether it is better to finance a community play or a professional

THIS IS NOT FOR YOU, GRAEAE

Graeae, founded in 1980, was the first professional disabled people's theatre company. Over decades, it has fought for recognition of disabled people as artists and as citizens, and in the process invented new forms to tell unheard stories and re-imagine familiar ones. Graeae works with professional and non-professional artists because it is so hard to get training or work as a disabled person. For this company, what matters is not where you trained or how you earn your living, but seriousness of purpose in creating art in your own voice.

With characteristic originality, Graeae chose to mark the centenary of the First World War by focusing on the living, not the dead—the wounded whose names are absent from war memorials and whose sacrifice can provoke feelings of embarassment, rather than patriotism. *This Is Not For You* was an outdoor show based on the stories of 25 disabled ex-service people, men and women, from recent wars, who performed with experienced Graeae actors, musicians, a choir and BSL interpreters. The play was an extraordinary, powerful, angry and moving insight into realities too often brushed aside or sentimentalised. But getting there took three years of logistical, technical and, above all, human effort. The veterans' disabilities and psychological wounds were neither ignored nor overcome: they were integral to a radical, engaged work of art that could not have been made in any other way.

MOVIMENTO DE EXPRESSÃO FOTOGRÁFICA

The digital revolution is so fast and comprehensive that it can be hard to understand how it is changing how we live, but artists are good at questioning the normal, even if only to show that nothing is as inevitable as it seems. Since 2001, a group of Lisbon photographers has been inviting people to look at the world more carefully and creatively through open courses and projects. The Movimento de Expressão Fotográfica (Movement for Photographic Expression) works equally with keen amateurs and with people who have never used photography as an art: elderly and blind people, young offenders, people with disabilities and others living in the city's marginal places.

The work is deliberately slow, valuing conversation and the discoveries that come when you look, look again, and again, before you really begin to see, Using pinhole cameras and physical film as well as digital technology, the artists help those they work with to produce work of unusual beauty because each image is distilled from a life, memory and what matters to the person who makes it. Exhibitions allow MEF to connect the disparate groups with whom they work and to make their presence visible in the city. It is not easy to finance and sustain such intimate work but MEF represents a vital form of endurance in a culture with throw away attitudes to photography and, shamefully, to people.

production is a matter of judgement, and judgement, where public resources are concerned, is human—and political.

The problem is not with evaluation, which is integral to all creative work, but how, by whom and why it is done. The long and costly effort to prove art's social, economic and intrinsic value is entangled in a political culture concerned with control, not with knowledge, or the wisdom of experience. It is rooted in the theories of New Public Management, intended to bring the supposed rigour of markets to public services.[275] Its culture of planning, targets, monitoring and evaluation gave people an illusion of control in a complex world, whilst absolving them of responsibility for their own judgements. Further, there is too little recognition that this approach may cost far more, in financial and human terms, than the value of the data it produces.

The problems are not limited to wastefulness. Many artists experienced this new management approach as a loss of freedom and autonomy. The new cultural funds came with new obligations to report on the social outcomes of the work. Many people saw this as unwarranted intrusion. Participatory artists, long used to arguing for their practice, were more sanguine, although they often struggled with the work involved by the new evaluation regime. Worse, it interfered with participatory art practice. It transformed the central relationship of participatory art by making the professionals implicitly responsible for how the people they worked with would be changed by the experience. And by changed, what was really meant was improved. There was an ever-sharper focus on people seen by public agencies as problematic. Where the first community artists had worked with communities defined by the relatively neutral and objective identity of place, their successors were being asked to work with 'young people at risk of offending' or 'people with experience of homelessness'. Such language left little room for equality, or a rights-based approach to cultural democracy.

But it would be wrong to close on this rather bleak summary of how government expectations affected participatory art during the 1990s and 2000s. There were new, often troublesome requirements, but there were also new resources and opportunities for creative practice. Community artists, used to working on the edges of other people's concerns, adjusted to a real demand for their work, supported by evidence of its value set out in *Use or Ornament?* and sub-

sequent studies. The arts world had gradually come to accept that participatory art had potential. It strengthened the political case for public funding and it reached new social groups at a time when orchestras and other cultural institutions were anxious about ageing audiences. Outdoor work and festivals became very popular during the first decade new millennium, perhaps because it kept participatory art safely separate from the institutions themselves. One of my lasting memories of this period is watching the live broadcast of an opera on a large screen on the beach at Skegness. Some people drew up their deckchairs to watch, while others were happy to enjoy the last of the evening sun in the water. I found it an odd experience, but it seemed that most people just accepted it as a normal part of life in 21st century England.

Assimilating participation

By the late 1990s, community artists in Britain had mostly given up trying to change the art world. Paradoxically, that was when the art world began to change. It absorbed many of community art's ideas, methods and values, especially in arts practice and the outreach programmes of cultural institutions. The acceptance of participatory art in health, education and other social contexts, helped show its wider potential. The change may have been facilitated by the belief that community art had failed and was no longer a threat. It thus became safe to use its methods to reach new audiences at a time of rapid social and technological change.

Community art began in a world whose means of cultural production and communication were closer to the Victorian era than today. In 1981, when I joined Greenwich Mural Workshop, public cultural space was much as it had been in 1881, with the single exception of broadcasting—but there were only three television channels, all state run or licenced.[276] Control of radio and print media (still in black and white except for some glossy magazines) was equally closed. A few alternative bookshops had emerged in the 1970s, but the very term underlines how hard it was then to access anything beyond mainstream culture. Community printshops were set up, in part, because posters were seen as a way of communicating ideas in a public space almost exclusively controlled by state and commercial interests.

The print collective See Red believed 'that flyposting was an important way of getting feminist messages out onto the street'.[277] That world has vanished, utterly. The problem now, in a cacophonous, unequally regulated public space, is no longer a lack of voices. It is knowing which ones to trust.

Since the beginning of the 1990s, the arrival of computers, digital video and photography, mobile phones, aerosol paints, laser printing, the Internet, message boards, budget airlines, 24 hour multi-channel TV, rolling news, blogging and vlogging, social networks, smartphones and other innovations have transformed the relationship between citizens and public culture. As an apprentice printworker, I learned that the community art movement was putting the means of cultural production into the hands of everyone. Today, that job has been done, but by other forces with different motives. Those means are more accessible than we could have dreamed. More unexpectedly, the means of publication, distribution and criticism have also been democratised. That is a cultural revolution comparable to the invention of movable type, and whose effects will be similarly far-reaching and unpredictable. Fear that elections might be clandestinely manipulated by foreign powers is one symptom. The virtual monopoly over cultural publishing held by the state and business has been broken and, although both search for ways to regain control, it will not be soon or easily restored.

Public arts institutions, though not a large part of that monopoly, were important in defining standards and protecting the cultural capital of the elite. But the authority of the BBC, the Arts Council, the National Theatre, the Royal Opera House, the British Museum and the rest of the establishment has diminished. Once they could simply make their cultural offer of exhibitions, performances and broadcasts available. Now they must appeal to their audiences—and attract those who don't come. Accustomed to speaking, they are learning to listen. The public, getting a taste for expressing itself in digital space, is more assertive. The art world's defenders initially raged against dumbing down but the term is less heard today. There's no going back and, for better or worse, public culture is now a matter of negotiation. That is why the arts world has adopted many of community art's participatory methods—it needs them to renew its relationship with society in a fluid, competitive and changeable

world. The paradox is that, unwilling to accept its loss of authority, it has applied the techniques of cultural democracy to the purpose of cultural democratisation.[278]

That has been a mixed blessing for participatory artists. The art funding system is much more willing to finance their work but its expectations exert a powerful influence on what that work is, how it can be done, with whom and why. The demand side of the participatory art economy has become more powerful than the supply side. This is most obvious in expectations about the social impact that their work should have, but it extends to ideas about participants, the duration of projects, the identification of social groups, the kind of art made, the processes used, how it must be evaluated and so on. This might be described as a kind of conceptual institutionalisation, which tries to ensure that participatory art happens in ways and within boundaries that are acceptable to those financing it. The issue is not whether those parameters are in themselves good but that they unquestionably form a system of control.

It is very difficult to avoid conceptual institutionalisation except by moving away from the funding system, but it can be done. One escape route is to create art so valued by the system that it loses interest in social questions. Artists whose work is only participatory are not seen in the same way. While their work is expected to achieve an acceptable artistic standard, it is assessed primarily on its ability to reach new audiences, to build confidence and skills, or to involve people in decision-making. These may be desirable goals but they reflect questionable assumptions about, and intentions towards, people who have the same right to participate in the cultural life of the community and enjoy the arts as everyone else.

Conceptual institutionalisation affects small participatory art organisations and individual artists most of all. It means that there is now less exploration and innovation in participatory art than there was in the past. Grass-roots organisations with limited resources and bureaucratic obligations are caught on a treadmill of delivery, the insecure workers in the art world's gig economy. There is no time for testing new ideas, finding inspiration, thinking or dreaming, though artists who cannot nourish their creativity become stale or burn out. Young artists enter the field with fresh ideas and energy, but they are prepared by their training to take on the system's assumptions. There

is a great deal of participatory art in Britain today, much of it very good, but the best is often happening despite or beyond the operation of the arts funding system. It is the artists who bridge the gap between its low expectations of participatory art and the high hopes of the people with whom they create new art.

11 Without help, without permission (Since 2008)

Let's get the TV and the radio
To play our tune again
It's 'bout time we got some airplay
of our version of events
there's no need to be afraid
I will sing with you my friend

Emeli Sandé[279]

Tides and storms

As this story of participatory art's long development approaches the present, it becomes more difficult to bring it into focus: everything is too close. But before describing where we stand now, well into the 21st century, it may be helpful to revisit briefly the pattern sketched out in this book. That pattern, like all history, is an interpretation of the past to make sense of the present. It is a hypothesis, albeit one based on years of experience, conversations, research and reflection. My interpretation of participatory art's development involves two intersecting themes. The first is about how the 18th century's invention of fine art created a split between visions of art and life that continues today. It began a struggle between those who pursue fine art's potential at any cost, including serving the structures of power, and those with a broader, more humanist idea of art's place in everyday life. We might, for convenience only, label these camps the Purists and the

Democrats. One mistake made by both Purists and Democrats is to believe that fine art is itself a structure of elite power, because the elite has always taken its side. It is not. It is a method for using art critically, but not necessarily at the expense of other uses, such as consolation or affirmation. As such, its power is available to anyone, not only the elite. That is why William Morris, a Democrat in these terms, wrote that he did not want art for a few.[280] He believed that the emancipatory power of fine art should be available to all. The Democrats did not reject the artistic and philosophical innovations of post-Enlightenment art. On the contrary, it was because they understood their importance that they wanted to make those innovations truly universal. That is why the members of Salford Lyceum applied themselves to learn music, theatre and philosophy, why the Oxford and Bermondsey Shakespeare Society made theatre with illiterate boys, why Joan Littlewood dreamed of a Fun Palace where anyone could enjoy the privileges of leisure:

> Choose what you want to do—or watch someone else doing it. Learn how to handle tools, paint, babies, machinery, or just listen to your favourite tune. Dance, talk or be lifted up to where you can see how other people make things work. Sit out over space with a drink and tune in to what's happening elsewhere in the city. Try starting a riot or beginning a painting—or just lie back and stare at the sky.[281]

The final part of my interpretation of recent art history—and the most speculative—is the suggestion that the split created by the invention of fine art is healing. That is partly a matter of time. Everything changes, and even the strongest ideas are rethought when the worlds that invented or used them pass. The Enlightenment's ideas are now bitterly contested.[282] European societies have experienced great changes since the end of the Second World War. The welfare state, democracy and peace have made their people healthier and better educated than ever, even if postwar progress has been under pressure from neoliberal policies. More europeans than ever have time and resources to enjoy an unprecedented abundance of artistic experiences. New information and communication technology have brought the means of cultural production, distribution and criticism within the hands of more and more people, but it has also given immense power to a few IT and media corporations.

IN PLACE OF WAR

In Place of War began life in 2004 as a University of Manchester study into how theatre and the arts can create pathways out of violence. Some of the people involved in that work committed to applying its learning to supporting young people living with war, its legacy and the civil violence of gangs and political oppression. Since then, In Place of War has become the hub of a global network of musicians, performers, trainers and artists who use their creativity to give other young people a chance. The method is consistent. First, establish safe and resourced art spaces. Next, train people to train others in artistic and creative industry skills. Finally, open doors to international collaboration and markets. It is not about commercial success. It is about being heard, activism, resistance even, in ways that are meaningful to the artists and their communities. The aim is to empower participants because nothing less brings lasting change.

It would be hard to imagine more difficult conditions for artistic work, in situations of extreme poverty and conflict, with donated equipment and little funding. But in Colombia, South Africa, Palestine, Zimbabwe, Brazil, South Sudan and elsewhere, In Place of War repeatedly shows how, given a chance, young people can apply their creative energy to change their corner of the world. This is fragile, marginal work: it may always be so, but that is why it is so important.

LAMPEDUSA MIRRORS

When Micaela Casalboni and Moez Mrabet met during a cultural managers' exchange programme called Tandem they immediately found common ground. She worked at Teatro dell'Argine in Bologna; he was a member of Éclosion d'Artistes, in Tunis. They both worked with young people, including many touched by the Mediterranean refugee crisis. Some were leaving Tunisia, or planned to, or had and been sent home hurt, but still hopeful. Others were arriving in Italy, often traumatised by their journey, and in need of help. Between them was Lampedusa, an Italian island closer to Africa than Europe, and in 2014 a very symbol of life and death. Micaela and Moez decided to invest their organisations' limited resources to narrate this shared realitywith young people in their cities.

Crossing seas of language, culture and security, they created an unfolding piece of theatre that spoke of migration's courage and its tragedy. They called it *Lampedusa Mirrors* to evoke the parallels on each side of the sea, and the need to look to ourselves, not others, for a response. Performances in Tunis and Bologna ferried people and feelings across the sea, and a film of the project brought it to wider audiences, in Brussels, Palermo and elsewhere. Resolving the crisis remains a political challenge. *Lampedusa Mirrors* was a human response at a human scale, working for recognition and healing.

It is debatable whether European society is more diverse today than it was a century ago, but it is unquestionable that once marginalised voices, including those of women, deaf and disabled people, ethnic minorities and LGBTI people, are better heard than they were and that they are changing and democratising ideas about art. This matters because the growth of participatory art—its normalisation—is above all the consequence of the gradual healing of the split in the Western idea of art that opened up during the Enlightenment. Although not everyone, on either side, sees it, the differences between Purists and Democrats are ceasing to matter. The question is no longer 'Is it art?', but 'Is it good?' [283]

Participatory art may have been carried along by a historical tide but it was active in the process, and its contribution to overcoming the split is the second, minor theme in this interpretation. There are more elements to it than I know or could include, especially from outside the UK. I have mentioned the influence of community development on British community art and the postcolonial theatre that Eugene van Erven describes as 'a kind of proto-community art created by collectively organized groups'.[284] But such gaps do not invalidate the part of the story I can tell, namely the development of community art in Britain, though this naturally includes an autobiographical dimension.

It begins with the emergence of community art in the 1960s, less as the narrowly political movement it has often been thought, and more as an artistic one that took the decade's counter-cultural challenge into the sacred halls of fine art. Doing so had political implications, for instance in questioning the allocation of cultural resources, and most community artists were on the same democratic left as William Morris. Their challenge was to cultural authority, which is why the art establishment responded by questioning the movement's ideas of quality. But the artistic worth of community art was never the point. It was the focus of a larger struggle over who had the right to decide whether it had artistic value, or even what artistic value meant. It was not a dispute about art, but about power.

Paradoxically, it was not politics that defined the first phase of community art in Britain, and made it important, but artistic, theoretical and methodological inventiveness. The aesthetics, ideas and techniques of community art were pioneered between the late 1960s

and the late 1980s. They were many and varied, and they provided a store of material that has subsequently nourished participatory art practice. But community art's most profound and far-reaching hope is cultural democracy. If, by the late 1980s, it seemed that the community art movement had failed to achieve cultural democracy (and it did feel like that to many of those involved) it was because they were working against another tide of history—the neoliberal ascendancy. The gradual democratisation that was healing the old split in art was at odds with the rightward shift in politics during the last quarter of the 20th century.

During the 1990s, like other progressive groups in Britain, community artists had to adapt to an unsympathetic but entrenched political environment. And like many others, including the charitable and voluntary sector of which it was part, it responded by prioritising the people it aimed to benefit. A change of terminology distanced it from past defeats, and helped artists establish new connections beyond the art world. They found a welcome in education, health, social services and regeneration, and applied their artistic models and practices to work that made a quiet but real difference to many lives. They developed a better understanding of other disciplines and put more emphasis on the social benefits of their work, strengthened by research, including *Use or Ornament?* That coincided with a change of government, which brought new funds for the arts and new attention to the hardships faced by post-industrial communities. The steady democratisation of culture also required an expanding cultural sector to pay more attention to all members of society. So the past two decades have been a rather good period for participatory art, if not for social equality in general. It is more widespread and more normal than it has ever been, and, if there are huge variations in what happens and why it is done, this too can be seen as evidence of democratic vitality.

And then there was the financial collapse of 2007-08, the Great Recession, the Eurozone crisis, the Arab Spring, war, terrorism and refugees. Everything changed. We are all living with the consequences of that storm, in one way or another, and while it continues it is hard to pay attention to the tide. Understanding what is happening in participatory art now is difficult. Looking forward seems especially speculative. Nonetheless, this chapter considers participatory art in

uncertain times, and suggests ways to strengthen its potential in cultural democracy and community empowerment. But first, we must try to map the field as it stands. That is a challenge because the scale and diversity of participatory art now makes it hard to discern patterns with confidence, especially in less familiar contexts and cultures, so this is no more than a sketch of a landscape that readers will need to revise in the light of their own knowledge, especially from other countries.

The normalisation of participatory art has seen it spread beyond the rich Western societies where it emerged in the 1960s to the Australian outback, Mexican border towns, South African townships and new cities in China. In the opening decades of the 21st century community art has bloomed in countries where it was weak or absent. I have seen that at first hand throughout southern and eastern Europe, and in countries as different as Colombia, Morocco, Japan, Burkina Faso, Canada and Kyrgyzstan. This work has typically been self-starting, driven by local energies and responding to self-defined needs. It happens without help and it asks no one's permission. Where state or institutional support exists it is usually responding to grass-roots action. In this, I see echoes of the early years of community art in Britain. However, my knowledge of work outside Europe is too limited for any stronger statement than that participatory art is thriving and that what I do know has impressed me by its creativity, integrity and humanity. These are stories for others to tell.

Within Europe, there has been a similar growth of independent participatory art in places where it was rare or absent 20 years ago. It has been nourished by the reunification of a divided culture already described. It has also been shaped by historical events, including the end of communism in Eastern Europe, the enlargement of the European Union, the financial crash and recession, and the refugee crisis in the Mediterranean. These events disproportionately affected the nations of Southern and Eastern Europe. They did not cause but enabled the development of participatory art in the hands of a new generation of artists. As a result of these historic and recent forces, it seems to me that there are important differences in participatory art across the continent. Most countries in Northern and Western Europe—France, Germany, Britain, Belgium, the Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden and others—have experienced relative stability and pros-

perity since the end of the Second World War. They have been able to develop cultural systems that support public institutions, independent and commercial actors, education and civil society within a framework of state funding and policy. These ecologies have often been in place for 60 or 70 years and they have flexed to accommodate new ideas and practices, even ones, like community art, that contested the existing assumptions. One way of interpreting the story of participatory art in Britain set out in the last two chapters is to see it as the assimilation of radical voices within a consensual mainstream that has required adjustments on both sides.

That has not been the experience in other parts of Europe. In countries run by communist governments under the sway of the USSR—Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Ukraine, Romania, Bulgaria, the Baltic States, Yugoslavia, and others—a state-controlled and ideologically guided cultural system was put in place. After the revolutions of 1989-1992, cultural institutions and artists had to undertake a massive intellectual and practical reorientation so as to survive in a more liberal economy. That was often difficult and painful, especially for the older generation. The growth of participatory art in Eastern Europe since the millennium has been driven by a generation formed in a post-communist system, and who rarely get much support from the reconstructed cultural system. In southern Europe—Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece, Malta and elsewhere—the situation is more complex, with differences of policy leading to structural variations in national systems. But it is fair to say that the focus of cultural policy in all these states was on heritage and institutions, including performing arts companies and museums. Younger artists were already turning to participatory art before the financial crisis shattered citizens' confidence in the status quo. Like many of their peers elsewhere, these young artists are responding to their vulnerable situation by making art with non-professional artists about the things that are now most urgent.

This outline of how differently the citizens of Europe have experienced the past half century is a brief but necessary reminder of the complexities that underlie any attempt at synthesis. But, with that caveat, it helps explain why the situation of participatory art now seems so different in Northern Europe and in Southern and Eastern Europe. Put simply, in the north, the practice is becoming a settled part of a

(relatively) secure cultural ecology, albeit at the cost of its radical and emancipatory potential. In the south and east, on the other hand, it is marginal, contested and independent, often unfunded and sometimes politicised. Its tense relationship with the institutions of the state and the art world can be compared to that of community art in 1970s Britain. The rest of this chapter offers brief accounts of participatory art in these two contrasting parts of Europe.

Institutional development in northern Europe

In Northern Europe, the tide of acceptance that carried participatory art into the most prestigious institutions of the art world does not seem to have been much affected by the financial crisis. Public spending has been under pressure and cultural budgets have not been spared. Nonetheless, a decade later it is hard to see a lasting change in the conditions for participatory art here. After 2010, austerity policies led to sharp cuts to public spending in Britain, particularly in local government, which has had to focus on statutory services at the expense of discretionary ones, including culture. Funding has been tighter but the increase made by the Labour government has been largely maintained. The arts have also been partly protected by income from the National Lottery. Galleries, theatres and orchestras have sometimes cut back on participatory work, but they have not changed policy. Interest in participatory art in health, social care and education remains strong and is supported by policymakers: in July 2018, the minister for Health and Social Care, Matt Hancock, defined social prescribing, such as Artlift offers, as one of his priorities in preventive health care.[285]

Participatory art received a major boost in 2013 when Arts Council England launched the Creative People and Places programme in 21 parts of England.[286] New partnerships have been formed between cultural and social organisations to offer performances, exhibitions and participatory art projects. The scale is huge: between them, the CPP partnerships reported an estimated 1.45 million attendances to 3,100 activities in three years.[287] Some of the work is very high quality, in artistic, ethical and even political terms, and most represents good practice by today's standards. In July 2018, Arts Council England announced new funding to extend CPP. Between 2013 and 2022, it will

have invested £90 million into what is largely a participatory art programme. For Sir Nicholas Serota, Chair of Arts Council England and director of Tate for nearly 30 years, there were three reasons why society needs this kind of work:

> First, because everybody should be able to enjoy the pleasure and the opportunity for personal expression that art and culture offer. […] Secondly, many people feel that their voices are not heard; that they have a vote but cannot influence the way that their communities are regarded and resourced. I'm not claiming that participation in a cultural project is the answer to it all. But culture can make a contribution to redressing imbalances of power, when we listen, encourage people to speak, and don't finish people's sentences for them. When we recognise that everyone has a voice and give respect. Thirdly, art and culture can help revitalize our sense of community and place at this time of rapid economic and social change. Culture is what binds humanity together; and it is also what makes us distinct. A sense of a shared and communally owned local culture is important in an age when communal focal points, whether libraries, pubs or places of worship, even shops on the High Street, are disappearing.[288]

It is worth reading these words, uttered from the epicentre of the British arts establishment, because they make exactly the same argument that the community arts movement made to the Arts Council in 1973. How they translate into action is, of course, another question.

Allowing for differences of history, culture, politics, law and administration, a similar incorporation of participatory art can be seen elsewhere in northern Europe. Because their cultural institutions tend to be more closely integrated with public services than in the UK, participatory initiatives in these countries have often come from within the art system. In France, a long discourse around cultural democratisation has fostered two important practices. Cultural mediation—what might be called education work in Britain—aims to make visual and performing arts institutions more accessible to those who do not already use them.[289] In 'Les nouveaux commanditaires', this has produced one of the most rigorous models of public art commissioning with and by communities.[290] Socio-cultural programmes are closer to the practice of community art, often delivered by local authorities, and not always well-regarded in the art world.

CHAPITÔ

Many tourists know Chapitô as a fine restaurant with a view over the historical centre of Lisbon and the Tagus river. For others, it is a hip venue for physical theatre, music or late night socialising. But behind this public face is an extraordinary social enterprise that has been changing lives through circus training since 1981. Chapitô is the vision of Teresa Ricou (Tété by her stage name) a clown artist who began working with young people when she returned to Portugal after training abroad. With single-minded tenacity she has nurtured a social enterprise that uses commercial acumen to achieve social inclusion.

Now housed in a former women's reformatory close to the Castle of São Jorge, Chapitô is a state registered school with 120 students aged 16 to 18 who work towards a Level 4 Professional Certificate in Circus Arts. Some come from comfortable backgrounds; others have known poverty, homelessness or prison. Chapitô has high ambitions for them all, expecting them to fulfil their artistic and human potential and to take responsibility for their lives. All contribute to the costs of their tuition, so Chapitô creates paid work that allows each student to earn what they need. Students perform at the school, in holiday resorts and at public events. Hundreds have gone on to make successful lives in, and beyond, the circus arts. The quality and seriousness of Chapitô's work deserves a book of its own. It is participatory art at its best: a creative route for emancipation and social justice.

EL COLEGIO DEL CUERPO

In 1997, two dancers founded El Colegio del Cuerpo, starting a pedagogical process with children from INEM public school in Cartagena de Indias (Colombia). Álvaro Restrepo was a successful choreographer with his own company, Athanor Danza. Marie-France Delieuvin was an eminent dancer, choreographer and pedagogue at the Centre National de Danse Contemporaine d'Angers. They chose 18 teenagers, as much for their desire as for their dance potential. Those young people became the foundation of an outstanding community dance. Many of them are still there, performing in the professional company, Compañía Cuerpo de Indias, and teaching the next generation. El Colegio del Cuerpo, (The School of the Body) has a holistic vision that roots education in the body. In learning about dance physically, creatively and emotionally, young people also learn about art, culture, respect, peace and society. At the heart of this work, which includes war refugees, disadvantaged children and others from more prosperous homes, is resistance to civil violence.

The company has survived with little support in difficult conditions, growing in artistic stature and educational maturity. Today, it performs dance of the highest quality internationally and provides vital pathways to adulthood: 8,500 young people have participated since 1997. What unites this work, and gives it power, is the integrity of artists whose defence of human rights is expressed in every gesture, from a quiet class to a major production. In a world where human bodies are so often abused, El Colegio del Cuerpo defends the sacred in the embodied person.

There are independent participatory art companies in France, Germany and elsewhere, but they often see themselves, and are seen by others, simply as cultural organisations. Banlieues Bleues is a jazz festival and producer based in Seine-Saint-Denis, a disadvantaged district on the edge of Paris. Set up in 1984 by a coalition of socialist mayors, the organisation has a high reputation for its programming and its work with local schools and community groups. It supports young people to create new music with French and international artists, perform in concerts and sustain regular sessions. But Banlieues Bleues does not see itself as a community art organisation. It produces excellent participatory art in the way that a mainstream gallery or theatre might do. Similarly, the Philharmonie de Paris supports the participation in classical music of disadvantaged children through its Démos project. Again, the work is participatory, but the organisation is not. This is not a minor distinction. The programmes of Banlieues Bleues and the Philharmonie de Paris would be diminished without participatory work, but they would continue. A community music organisation, such as More Music in Lancashire, exists only through and for co-creation with non-professional artists.

Participatory art practice has been adopted by cultural institutions adjusting to changes in the societies on which they depend for funding and audiences. In the Netherlands community art has entered national cultural policy, though its difference from amateur art is sometimes blurred. The country now has a strong independent participatory art sector with individual artists, community art companies and cultural institutions. Leeuwarden, European Capital of Culture in 2018, put participation at the centre of its programme.[291] The opening weekend saw 300 Friesland communities share midwinter stories with 25,000 visitors; there has been a wealth of participatory projects throughout the year. Leeuwarden's approach shows how the distinction between fine art and popular culture is becoming less and less meaningful. The thousands of local people who contributed to the programme are concerned with encouraging participation in art that addresses what is important to Friesland's life now and its future.

In Germany, participatory art has reached the Berlin Philharmonic, which began an education programme under the leadership of Sir Simon Rattle, building on his experience in Birmingham.[292] Looking back after ten years, he said:

> 'Being an orchestra of wild tigers, as they are, they took the idea that music belongs to everybody absolutely deep in their hearts, so now a large proportion of the orchestra are working for education, for spreading the word. We had extraordinary experiences, in schools, in prisons, in far-reaching parts outside Berlin, in old people's homes. […] I think as musicians we've learnt at least as much as the people we've worked with and played for. There are many people who've become great friends through it and now, after 10 years, we really feel that we have a family, and this is something that is absolutely part of the orchestra's commitment. We must be part of the city and we must give everybody the opportunity to experience our music. It can change people's lives.' [293]

The adoption of such a programme by Europe's most prestigious orchestra—and its sponsorship from the outset by Deutsche Bank—shows how participatory art has become embedded within cultural institutions in the wealthy parts of the continent.

Independent development in southern Europe

> Our search for the 'new', important as it is, should not come at the expense of erasing the history and agency of the social movements and activists that have come before and paved the way for the current contentious response to the global crisis, its architects and beneficiaries.
>
> **Cristina Flesher Fominaya** [294]

Participatory art has become normal in public cultural provision in Northern Europe, but that cannot be said for the continent as a whole. Progress is evident in countries like Spain and Portugal, but elsewhere participatory art is still marginal and dependent on the commitment of artists and activists. That is explained by the histories already mentioned: participatory artists in Belgium and Serbia start from very different places. But it is not at all certain that acceptance is what all artists want, especially if it brings the loss of independence evident in the history of British community art. In Southern Europe especially, the financial crash and its consequences have radicalised an emerging generation of participatory artists. One consequnce is that some of the most vital work is happening in countries where there it has the least formal support. The 2008 financial crisis was a

formative experience for a generation of young Europeans, just as 1968 was for the first community artists.[295] They saw how jobs, homes and pensions could vanish overnight, and felt the hardship in their families. Their own prospects were blighted. In 2012, youth unemployment was over 40% in Italy, over 50% in Spain and close to 60% in Greece.[296] Angry, disillusioned and energised, many joined Occupy, Indignados and other protest movements to challenge how politics was being done. The 2011 manifesto that was circulated in Spain captures something of that spirit:

> We are people, not merchandise. I am not only what I buy, why I buy it, and for whom I buy it. […] I am indignant. I believe I can change it. I believe I can contribute. I know together we can. Come with us. It is your right.[297]

From Madrid to London, from Reykjavik to Istanbul, young people took over public space and sometimes they forced real change. Even where they did not (or where there has been a repressive reaction), they revived methods of democratic debate and education reminiscent of May 1968. But they did so with new digital and communication technologies, and at a time when culture has become mainstream and participatory art is normal. Some of that energy has found its way into community art.

George Sachinis and Eirini Alexiou are part of that generation of young European artists who began work in the first decade of the 21st century. In 2004, they established a performance company called Ohi Pezoume ('Not Playing'). Based in Athens, their work was site-specific, connecting art and science, history, myth and the spirit of place. The new company won awards and the support of the Greek Ministry of Culture. Then, in 2011 as the debt crisis unfolded, they were told there was no funding for the current show. They paid the bills themselves. Ohi Pezoume was a minor casualty of a national disaster. With millions of their fellow citizens, the artists were cut adrift. What makes this story notable is how that experience turned a fine art performance company into a community art collective called Urban Dig Project.

George and Eirini had begun to see the potential of participation in their last funded project, when they had been asked to involve local people in the production. But that was another world compared to the tsunami of unemployment, debt and homelessness now sweeping

the city.[298] Bewildered, they only knew that they had to make art differently if it was to be meaningful in this new reality. They took what work they could to meet their immediate needs, and began talking with friends about what might be done here, now, without help, without permission. Those conversations gradually became a two year community art project in Dourgouti, a poor neighbourhood largely hidden from the rest of the city. It began with conversations, in cafés, streets and squares, talking about nothing and everything, about the place and its memories, about local people's lives, their skills, hopes and needs. George Sachinis discovered that he had only to open a map on a taverna table for people to gather round and tell stories about the area. Everyone had a voice, whether they had lived in this run-down district all their lives or washed up here from another part of Greece or from abroad. This was community defined by place. Walks followed, to explore the streets and share knowledge. Out of work architects, planners and trainers joined the artists for workshops on café terraces and public squares. Digital media specialists built a web presence and set up social media accounts to connect the growing numbers drawn to the project. They worked in Greek and English, to include refugees and migrants, and they asked the Roma scrap dealers to spread the word as they plied their trade. There was a lot of walking, knocking on doors and building trust. There were also those who wanted to know what was in it for the artists—if they weren't being paid?

The answer was inspiration. George, Eirini and the other members of what had become Urban Dig Project were seeing how co-creation could open powerful new ways of making art at a time of insecurity and suffering. In the end, five hundred people contributed to Dourgouti Island Hotel as the project was called.[299] They led walks, played games, told stories, participated in workshops, made music, sang, danced, drew maps and more. They also helped one another, creating informal groups for mutual support. There were performances and there were audiences, but Urban Dig had seen that what mattered was how the work empowered people in semi-planned and spontaneous art, and brought solidarity, consolation and pleasure, even as it highlighted injustice and imagined new ways of living together.

The experience in Dourgouti changed the artists of Urban Dig Project. They still make poetic, challenging, beautiful performances.

Their commitment to art is as strong as ever. But they have seen how it can resonate differently when it is made with non-professional artists in response to urgent, living experience. George Sachinis says:

> 'It's true that when you take art to communities, people look at you funny, because, yes, we do immense hours of work for no money. That's something that, unfortunately, as artists in this country, we know about and we've done before. Of course, we do it for other reasons than money. I think development in the cultural sector is coming from communities now, really sharing skills about how to harvest your cultural wealth, because there's not much other wealth in this country. How to discover and harvest that is a skill we're all learning and it's very nice to do it collectively. My concern is that this work needs people who have the skill to work on the ground. It's not that sophisticated, it's not complex, but it takes a maturity from experience that one needs to have. We like to explore the line between art and activism. We are not activists but we do have things to share.' [300]

The journey from Ohi Pezoume to Urban Dig is particular to the people involved, and to the problems of the Greek crisis. But it is striking how many artists and small independent art organisations in southern Europe have followed similar paths in recent years. Many of them began about the same time as Ohi Pezoume, in early years of the new century, and already had ideas of co-production and participatory work. The financial crisis transformed their situation as artists and citizens. It is important not to oversimplify this, because the effects varied widely. Revolution and war in Ukraine should not be compared to banking and political crises in Spain. The frozen conflicts of former Yugoslavia predate the financial crisis, and the arrival of refugees is experienced very differently in Athens, Belgrade or Berlin. It is vital not to simplify historic events still too close to understand clearly. That said, there are common aspects to the situation facing artists in on all sides of the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe, even if the causes are different.

They include a breakdown in trust between citizens and politicians that has left the state looking uninterested in, or unable to solve, local problems, so that people are ready to take action themselves. There is little support for community art from ministries of culture or art institutions, but foundations are increasingly active as they

understand its potential. Poverty, migration, inequality and political accountability are subjects of urgent common concern because they touch everyone. There is a generation of young artists who know about community art and socially engaged practice and who, like George Sachinis and Eirini Alexiou, are not prepared to wait for better times. They need to make a difference now. The crisis has shaped how and why these artists work in participatory practice, even if it is not always at the forefront of their thinking. It has confronted them with issues that have entered their art, like refugees, democracy and corruption. It has made them wary with institutions they no longer trust. It has required them to be inventive in the absence of local precedents on which to model their work. It has obliged them to find new forms of finance and sustainability. It has given them a sense of urgency, because change is necessary and it must come from their generation.

Some artists, like those involved with Urban Dig, have changed their practice in the face of this situation. In 2013, the Spanish director Àlex Rigola created an immersive theatre production performed by 14 migrants living in the city of Salt. *Migranland* was Rigola's first participatory work, and it used the myth of Odysseus to frame experiences that the participants shared in rehearsals. It was presented as part of the Temporada Alta Festival in a collaboration with the social programme of La Caixa Foundation, which has become a major supporter of participatory art programmes.[301] The role of Spanish performing artists in social inclusion projects has grown following a first national gathering on the issue in 2008. Since then annual meetings have been held in different Spanish cities, attracting large numbers of artists and supported by the Ministry of Culture. The participation of many civic theatres suggests a growing institutional interest in community art and inclusive practice.

The lines between activism, politics and community art have become fluid during the crisis. XNET is a collective of artists, campaigners, digital experts and journalists, dedicated to exposing corruption and defending citizens' rights. Recognising that the sheer complexity of fraud is a major obstacle to understanding the financial crisis, XNET used theatre to turn a cache of leaked emails into a play that could communicate why they were taking legal action against some of the executives of Caja Madrid bank. *Hazte Banquero* (*Become a Banker*) was performed by professional actors but devised by the

collective and directed by one of its founders, Simona Levi:

> Leaking data is a risky political act. Performing that data, turning numbers and words into feelings, is politically and artistically dangerous. *Hazte Banquero* manages to be a powerful, entertaining play with a serious message. It succeeds both in its artistic and political goals. But ultimately, the XNET artists do not distinguish between the two. As citizens we need to act in order to prevent corruption and irresponsibility. This is why XNET organized a crowd-funding campaign to finance their continuing prosecution of bank executives. […] The trial and the play are two faces of one process of citizen engagement initiated by XNET. On the 23rd February 2017, Miguel Blesa was sentenced to six years imprisonment, and Rodrigo Rato to four and a half, on charges related to the black credit cards scandal. They both appealed to the Supreme Court and are currently not in jail thanks to their 'exemplary' conduct during the trial.[302]

Community art need not be as direct as this to be politically engaged. In Porto, Pele has been making community theatre for 15 years, with working class communities, deaf and disabled people, and others on the edges of the city's cultural space. Sometimes the work is principally about visibility and presence; sometimes it exposes tensions in local politics, for instance in the negative effect of Porto's growing tourism economy is having on local people. Pele have worked in the local prison, creating a theatre piece performed by the inmates and seen by a festival audience. The tensions of that work were explored in a later conference involving representatives of the Ministry of Justice. SAMP in Leiria and MEF in Lisbon, have also made art with young offenders, contributing both to individual lives and institutional change. These organisations, all supported by the PARTIS programme of the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, are among many who are using participatory art to work with institutions. The uncertainties caused by the financial crisis have opened some doors that were previously closed and made it possible to work on less unequal terms than before.

The post-2008 crises in Greece, Spain, Italy, Ireland and Portugal have been very damaging and they are not over yet. Elsewhere, the fallout has led to public spending cuts felt most by the poor, and authoritarian politics, especially in eastern Europe. Many art-ists working with communities have resisted these changes. In Macedonia, the

Contemporary Art Center has created several politically charged public interventions with strong participatory elements. And then there are the countries in or close to Europe that have experienced war or revolution, including Ukraine, Tunisia and Turkey. Syrian artists have bravely made their voices heard, even from within the benighted country. In Egypt, artists working with communities have experienced a wild ride during the shifting forces of revolution and counter-revolution. Under the current regime, Heba El Cheikh continues the work of Mahatat for contemporary art collective, which she co-founded in 2011, but cautiously, aware of traps on all sides. Working in Cairo and smaller cities of the Delta and Canal Regions, Mahatat creates performances, public art and small tours, always in partnership with local individuals and institutions.

In 2017, Heba and her colleagues began working in the Cairo neighbourhood of Ezbet Khairallah, known for its hard-working craftsmen and close-knit community. Their first initiative responded to local skills, through the design and construction of sculptural street installations, but it became evident that this did not meet a real need. It did open local debate though and led to the idea of building a small open-air theatre on a hillside overlooking the city, a place where the community could share and celebrate its own culture. With a design (by architect Samir El Kordy) agreed, construction happened quickly with lots of willing hands. Stage and backdrop are made of timber, with fittings for stage lights to be brought in as needed. Masrah El Ezba (the Village Theatre) saw its first performance on 17 October 2017, with traditional dance and music, hip-hop, circus and popular music by the neighbourhood's young talents. The 'auditorium'—standing room only—was packed, and people watched from nearby buildings and rooftops. Through such mutually respectful participatory art, groups like Mahatat help protect an open, inclusive cultural space in Egypt.

Experiences such as these represent some of the more valuable participatory art work now being made. In the last 15 years community art has become embedded throughout and beyond Europe, taken up by a generation of young artists who see it as an empowering resource in a time of insecurity. Commitment to these values is often strongest where there is least state support for them. But if there is no help, there is no obligation either: less security, but more free-

FUN PALACES (see page 67)

MAHATAT (see page 184)

DEAD GOOD GUIDES

After leading Welfare State International for almost 40 years, John Fox and Sue Gill laid the company to rest on April Fools' Day in 2006. The curtain had just fallen on Longline Opera, a final celebration of community, nature and history. They gave their Ulverston base to another arts organisation, sent their archives to Bristol University, and went home to the Beach House, where, at an age when other people retire, they started a new company, Dead Good Guides. For years John and Sue had burrowed imaginatively into the unique land and seascape that is Morecambe Bay. In exploring its particularity, they revealed its global connections, through art about the unbalanced relationship between human beings and the earth.

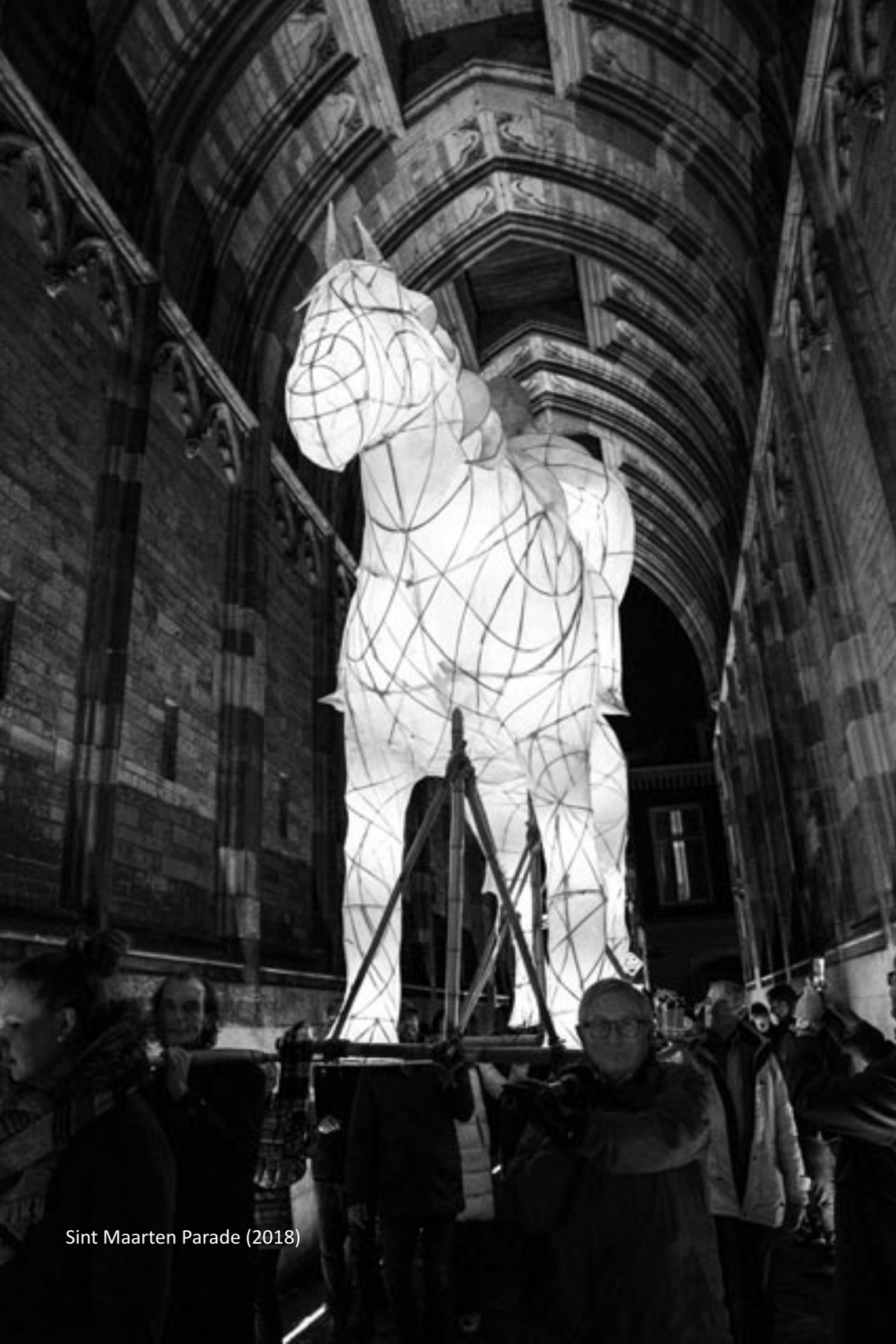
Today, they invite people to join them in creating temporary installations on the foreshore, taking sound walks, planting crops or writing poetry. They offer creative rites of passage training courses, and research land management in the 'Wildernest' project. Any remaining distinctions between process and product wash away, as workshop, performance, poem, sculpture, ceremony and social life merge into a single world where everyone is able to find their own place, talent and voice. The spectacle of their earlier work has been succeeded by a quiet humility, working towards a better, more creative and more generous way of being in the world.

dom, or at least, more independence. It is hard to survive as a freelance community artist in Greece, Italy or Spain; it is harder still in Macedonia, Morocco, Egypt or Lithuania. So young artists are forming groups, as they did in the early years of community art. Being part of a collective brings strength, confidence and new ideas. It is also an expression of common purpose. Some of them have studied art but others are trained in psychology, social sciences, politics, computing or education. They act as artists, but diffidently, not always using the word. Many have no personal practice, and are unconcerned about art world career or reputation. They tend to be where people live or work, and in sites that shape and give meaning to the art. That takes many forms because it responds to a situation and a group of people. It is often performative, but digital and online tools are also used. It usually has strong ideas and crosses lightly the boundaries of aesthetics, form, theory and genre. It might draw simultaneously on traditional, popular, folk, classical, commercial, hip-hop and other artistic languages. The artists are aware of ideas about the social impact of participatory art developed since the 1990s, and the discourse of socially-engaged art, but they use them lightly, as resources not prescriptions. They are wary of taking on the policy agenda of institutions they mistrust, preferring to set their own objectives together. They are committed to the people they work with, and want them to benefit from taking part, but they look for social change in lived experience.

Mostly in their twenties and thirties, these young artists have grown up in states retreating from past commitments, in precarious and unequal economies, with computers, smartphones and social media, and in a multipolar world dominated by climate change, globalisation and terrorism. They do not imagine or respond to the world as did the artists of the baby boom generation and, naturally, I don't always understand them. I sometimes find myself questioning their approach and practice, knowing too that my questions are unimportant. What is important is that this third generation is renewing community art, in theory, form and practice, which is how it will survive and flourish. They are taking it in both hands to make it serve the needs of the society they want. They do not seek the art world's help or permission, nor do they need them from the previous generation of community artists.

It would be futile to revive the Salford Lyceum, or the Oxford and Bermondsey Shakespeare Society, or Welfare State International. Each generation takes ideas and inspiration from its predecessors but each must also create art in ways and for reasons that are meaningful in its own time. Human dignity, equality and social justice, like the capacity in everyone to express themselves artistically and create meaning in the world, will always be motivating goals for some artists. How they pursue them is part of the evolving story of participatory art and cultural democracy.

IV Participatory art next



Sint Maarten Parade (2018)

12 Hope in uncertainty

> Hope locates itself in the premise that we don't know what will happen and that in the spaciousness of uncertainty is room to act. When you recognize uncertainty, you recognize that you may be able to influence the outcomes—you alone or you in concert with a few dozen or several million others. Hope is an embrace of the unknown and the unknowable […] It's the belief that what we do matters even though how and when it may matter, who and what it may impact, are not things we can know beforehand.
>
> **Rebecca Solnit**[303]

Historic, and welcome

This book has argued that the normalisation of participatory art is a historic, and welcome, realignment in contemporary ideas of art. It marks the reunification of two traditions of art making—fine art and everything else. The Enlightenment's reinvention of art as a self-aware and socially-critical act was a revolutionary spark that produced at least two centuries of creative innovation. It profoundly shaped the modern world, and its human value is immense. Yet it did not have only positive effects. It led to the devaluation of existing art practices and the cultural marginalisation of most people, except as consumers of art. As the social standing of the professional artist rose, that of the applied, amateur and occasional artist fell. Many people resisted this by using the new ideas for emancipatory purposes and

sustaining existing artistic practices and traditions. They worked together in formal and informal associations, finding strength in solidarity and adapting their practice with changing times. Community art was the latest expression of this dissenting voice in art—not the familiar rebel claiming his own place in the salon, but another, more subversive voice that refused to accept the salon at its own estimation. And because Europe has slowly, often painfully and despite setbacks, become more democratic, those who see participation in the cultural life of the community as a right have grown in numbers, confidence and strength. Participatory art, once disdained, has become normal. That is a historic, welcome realignment in our idea of art.

Historic? Not everyone will be convinced that the rise of participatory art is more than a passing fashion. Faith in art as a source of transcendent, universal value is resilient, and aligned with some powerful social interests. The word historic is intended to express my view that the normalisation of participatory art marks the end of long period in which one concept of art and its place in human affairs has dominated. I think that is happening but I cannot be sure. My hypothesis may be falsified by events. However, whether or not it turns out to be true, I am sure that the struggle for fair participation in cultural life will not end. It never does. It only moves to new sites of symbolic contention. Social justice is a process, not a destination, if only because we do not agree what it is. The normalisation of participatory art will not end conflict about the value of art or the legitimacy of judgement. But, for now at least, it creates a more open, fluid situation. In that uncertainty, there is hope for a more equitable access to art's sense-making potential and for a more democratic settlement.

Welcome? Again, not everyone will agree, especially if they are invested in the system that is passing. The authority to determine value will always be sought after. But it seems reasonable to expect that art will be enriched if more people participate in its creation, if only because that will increase the probability of exceptional talent being recognised. The alternative is to believe in what Pierre Bourdieu called 'the miracle of the unequal class distribution of the capacity for inspired encounters with works of art and high culture'.[304] Equally, the belief that art is good implies that people are enriched by contact with it, and there can be no closer contact than creation. There is, objectively, no good reason to fear that more equitable participation will

damage art. That would imply lack of confidence in art's power to resist control or subversion, but that is not borne out by history.[305]

The normalisation of participatory art is welcome in itself and for making the right of cultural participation a reality to more people. It is welcome too for another reason. Europe is experiencing a period of upheaval and insecurity not seen since the fall of Soviet Communism, or perhaps even the aftermath of the Second World War. There are local pressures, such as the refugee crisis and financial austerity, and universal ones, including climate change, globalisation, robotics and war. Much that was taken for granted is now in question.

The suggestion that art has any relevance to such existential threats would seem absurd—except that people *are* making participatory art in, and in response to, very precarious situations. I know of projects with refugees in Lisbon, Barcelona and Helsinki, action to reclaim public space in Alexandria, Zagreb and Athens, social theatre with communities in Porto, London and Bologna… The examples in this book are the tip of an iceberg. Art is not a solution to economic, political or social difficulties—but it can be a response. These experiences show how participatory art can help us live through difficult times by enabling us to express pain, anger and hope, make friends and find allies, imagine alternatives, share feelings and be accepted. The artistic act is a means of agency in the world, a way to speak and to be heard. When it is made by professional and non-professional artists together, it becomes an expression of shared humanity, different voices in harmony, listening to one another. It becomes a commitment to the idea that we have more in common than separates us, not least in our common human dignity.

So yes, the normalisation of participatory art is welcome, very welcome. It has not come a moment too soon.

What participatoy art needs

Participatory art is more extensive, more diverse and more secure than it has been in my lifetime. That is thanks to the tenacity over decades of people making good art in bad conditions, explaining the value of what they are doing, and advocating for it as a human right. They have been supported by far-sighted allies, including cultural leaders, civil society actors and foundations. Attitudes in the institu-

tions of cultural and political power are changing but not many are yet dependable partners. Most politicians have still to understand how their electors' relationship with art changed, so they follow rather than lead. And that is in the prosperous countries: elsewhere, the position of community artists is often much more fragile.

In Britain, participatory art is at a tipping point. It will continue to grow, for the reasons I have given, but how that happens will be influenced by choices that lie with public institutions: the Arts Councils in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, art schools and universities, local councils and services. That is also, of course, a matter for government, which finances, regulates and, to some degree, controls them. Until now, because participatory art has struggled for recognition, it has had to work much harder than other parts of the publicly-supported cultural sector. Do more, with less and prove the outcomes. It is a bit like trying to walk up a down escalator, and keep up with everyone else.

That must change if participatory art is to fulfil its potential in society alongside conventional artistic production. It is a matter of fairness but of self-interest too. The normalisation described in the first chapter will not be sustained without structural change in how the country's institutions support participatory art. Without that help, it will continue to grow, but in dissent. There is much to be said for that—it has characterised community art's relationship with the art world for decades—but if cultural democracy is the goal, eternal opposition is failure. If a more democratic, inclusive and creative participatory art practice is to develop, if some of the promise described in this book is to be fulfilled, the institutions concerned need to take action now. There are three things that participatory artists most need: money, trust and professional development.

Resources

Participatory art receives more public funding today than it did, but that is still a very small proportion of public budgets for culture. What's more, the expansion of funding has produced an increase in volume of work rather than changing the conditions of its creation. Many participatory art organisations and artists are not much better resourced than they were in the past—there are just more of them. Commitment and imagination overcome a lot, but quality cannot be

separated entirely from materials, equipment, facilities, training and time. Underpaid, overworked artists cannot do their best work. Participants are short-changed: most in need, they receive least. And, over time, the artists themselves burn out.

There have been attempts over the decades to set minimum fees and working conditions for freelance artists but it requires commissioners to take responsibility for their own expectations. That is easy to avoid while there are idealistic young people looking for work. Unpaid 'training opportunities' and internships are symptoms of an abusive system whose actions betray its words. As ever, they privilege those with existing capital. The conditions in which participatory artists work should match those of other artists (and they should be better and fairer across the board). Arts Councils could be working with the participatory arts sector to set benchmarks that protect artists and participants.

This is not only about rates of pay. It also concerns what is paid for and the security that permits people to build a practice and a life. A shift towards project funding in the 1990s placed an unreasonable burden on individual artists and small organisations, whose core costs do not disappear because they are not covered by a grant. All funding bodies should expect to contribute to the overheads artists have to meet, from premises and training to insurance and sick pay. They should also recognise the full extent of the project cycle outlined in Chapter Six and be willing to pay for the time involved in planning, negotiating, evaluating and reporting on work. In short, it is time to end the relentless pressure to deliver more for less. Good participatory art can be created on relatively modest budgets (at least in comparison with other types of art production) but better work depends on adequate resources. Participatory art prioritises people who don't already engage with public cultural services, those who, not by coincidence, often have least resources. Ensuring that they can exercise their right to participate in the cultural life of the community and enjoy the arts takes more care and money, not less. Fair funding of participatory art is, ultimately, a matter of respect.

Trust

Despite the demand for their work, participatory artists remain second-class citizens in the arts funding system. When a choreographer

or curator approaches a funding body they can assume a shared belief in the intrinsic value of dance or contemporary art. A participatory artist in the same position can make no such assumption. The professional expertise of actors, musicians, curators, artists and directors is presumed, their judgement about creative matters trusted. Participatory artists can rarely count on similar esteem. This is not about whether or not an individual artist is admired. It is about different ways of valuing art forms. A grant application for participatory art will be expected to show, each time and in advance, the proposed project's value—its rationale, need, anticipated outputs, outcomes, and legacy. A theory of change or log frame may even be required, as if it were a development project. That would be understandable from a social fund, but this is typically how arts bodies consider participatory work. The limited interest in artistic questions or the applicant's record of work is one problem, but the real concern is the ingrained mistrust of participatory art's intrinsic worth. It is simply not regarded by most people in the art system as a body of knowledge equal to music or theatre. So administrators who rarely have first-hand understanding of the field demand advance guarantees of its value to be verified by evaluation (not experience) on completion.

This doubt about participatory art's value and, implicitly, the expertise of those who male it, has led to simplistic, burdensome and misguided requirements. Apart from the normal monitoring of public funds, there is no reason to evaluate the outcomes of *every* local arts project. It is the equivalent of placing a full-time Ofsted inspector in every classroom—costly, pointless and intrusive. Like teachers, community artists should assess, reflect on and learn from their practice. Self-evaluation is a professional responsibility and doing it well requires training and support, including payment for the time involved. The evaluation effort of funders should be directed by policy and aim to generate new, relevant knowledge to inform future decisions. Investment should be monitored as a matter of course. Much could be learnt from analysis of the quantitative data it produces. There is also a need to recognise the value of art as a source of well grounded qualitative data, acknowledging that artistic creations and the participatory processes by which they are produced, can be at least as valuable in these terms as data sought through social science or management methodologies. Art too is a form of knowledge.

URBAN DIG

In an Athens street, a man promises to rebuild a theatre to sing the people's songs. Nearby, a woman dances on old CDs, while another tells her tale from the bars of a dark basement. There are performers on phone booths, trapped between glass doors, and walking the streets, all to the music of a band whose singer has her tiny baby strapped to her chest. This passionate, poetic event is the culmination of Urban Dig's year-long 'excavation' of Omonia Square, in collaboration with its inhabitants, in search of old stories and new meanings, dreams, connections and human dignity.

Urban Dig is a collective of planners, performers, designers, architects, theatremakers. Engineers and artists. When the Greek financial crisis swept away the public commissions on which they had worked, they rethought their approach and purpose. Without public funds or support, they responded by working with people to look for creative responses to the hardships facing everyone. Necessity allowed the emergence of a unique methodology for mapping the fabric, history, experience and hopes of people and place. The research nourishes site-specific performances that make visible human needs and desires, and change the memory of a neighbourhood, already changed for its residents by the process of discovery. It is the world of cafés, open-air planning events, interviews, walking tours, conversations and shared moments that—when done in public space in a seriously playful and artistic way—help build trust and create change, new optimism and a greater ownership of the city by its people. It is a new art for an old situation.

REFUGIACTO

In 2004, the Portuguese Council for Refugees began using drama to support its language classes. What began as practical initiative for social integration has matured into a diverse and creative theatre group, whose performances reflect the interaction of people with very different skills and sensibilities. The short plays they co-create reflect the thoughts, feelings, experiences of life shared by the members. The group has developed its theatre skills through artistic workshops led by professionals, including work with Sofia Cabrita, supported by the PARTIS programme. Interest in and demand for its work has grown with the beginnings of the refugee crisis. Those who have been part of the theatre company, have found it a profound, life-changing experience.

Omid Bahrami (above) had left family in escaping Iran, but the theatre group brought new friendships and a sense of belonging. It brought new opportunities too, including a chance to take part in an intensive theatre project in Italy, where he worked closely with female actors. Having grown up in a segregated society, he was initially intimidated by this, but the supportive atmosphere allowed him to make friends across the gender gap. Through such experiences he has come to feel at home in European society, and begun a career in health care. But he remains a committed member of RefugiActo, for the happiness it gives him, and because of its work in communicating the situation of refugees to the fellow-citizens of his adopted country. In RefugiActo, the personal and the political are inseparable.

Evaluation is a complex and demanding process. Grantees need effective approaches to self-evaluation, but external evaluation of participatory art should be used only when there is clear value in doing so. External evaluation by independent experts of a representative or targeted sample of projects would produce a better return on investment. It would also be worth commissioning meta-analyses of the vast bodies of data funders now hold. This multitiered approach (effective monitoring, self-evaluation, targeted external evaluation and research into historic data) would create knowledge that could improve practice, policy and spending decisions. But only if commissioners had systems to reflect on, learn from and respond to the information they produce. Reports do not in themselves produce change. Information flows like treacle, not water. Huge quantities of research have been produced about participatory art in Britain during the past 15 years. How much has been read by anyone not involved in the work? Extracting and applying the knowledge buried in these data graveyards requires commitment from those who commission and assess participatory art. That could begin by committing to generate less but better data. The present approach is wasteful, interferes in the artistic process and undermines trust. In 2002, the philosopher, Onora O'Neill, was already warning:

> The new accountability is widely experienced not just as changing but (I think) as distorting the proper aims of professional practice and indeed as damaging professional pride and integrity.[306]

The position has only detriorated since then. The culture of literalist accountability is widespread in arts management and the burden falls hardest on the participatory arts sector where, as O'Neill goes on to note, it provides 'incentives for arbitrary and unprofessional choices'. We need a fundamental rethink of how, when and why participatory art is evaluated and what use is made of the results. And that depends on commissioners beginning to trust participatory art and the expertise of those who practice it.

Professional development

With adequate resources and trust participatory art would be in a position to address its weaknesses in professional development. Young artists can now study various models of applied theatre, par-

ticipatory art and socially engaged practice, full time or as modules in other degrees, but opportunities to build on that knowledge after graduation are limited. That is largely due to the structural weaknesses already discussed, but it is also a failure to take control of an issue that was already being discussed in the 1970s. More could be done within the sector, for example through in-work training, short courses, placements, apprenticeships, mentoring and so on. Partnership with higher education could provide theoretical resources, accreditation and practical support.

Professional networks play a critical role in some disciplines. People Dancing, Sound Sense and Engage have been vital, respectively, in community dance, community music and gallery education. But there are other fields without similar membership organisations, while participatory art as a whole is constrained by the absence of a national voice since the end of the National Association of Community Artists in 1987. ArtWorks Alliance, a network formed in 2015 with support from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, might fill that gap. It already plays a valuable role in organising forum meetings and through an online knowledge bank, but it is still small and its focus is on organisations rather than the freelance artists most in need of support.

It is easier to travel and network today than it was in the 1980s, but freelance artists rarely have funds for it. Travel bursaries would allow them to see work in other places and learn from their peers. There are EU programmes, such as Creative Europe, but small organisations often lack the capacity to apply for and manage these funds. An exception is Acta, which has run community theatre festivals in Bristol with European funds, as well as having an admirable commitment to professional development and university partnerships. On a much larger scale is Tandem, an exchange programme for cultural managers in Europe and neighbouring regions (including the Middle East and North Africa), jointly managed by MitOst and the European Cultural Foundation. Participants work on joint projects and spend at least two weeks in each other's countries, learning about different cultures, art systems and ways of working. Tandem has been a valuable route for training in participatory and cross-border work, but there is a limit to what a single programme can do.

Bound up as it is in time, place and voluntary work, participatory art is difficult to present in the art world's usual formats, which contributes to its isolation and low media profile. Solutions are beginning to be found, though they are still uncommon. The small team behind Rotterdam's International Community Art Festival have achieved outstanding results in the past 15 years, creating Europe's most important platform for participatory art and its best opportunity for networking. For 10 years, the Spanish Ministry of Culture and the British Council have supported a conference and festival on inclusion in the performing arts that has contributed to a huge growth of interest in the field. The more recent showcases organised by the Fundação Calouste Gulbenkian in Lisbon have helped people working in participatory art get to know each other's work and raised public awareness of the field. In Porto, Pele has independently organised four community art festivals under the title MEXE, presenting Portuguese and international theatre work alongside academic seminars. Undertaken on shoestring budgets, such examples show that imaginative solutions can be found and that there is a hunger for the opportunities to meet and learn that they offer. But they do not exist in most European countries and most artists do not have the means to attend anyway. Not all participatory art's challenges are straightforward but this one is. Support from national and European funds could make a big difference to the sector.

These examples show that pathways to professional development exist, but they need strengthening and expanding. Without that, participatory art will continue to rely too much on young, inexperienced (and cheap) artists, while older ones leave for career opportunities or greater security. The weakness of the critical and theoretical base is closely related to this. For an artistic practice half a century old, community art has produced few critical texts. There are reports of variable quality, but serious consideration of the practice or theory is much less well developed. That too is the result of funders' narrow focus on results. There is too much about *what*, and not enough about *how* or *why*. As community art enters its fifties, there are signs of a growing interest in its history, and it can only be hoped that will develop into a flourishing discourse about current and future practice. Perhaps that will also help win trust and unlock proper resources.

What participatory art does not need

After 50 years of creative invention and achievement, participatory art does not need discovering. It does not need the condescension of those comfortably settled at the table, or their left-overs. It does not need to be told its own history, or damned with faint praise. It does not need colonisation, exploitation or development. It does not need to be appropriated, polished or institutionalised. It does not need to wipe its shoes at the door. It does not need educating or relocating. Participatory art does not need to hear that it is good *for*, or considering *that*, or would be better *if*... It does not need to be told what to do, when, for whom, how and why. It does not need to justify its 'quality' or prove its 'impact'. It does not need help nor permission. It does not need to serve anyone's politics: it has politics of its own. It does not need to put a tiger in anyone's tank.[307] It does not need to wait.

Participatory art is here, now, live. Participatory art has won, because it opens doors, empowers, challenges, delights and confronts. Because it values relationship and community. Because it is an open resource and a human right. Because the world is changing and it helps meet that change. Because it matters to so many.

A co-operative art

> By inverting the approach and giving potency to what already exists, we have sought a new practice, built on enchantment, magic and art, valuing the initiatives of those who *do* and wish to continue *doing*. This different form of relationship between the state and society opens a gap, a small crack towards a new paradigm of the state.
>
> **Célio Turino**[308]

This is a wonderful time to be making participatory art. Acceptance is making it possible to work on a scale, with people and in ways that could scarcely have been imagined even 20 years ago. Technology has brought the means of artistic production and distribution within easy reach. Education and democracy are opening art's emancipatory potential to more people than ever. The ideas and methods of participatory art enable people to share the process of creation in ways they find meaningful. The numbers now involved, and their growing

awareness of each other's work, means that it is becoming possible to imagine the emergence of a movement—that is to say a sense of shared purpose among people making participatory art similar to that which existed in the 1970s and early 1980s. Certainly, it is possible to feel that at ICAF or MEXE, as you meet and see the work of people from across the world.

And yet, as I write, democracy, tolerance and human rights seem more vulnerable than at any time I have known. Like most people, there is little I can do to protect them, except to work with friends and allies in the field I know. Community art enacts democratic action and tolerance. It is an expression and a defence of human rights. More simply, it is people learning to create art together, to make sense of their situation, and to find ways to improve things. Its immediacy and rootedness are far from the grand, rhetorical gestures that characterise other kinds of art. Mostly, community art passes unnoticed, except in the places and among the people who are involved. But in that apparent limitation is strength because participation is a commitment and a lived experience that empowers people.

We may be confronted by crises and uncertainties, but we have these resources with which to meet them. Participatory art enables us to do that together, democratically, because few of us are strong enough to do it alone. Societies belong to people, not governments. They are built through relationships, not treaties, in what we do, not what we say. Most of us want to live in peace with others. Most of us accept that people are different. Most of us know that life is short and precious. There is a great deal to do to overcome the problems we now face, whether in Europe or elsewhere, and much of it is in the hands of governments, corporations and international bodies. Where we live though, among our neighbours, we do have power to make a difference. Cardboard Citizens, Pele, Urban Dig, Streetwise Opera, Banlieues Bleues, Movimento de Expressão Fotográfica, Cork Community Art Link, More Music, Akcija, A Bao A Qu, El Colegio del Cuerpo, Ustat Shakirt, X-Church—these and thousands of other groups are doing that already. Art does not change the world, but it does change the people who change the world. Participatory art empowers and emancipates. It strengthens community. It is a source of hope in uncertainty.

Notes

Living Heritage Project (2004)

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5x5x5=creativity	Forest of Imagination
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Black and white photos

Malcolm X Elders, 'We Have Overcome', (2012)
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Sint Maarten Parade (2018)
Utrecht, Netherlands, photo Bas van Setten

Living Heritage Project (2004)
Satu Mare, Romania, photo François Matarasso

Bibliography

There is a lot of informal and online material about participatory art, partly because mainstream publishers have produced little on the subject. That makes it difficult to know what to list here. I have chosen to include only books that it should be easy to find in a library or bookshop (perhaps secondhand). References to online reports and websites are in the relevant endnote: all were verified on 26.08.2018. A fuller bibliography will be found on the project website. I have not included links to project websites, since they can go out of date. An internet search will find most of them, but links to the projects mentioned here will also be found at: www.arestlessart.com

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Endnotes

Maclear 2017: 145

2 The different ways in which I use those terms is explained at the beginning of Chapter One and more theoretically in Chapter Three.

3 Between 2011 and 2015, I worked on a project called Regular Marvels, that used art as a social research method. It focused on topics undervalued by the art world, including amateur theatre, ageing artists and artists with experience of migration. Five books were published and can be downloaded free from www.regularmarvels.com

4 My way of making participatory art I call community art: cf. Chapter Three.

5 For a fuller account explanation of the parallels and differences between participatory art and community art see Chapter Three.

6 I am indebted to Joel Anderson for the qualifier 'full, free and equal', and the arguments set out in his working paper for the now closed Platform for Intercultural Europe (Anderson, J., & Kaur-Stubbs, S., 2010, *Intercultural Dialogue, Enabling free, full and equal participation*, Brussels).

7 Most of what we think about art, and especially about its value, must be considered belief since it cannot, in Karl Popper's terms, be falsified. That does not make it unimportant: faith moves mountains. But it should make us wary of what is said and of the misapplication of scientific concepts to an essentially human experience.

8 'Arts Council' refers to the public body established in 1946 by the British government to distribute state funding to independent arts organisations. The organisation operates at 'arm's length' from government, in the sense that ministers do not make funding decisions, but since it depends on grant-in-aid, its thinking tends to mirror that of government. At different times, it has been called the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Arts Council of England and Arts Council England (its current title); parallel bodies exist in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, as well as in some other countries that have followed the British model. For the

sake of simplicity, the term 'Arts Council' is used in this book to describe the English body and its predecessor, the ACGB, but its beliefs and response to community art (and later to participatory art) are similar to those of other cultural institutions in Western Europe.

9 Cf. Shaw 1987: 130-138

10 'But what is culture–really? Not an after-dinner pastime for affluent people. Not social therapy. Not that which comes after everything else. Culture is—well, it's a matter for politicians,' From the opening remarks of Kjølv Egeland, Norwegian Minister of Church and Culture, to the Ad Hoc Conference of European Ministers with Responsibility for Cultural Affairs. Oslo, Norway, 15-17 June 1976 (Council of Europe, *Oslo 1976, Report of the Conference*, Strasbourg 1976, pp 12-13)

11 See Matarasso & Sarker 1993; Matarasso 1994 & 1997.

12 Matarasso 1997: 85

13 http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/other-venue/exhibition/turner-prize-2015/turner-prize-2015-artists-assemble

14 http://www.tate.org.uk/visit/tate-modern/tate-exchange

15 http://www.visitmima.com/

16 Vicky Featherstone speaking to *The Stage*, 3 March 2006, https://www.thestage.co.uk/features/2006/home-work-national-theatre-of-scotland-and-vicky-featherstone/

17 Creative Partnerships closed in 2011, due to government funding cuts imposed after the 2008 financial crisis, but Creativity, Culture & Education, the organisation set up to manage it, continues its work, mostly outside the UK. https://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/programme/creative-partnerships/For the educational outcomes of Creative Partnerships in England, see Durbin, B., et al., 2010, *The Impact of Creative Partnerships on School Attainment and Attendance*, National Foundation for Educational Research, Slough.

18 http://gwanwyn.org.uk/cartrefu/

19 http://meetmeatthealbany.org.uk

20 https://www.syha.co.uk/get-involved/moments-of-joy

21 http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/creative-people-and-places-fund

22 University of Hull, 2018, *Cultural Transformations: The Impacts of Hull UK City of Culture 2017, Preliminary Outcomes Evaluation*, Culture, Place and Policy Institute University of Hull, p. 40. See also Hull 2017, *Creative Communities Programme* guidance brochure https://www.hull2017.co.uk/app/uploads/2016/03/H2017_CCP_GUIDANCENOTES_FB16-2.pdf

23 http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b008y125

24 https://www.lewishamandgreenwich.nhs.uk/the-trust-choir

25 Knight, T., & Ruscoe, S., 2012, *The London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games*,

London, p.44

[26] Jenny Sealey speaking to *What's on Stage*, 25 January 2016 https://www.whatsonstage.com/london-theatre/news/jenny-sealey-people-are-fearful-of-difference_39588.html

[27] http://demos.philharmoniedeparis.fr

[28] https://fondationcarasso.org/fr/objectifs-et-programmes-0

[29] http://www.kiertuenayttamo.fi/esitykset/toinen-koti/

[30] https://obrasociallacaixa.org/en/cultura

[31] https://www.friesland.nl/en/european-capital-of-culture/participate

[32] http://icafrotterdam.com

[33] https://www.eda.admin.ch/deza/en/home/activities-projects/activities/research-culture/culture-art.html. See also Matarasso, F., 2013, *Cultural Encounters, Swiss Cultural Programme in South Eastern Europe, 1999-2012*, Sarajevo.

[34] https://www.creativitycultureeducation.org/case-studies/

[35] https://www.vichealth.vic.gov.au/be-healthy/be-healthy-arts

[36] Finkelpearl 2014

[37] In 2018, the House of Commons Digital, Culture, Media and Sport Committee began an inquiry into the social impact of participation in culture and sport, a further sign of the policy importance of participatory art: https://www.parliament.uk/business/committees/committees-a-z/commons-select/digital-culture-media-and-sport-committee/inquiries/parliament-2017/socialimpact

[38] Jaspers' term *Grenzsituationen* literally means 'border situation' but in English translations and writing about Jaspers, the term appears also as 'ultimate situations', 'limit situations' and 'boundary situations': I have preferred the term 'border' in this context for its metaphorical resonance.

[39] Jaspers. K. 1950, *Einführung in die Philosophie,* Zürich, trans. Mannheim. R. 1951, *Way to Wisdom, An Introduction to Philosophy*, London, p. 18-19.

[40] Thornhill, C., 2011, 'Karl Jaspers', *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy* (Spring 2011 Edition) https://plato.stanford.edu/archives/spr2011/entries/jaspers/

[41] Sartre 1973: 19ff.

[42] Bakewell 2016: 82

[43] The artistic implications of Fada's work and participatory art in general are discussed in Chapter Five.

[44] Williams 1989: 4

[45] In this book, the word art refers to the European tradition in which I have been educated and worked. Although, for historical reasons, that has had a global influence, the relevance of these ideas to art practices developed in other places, times and cultures is for others to say.

46 https://en.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/art

47 http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/creed-work-no-227-the-lights-going-on-and-off-t13868

48 Shiner 2003: 80-81

49 Carl Linnaeus (1707-1778) was a Swedish botanist credited with formalising the modern system of naming organisms.

50 This category error continues to create misleading expectations about the impact of art and specifically how participatory art should be evaluated.

51 http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/andre-equivalent-viii-t01534

52 http://www.welldressing.com/extra.php

53 http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artists/carl-andre-648/carl-andre-works-art-dont-mean-anything

54 Tolstoy 1995: 38

55 Manguel 1997: 7

56 Tolkien 1966: Foreword

57 Stevens 1997: 845

58 Read 1955: 156-7

59 http://www.un.org/en/universal-declaration-human-rights/ This right has since been affirmed and expanded in a succession of further international treaties: see Anderson, J. 2010: 14

60 ACGB 1974: 7

61 Internal division was a weakness in the first generation of community art and contributed to its exhaustion and its discrediting in the eyes of many: see Chapter Nine.

62 It has been said that definition is an act of appropriation (Jeffers and Moriarty 2017: 19) but if so it is something done by anyone who names their profession or practice. Paradoxically, such terms cannot be definitive: they are only ways for us to think more precisely about what we do.

63 The idea of what makes someone an artist proposed in this book is at odds with established practice, including where administration is concerned. In Germany, for example, an artist with a relevant degree is regarded as professional for employment and welfare purposes, which means, among other things, that applications for grants are regarded as job applications. But I am concerned here with philosophy, art and ethics, not public administration.

64 Gardner 2011: 105ff.

65 See Matarasso 2012b: 65-66

66 When Dennis Kimetto claimed the World Marathon Record at Berlin in 2014, nearly 29,000 people followed him over the finish line. His achievement was

global, theirs personal, but all were worthwhile.

67 Williams 1989: 8

68 Flesher Fominaya, 2014. I am grateful to Julia Rone for drawing my attention to this research.

69 Cf. Nicolas Bourriaud, Grant Kester, Tom Finkelpearl, Claire Bishop and others

70 Finkelpearl 2014

71 Finkelpearl 2014

72 http://www.antonygormley.com/projects/item-view/id/245

73 http://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-liverpool/exhibition/antony-gormley-testing-world-view-field-british-isles. (The title of this work is variously listed as 'Field of British Isles' and 'Field for the British Isles'.)

74 The term 'relational aesthetics' was coined by the French curator, Nicolas Bourriaud in *Relational Aesthetics* (Dijon, 2002, English text)

75 Suzanne Lacy, *The Crystal Quilt* (1985-87) http://www.suzannelacy.com/the-crystal-quilt/

76 Similar approaches also exist in community art, for instance in the 'Invisible Theatre' of Augusto Boal (Boal 2000: 143-147)

77 Interviewed by Morgan Meaker, *The Guardian*, 21 October 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/culture-professionals-blog/2014/oct/21/alistair-hudson-mima-modern-art

78 Crehan 2011: 8-9

79 http://www.oxfordreference.com/view/10.1093/acref/9780195113075.001.0001/acref-9780195113075

80 Matarasso 2012a: 73-81

81 Charles Taylor, interviewed in *The New Yorker*, 11 November 2016, https://www.newyorker.com/culture/persons-of-interest/how-to-restore-your-faith-in-democracy

82 This might reasonably be thought to constitute a practical theory, grounded in the practice of their art, but one of the weaknesses of participatory art has been its difficulty in translating such thinking into a consistent and communicable set of ideas.

83 'La démocratisation est incontestablement l'une des principales missions des établissements culturels', Tobelem 2016: 24

84 Simon Rattle on the Education Programme of the Berliner Philharmoniker, 27 March 2013: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RTd74dOCkY

85 'Does Culture Matter?' (1940) in Forster 1951: 110

86 Baker 2014: 71-4

87 Sage 2016-17 Annual Record http://sagegateshead.com/about-us/annual-review/

[88] http://www.thebluecoat.org.uk/content/blue-room

[89] In Francophone countries people who don't attend arts facilities are sometimes called 'les non-publics', a term which is it is hard to imagine using to their face; (cf. Arnaud et al., 2015: 26).

[90] Warwick Commission, 2015, *Enriching Britain: Culture, Creativity and Growth: The 2015 Report by the Warwick Commission on the Future of Cultural Value*, Coventry, page 34. A similar picture of cultural consumption exists in France, where for Françoise Benhamou, it remains '*terriblement élitiste*'. Despite sustained efforts at widening access to the arts, research by the Ministry of Culture found that social differences had changed little between 1973 and 2008 (Benhamou 2015).

[91] Matarasso 2012a: 76, based on data reported in DCMS, 2008, *Our Creative Talent: the voluntary and amateur arts in England*, London

[92] Stella Duffy, interview with the FM, 14 January 2016

[93] In 2018, there were 433 Fun Palaces in nine countries, but detailed figures for the year are not yet available, so data for 2017 is included here.

[94] *Fun Palaces Campaign 2017 Evaluation Report*, http://funpalaces.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Evaluation-2017.pdf

[95] Fleury 2016: 79 (my translation)

[96] https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/creative-people-and-places-fund#section-2

[97] Crossick and Kaszynska 2016: 29

[98] Freire 1972: 58

[99] Freire 1972: 70-71

[100] Freire 1972: 82

[101] http://www.geese.co.uk/about/mission-vision-and-values/

[102] Andy Watson, interview with the author, 26 January 2016

[103] The research was undertaken by Anne Peaker, who had worked in community art since the 1970s, and Jill Vincent, a sociologist at the Centre for Research in Social Policy at Loughborough University, with funding from the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Home Office and the J Paul Getty Jnr Charitable Fund. Its publication by the Home Office 'for distribution to prison governors' helped ensure that the findings were taken seriously within the prison service; (Peaker & Vincent 1990).

[104] https://www.artsincriminaljustice.org.uk

[105] http://www.artsevidence.org.uk

[106] See Matarasso 2013a

[107] Thompson, J. 2000, 'Critical citizenship: Boal, Brazil and theatre in prisons', *Annual Review of Critical Psychology*, Vol. 2, p. 187

[108] Dickson 1995: 24

[109] The theoretical influence of French thought was growing during these years. In *La Reproduction* (1970), Pierre Bourdieu and Jean-Claude Passeron introduced the concept of 'cultural capital', which describes the empowering resources accumulated by individuals through social, economic and educational structures.

[110] In 1968, the distinction between high art and entertainment was beginning to seem meaningless even to those who most benefited from it. The American composer, Ned Rorem, compared the Beatles to Monteverdi, Schumann, Poulenc, and Mozart, describing their appearance 'as one of the most healthy events in music since 1950' because 'they have removed sterile martyrdom from art', *The New York Review of Books*, 18 January 1968.

[111] Graves (2005: 11) cites this with a reference to the 1976 Oslo Report, though these words do not in fact appear in that document: they may come from J. A. Simpson's paper, but I have not been able to verify this.

[112] See Chapter Nine for an account of this period in British community art.

[113] On the limitations of deliberative processes in democratic life, see Talisse, R., 2017, 'New Trouble For Deliberative Democracy', *Les ateliers de l'éthique*, 12(1), 107–123.

[114] In 2018, Amnesty International published research into the abuse of women on Twitter, in which it reported that 'Twitter's failure to adequately respect human rights and effectively tackle violence and abuse on the platform means that instead of women using their voices 'to impact the world', many women are instead being pushed backwards to a culture of silence'. https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/research/2018/03/online-violence-against-women-chapter-1/

[115] Friedländer 1997: 12

[116] http://www.bighart.org/who-we-are/

[117] *Hansard*, 11 November 1947, Vol. 444 cc. 203-321, http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1947/nov/11/parliament-bill#column_206

[118] See, for example, Voluntary Arts, Our Cultural Commons https://www.voluntaryarts.org/Pages/Category/our-cultural-commons ; Understanding Everyday Participation, http://www.everydayparticipation.org; and the Centre for the Understanding of Sustainable Prosperity, https://www.cusp.ac.uk/themes/a/. See also Hadley, S., & Belfiore, E., 2018, 'Cultural democracy and cultural policy', *Cultural Trends*, 27:3, 218-223

[119] Wilson, N., Gross, J. & Bull. A., 2017, *Towards cultural democracy: Promoting cultural capabilities for everyone*, London

[120] Wilson, Gross & Bull 2017: 3

[121] In *Dialectic of Enlightenment* (1947) Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno set out a critique of a 'culture industry' that 'promises to intensify the impoverishment

of the aesthetic material so radically that the identity of all industrial cultural products, still scantily disguised today, will triumph openly tomorrow in a mocking fulfillment of Wagner's dream of the total art work.' Horkheimer, M. & Adorno, T., 2002, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, Stanford University Press.

122 http://culturaldemocracy.uk

123 http://funpalaces.co.uk/about/

124 Higgins 2012: 173

125 White 2015: 42

126 White 2015: 43

127 Cited in White 2015: 43

128 White 2015: 43

129 White 2009: 43; see also work on the social determinants of health by Richard Wilkinson (Wilkinson & Pickett 2009) and Michael Marmot (Marmot 2010)

130 APPG 2017: 154

131 APPG 2017: 73

132 Freire 1972: 69

133 Heaney 1997: 7

134 David Pratley, Regional Director of the Arts Council of Great Britain interviewed by Bernard Ross in *Another Standard*, Nov/Dec 1981, p. 3.

135 Interviewed for the London Community Video Archive, http://www.the-lcva.co.uk/interviews/594b08084566c91512236c7e

136 Kelly, O., 1985, 'In Search of Cultural Democracy', *Arts Express*, October 1985: available at: https://jubileeartsarchive.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/03/In-Search-of-Cultural-Democracy.pdf

137 Barnes 1984: 136

138 Theatre Workshop 2009: lxxv

139 In May 1968, during the unrest in Paris, art students had set up a radical print-shop in the École des Beaux Arts, turning out striking single-colour posters. Using the simplest equipment and methods (e.g. hand-cut paper stencils), they produced tens of thousands of prints in a style that had a significant influence on graphic design in the following decades.

140 Sue Gill, interviewed by FM 23 February 2016

141 Matarasso, F., 'Hawtonville Arts Project' in Kenna et al, 1986: 61

142 In 2015 the Notting Hill Carnival Enterprises Trust's mission was 'To use Carnival arts collaboratively and artistically as a catalyst to facilitate education, engagement, empowerment, entertainment, integration, transformations of perceptions, inspiration', a clear statement of community art values. See Taylor,

E. & Kneafsey. M., 2016 'The Place of Urban Cultural Heritage Festivals: The Case of London's Notting Hill Carnival' (Borowiecki, Forbes & Fresa 2016). As of 2018, the mission has been rewritten: https://nhcarnival.org/about

143 http://www.the-lcva.co.uk/interviews/594b08084566c91512236c7e

144 On the autonomous existence of the work of art, see Bayard 2008

145 Le Guin 1989: 198

146 Quoted in Helmers 2003

147 On the logical inconsistency of relativism, see Kołakowski 1999

148 See http://www.artscouncil.ie/Publications/Literature--English-language-/Weighing-poetry_-Exploring-funding-criteria-for-assessing-artistic-quality/ and Bartlett & Higgins 2018: 11

149 The qualifier 'the extent to which' is intended to show that people's feelings about these things will vary, between them and over time. It does not mean that the variation can or should be measured.

150 Carroll, N., 2000, "Art and Ethical Criticism: An Overview of Recent Directions of Research," *Ethics* 110 (January, 2000): 350–87, p. 350.

151 This principle was first set out in *Defining Values* (Matarasso 1996: 24) and repeated *in Use or Ornament?* (Matarasso 1997: 90)

152 Schlink 1997: 140-141

153 Arnstein, S., 1969, 'A Ladder Of Citizen Participation', *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 35: 4, 216-224

154 Cf. New Economics Foundation 1997: 2 and Tiller 2016: 36

155 There is a parallel debate in participatory development, which has been criticised for masking unequal and even 'tyrannical' power relations in post-colonial and neo-colonial contexts; cf. Cooke & Kothari 2001 and Hickey & Mohan 2004

156 https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/jul/11/i-got-naked-for-spencer-tunick-sea-of-hull-photographer?CMP=Share_iOSApp_Other

157 Nadja Raszewski, Interview with FM, 21 January 2016

158 Cf. Suzy Croft and Peter Beresford, 1992, 'The Politics of Participation' in Craig et al, 2011: 167

159 https://www.restoke.org.uk

160 https://marcvillanuevamir.com/Syria-incomplete-cartography

161 http://www.dasharts.org

162 https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/sierra-160-cm-line-tattooed-on-4-people-el-gallo-arte-contemporaneo-salamanca-spain-t11852

163 These ideas were first explored in Matarasso 2013b, where I set out five stages (a fourth, 'Creation', was concerned with artistic quality) but this now seems unsatisfactory to me.

164 Cf. Matarasso 2013a

165 'L'empowerment articule deux dimensions, celle du pouvoir, qui constitue la racine du mot, et celle du processus d'apprentissage pour y accéder. […] Cela implique une démarche d'autoréalisation et d'émancipation des individus, de reconnaissance des groupes ou des communautés et de transformation sociale.' (my translation); Bacqué & Biewener 2015 (Kindle edition)

166 Carine Osmont, Farnham Fun Palace maker, writing on the Fun Palaces website: http://funpalaces.co.uk/what-happens-after-fun-palaces/

167 Matarasso 1996a: 26

168 Stella Duffy, interview with FM 14 January 2016

169 Shakespeare 2018: 160

170 Banner headline on the front page of Arts Council England website, 23 May 2018, (subsequently removed).

171 Carey 2005: 101

172 Carey 2005: 61. This is one reason why I have never believed that longitudinal studies of the impact of the arts would be as useful as is often suggested.

173 Ruth Daniel, interview with FM 21 January 2016

174 https://inplaceofwar.net/our-work/cultural-spaces/

175 Bartlett & Higgins 2018: 6

176 Moriarty 1997: 17

177 See Heather Piper and Helen Simons 'Ethical Responsibility In Social Research' in Somekh & Lewin (2005: 57) and Simons 2009: 103 ff.

178 Russell 2000: 98

179 Russell 2000: 104

180 http://www.artworksalliance.org.uk/uploads/resources/ArtWorks-code-of-practice.pdf

181 https://www.communitydance.org.uk/membership-services/professional-code-of-conduct

182 https://www.communitydance.org.uk/membership-services/professional-code-of-conduct

183 https://parliamentofdreams.files.wordpress.com/2017/03/2015-time-to-think-peer-reflection.pdf

184 Linton Kwesi Johnson, *Making History*, (1983 Island Records); Kwesi Johnson 2006

185 A notable exception is the work of Robert Hewison on 20th century British cultural policy and its effects.

186 Jeffers and Moriarty 2016

187 It is now also becoming an old person's form too, as artists in the sixties and seventies use the freedom that a pension brings to make work with people outside the arts funding system. In 1970s Britain, the state often unwittingly supported radical artists through unemployment benefits; it is doing so again with the old age pension.

188 'People Get Ready' by Curtis Mayfield, *The Impressions* (1965, ABC Paramount)

189 Shiner 2001: 226

190 They also made dangerous links with nationalism, merging ethnicity, culture and legal rights in ways that could be liberating for some and oppressive of others in Europe's post-imperial territories.

191 Shiner 2001: 121

192 Current critiques of the lack of diversity and social mobility in the cultural industries suggest uncomfortable parallels with the 18th century.

193 This othering extends far beyond participatory art. We are used to terms such as black art or women's art, but there is no equivalent for white men's art because it is claimed as the norm from which others deviate.

194 Arnold 1993: 190

195 In 1913, as Shakespeare was being performed in Bermondsey, Parliament rejected a proposal to establish a National Theatre on the grounds that subsidising the arts was not Government business (Weingärtner 2012 loc. 504)

196 Rose 2010: 80-81

197 Rose 2010: 475

198 Morris 1993: 253

199 Rose 2010: 78

200 This account is from *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*, published in London between 1828 and 1843, and whose title nicely evokes the aspirations of its time. The surviving volumes have been digitised by Google, in a contemporary effort at the diffusion of useful knowledge, and are available online: https://archive.org/details/ThePennyCyclopaediaOfTheSocietyForTheDiffusionOfUsefulKnowledge

201 *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*

202 *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*

203 *The Penny Cyclopaedia of the Society for the Diffusion of Useful Knowledge*

204 This story became known when his great-great grandson, the actor Sir Ian McKellen, took part in a BBC programme about his ancestry: http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2017/01/15/sir-ian-mckellensgreat-great-grandfather-helped-invent-weekend/

205 See Dugast 2011. In Australia, the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts was founded in 1833, four years before the Royal College of Arts in London.

206 https://communityartsunwrapped.com/2014/03/24/where-have-we-come-from-community-arts-to-contemporary-practice/

207 Belfiore and Bennett 2008: 194

208 cf. Matarasso 2013a.

209 Compare Henry Moore's drawings of Londoners sheltering from the Blitz in London Underground tunnels and almost any art produced by totalitarian regimes during the war.

210 *A Canterbury Tale*, the 1944 film by Michael Powell and Emeric Pressburger, is typical in focusing on three ordinary people caught up in a war to defend a romanticised vision of ordered, rural England.

211 Hewison 1995: 41

212 The creation of separate organisations for art and entertainment shows the continuing authority of Enlightenment ideas about culture. The word 'encouragement' in CEMA's name implicitly recognises that its tastes were not always those that people chose for themselves.

213 Marquand 2015: 30

214 British anti-intellectualism and suspicion of 'highbrow' culture remained important in the 1950s, and offered soft targets for some young artists (cf. Kynaston 2009: 141)

215 Paul Laity, 'Pelican Books take flight again', The Guardian, 25 April 2014, https://www.theguardian.com/books/2014/apr/25/pelican-books-take-flight-relaunch

216 Harries 2013: 381

217 Quoted in Bennett, O. (1991) 'British cultural policies 1970-1990', in *Boekmancahier*, jrg. 3, nr. 9, 293-301

218 Carpenter 1996: 27

219 As it had done with the BBC, the British state eschewed direct control of the organisation, and the temptation of censorship it would bring. It invented the 'arm's length principle', so that ministers could issue policy directives but not directly make spending decisions. In subsequent years, that principle has come under severe strain because of the increasing size of public expenditure on culture and its perceived influence on social attitudes and policy. The price of this high-minded independence was—and is—to separate cultural policy from the democratic process, and so create a permanent question about its legitimacy.

220 The charter was revised in 1967, when the phrase 'fine arts exclusively' was replaced simply by 'the arts' (Hewison 1995: 43).

221 http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/about-us/our-mission-and-strategy
The change was made when the Arts Council's Royal Charter was renewed in 1967. The Labour government had appointed Jennie Lee MP (1904-88) as the first ever Minster for the Arts in the Department of Education and Science, and she

published what is still the only White Paper on the arts, securing additional funding and an expansion of the Arts Council's role.

222 West Bromwich Operatic Society, founded in 1937, is one of thousands of amateur theatre company that thrive without public funding or official recognition (Matarasso 2012).

223 Read 1955: 139

224 Appleyard 1984: 28-9

225 Centre 42 was named after a Trades Union Congress resolution calling for more union participation in the arts (Hewison & Holden 2006: 94). Robert Hewison suggests that Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop influenced the adoption of the term 'workshop' by the Left as an emblem of democratic good practice (Hewison 1995: 181).

226 http://www.roundhouse.org.uk/about-us/history-of-the-roundhouse/1960-1970-an-arts-centre-emerges/

227 Hewison 1995: 119

228 See Black, L. 2006, 'Making Britain a Gayer and More Cultivated Country': Wilson, Lee and the Creative Industries in the 1960s, in *Contemporary British History* Vol. 20, No. 3, September 2006, pp. 323–342

229 'Eyes on the Prize', from Mavis Staples, *We'll Never Turn Back*, (2007 ANTI-Records)

230 It continues today, albeit in different terms and between people with less sense of common identity.

231 Morgan, S., 1995, 'Looking back over 25 years' in Dickson 1995: 25

232 Kelly 1984: 137. Most community artists were united in wanting alternative models of cultural production, distribution and reception but there was less agreement about what cultural democracy might be, a difficulty likely to recur today as the term is coming back into use.

233 In 2001, political conflict became art when Jeremy Deller recreated a notorious confrontation between striking miners and police on the site of Orgreave Coking Works in South Yorkshire, with the participation of some of the people involved, other local people and military re-enactors (Bishop 2012: 30-37).

234 Cf. Bishop 2012: 177-191

235 The Association of Community Artists was founded in 1972 and acted as a campaign and information network. It adopted a regional structure in 1980, setting up The Shelton Trust as a national platform to organise conferences and publish a magazine called *Another Standard* until its demise in 1987 following the Sheffield Conference. *Another Standard 86, Culture and Democracy: The Manifesto*, was coordinated by Owen Kelly, John Lock and Karen Merkle, and co-written with nine others. (Kelly, Lock, & Merkel 1986: 58).

236 In 1974, the Association of Community Artists included 149 different groups

(Kelly 1984: 13).

237 Hewison & Holden 2006: 93-94

238 Braden, 1978: 3

239 Ken Turner interviewed in 2015 by Amanda Ravetz for Huw Wahl's film, *Action Space* (2016) at 6:07 to 6:40

240 John Fox, interviewed by FM 23 February 2016

241 Henri 1974: 111 ff.

242 The London Community Video Archive preserves important work from the 1970s and 1980s, as well as documents and interviews with important community filmmakers, some of whom, like Maggie Pinhorn of the Basement Project, continue their work today.

243 Braden, 1978: xvi

244 Crehan 2011: 51

245 Jeffers and Moriarty (2017: 23) largely exclude theatre from their book, on the basis that community art was multidisciplinary and that community theatre did not regard itself as a movement.

246 For information about British Alternative Theatre (1960-1990) see http://www.unfinishedhistories.com

247 Naseem Khan, 'The Public-going Theatre, Community and 'ethnic' theatre', in Craig 1980: 68

248 Kershaw, 1992:175

249 Jellicoe 1987:122

250 McGrath 1981:83

251 http://mkinsight.org/a-brief-history-of-milton-keynes/ (accessed 15.02.17)

252 *Project brief and proposed budget for 'All Change'*, 1976, Living Archive Online http://www.livingarchive.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/all-change/research-process-all-change-an-original-musical-documentary-play-1976-1977/details-of-project-brief-and-proposed-budget-for-all-change
For other material relating to the community theatre production, see http://www.livingarchive.org.uk/content/catalogue_item/all-change

253 'Trenchtown Rock', from Bob Marley and the Wailers, *Live!*, Virgin Records 1975

254 The gap was partly filled when the East Midlands Association for Community Arts newsletter, *Mailout*, took on a national role, which continued after the Association's demise until 2013.

255 Baldry 1981: 146

256 Hewison 1995: 258

257 Crehan 2011: 77

[258] In a 1986 survey, Greenwich Mural Workshop found 34 community printshops in England (including the one I was then running); few of them were operating five years later (Kenna & Medcalf 1986).

[259] Paddington Printshop continues today as London Print Studio http://www.londonprintstudio.org.uk; See Red closed in 1990 https://seeredwomensworkshop.wordpress.com/about-see-red/

[260] These figures are based on the papers of the Community Plays Archive and Database Project held in the V&A Theatre and Performance Collections, https://archiveshub.jisc.ac.uk/data/gb71-thm/41

[261] See Matarasso 2013a

[262] Tusa 1999: 163

[263] Matarasso 2013a: 216

[264] Hewison 2014: 72

[265] Hewison 2014: 64-5

[266] £449 million was spent in London alone, mostly on improving existing cultural facilities such as the Royal Opera House, Sadler's Wells, and the Royal Albert Hall (see Anderson 2002).

[267] https://www.economist.com/special-report/2014/01/06/mad-about-museums

[268] The books were Braden (1978), Kelly (1984) and Dickson (1995).

[269] Matarasso 1997: 79-81. My imprecise use of the term 'cost-effective' is something I would clarify today.

[270] Smith 1998: 134-135

[271] Cf. Bishop 2012: 14

[272] 'The arts, culture and sport are central to the task of recreating the sense of community, identity and civic pride that should define our country. Yet we consistently undervalue the role of the arts and culture in helping to create a civic society—from amateur theatre to our art galleries', 1997 Labour Party Manifesto.

[273] The key criticism, made in a journal article by Paola Merli, was that the research was based on a questionnaire whose results could not justify the interpretation placed on them. But she had not seen the document (which included closed and open questions) or acknowledge that it was one method in a multidisciplinary methodology. The research team included case study researchers, others who looked at particular issues or projects, and authors of working papers; an advisory group with academic members, provided guidance on methodology. The research was undertaken through project visits, participant observation, semi-structured discussion groups and interviews, and an observer group process piloted by Deidre Williams in Australia. The participants' questionnaire, completed by 513 respondents, produced quantitative and qualitative data in that context. (Matarasso 1997: 95ff. and Matarasso, F. 20013, 'Smoke and Mirrors' in *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 20013 vol. 9/3)

[274] Council of Europe 1976: 12-13

[275] Sophie Orlando observes that under New Labour Research into the value of the arts became concentrated on an effort of 'scientification' and a technification of the link between art and its social context that ignored the disparities and complexities in the field of art itself [My translation] ('L'étude de la valeur des arts s'est concentrée sur l'effort de « scientifisation » et sur une technicisation du lien entre l'art et le social en ignorant les disparités et la complexité du champ de l'art lui-même.') Orlando, S., 2010, « *L'artiste agent du changement social » ou comment les politiques culturelles britanniques ont annexé la production artistique au profit du programme du New Labour* in, Marges, 10. 2010 http://marges.revues.org/496

[276] In 1981, television was still limited to evenings, after children's programmes. It shut down around midnight, with a sober 'Good night' from the announcer, followed by the National Anthem. BBC Television launched a breakfast programme in 1983 and broadcast a full daytime schedule for the first time in 1986.

[277] See Red, 2016: 21

[278] Cf. 64 Million Artists 2018

[279] 'Read All About It, (Part III)', Emeli Sandé, from *Our Version of Events*, (2012 Virgin Records)

[280] Morris 1993: 253

[281] From a promotional brochure for the Fun Palace by Joan Littlewood and Cedric Price, 1964, in the Cedric Price Archive at the Canadian Centre for Architecture http://www.cca.qc.ca/en/issues/2/what-the-future-looked-like/32737/1964-fun-palace)

[282] See Gray 2003 & Todorov 2006 for contrasting interpretations of Enlightenment ideas in the modern world.

[283] 'Is it good?' has always been a better question because it opens up others, including what you mean by good, for whom, in which circumstances and for what purposes. Through such questions art makes us philosophers, by requiring us to think critically about our experience, reality, truth and the meaning of existence, as Jaspers recognised.

[284] Van Erven, E., 2016, 'Towards a New Cutting Edge: Where Avantgarde Meets Community Art', *The Drama Review* 60:4, Winter 2016, p. 94. On community development see Craig, G. *et al*, 2011.

[285] https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/matt-hancock-my-priorities-for-the-health-and-social-care-system

[286] http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/creative-people-and-places-fund

[287] ECORYS, 2017, *Creative People and Places, End of Year 3 Evaluation Report*, Birmingham p. 16 http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/year-3-ecorys-report-impact-outcomes-and-future-end-year-3

[288] http://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/blog/nicholas-serota

289 Aboudrar & Mairesse 2016

290 http://www.nouveauxcommanditaires.eu/en/home

291 Cf. Strubbe, R., 2013, *The Search Compass*, Leeuwarden and https://www.friesland.nl/en/european-capital-of-culture/participate

292 https://www.berliner-philharmoniker.de/en/education/

293 Simon Rattle, 27 March 2013:
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6RTd74dOCkY

294 Flesher Fominaya, C., 2014

295 Cf. Harari 2018

296 Oesingmann. K., 2017 *Youth Unemployment in Europe*, ifo DICE Report 1 / 2017 March Volume 15

297 Castells 2015: 130

298 In 2016, five years after the beginning of the Greek financial crisis, a third of the Greek population was at risk of poverty or social exclusion, a proportion exceeded among EU member states only by Bulgaria and Romania. (Eurostat News Release 155/2017 - 16 October 2017)

299 https://www.urbandigproject.org/dourgouti-island-hotel-project

300 Personal interview, 15 December 2016

301 https://obrasociallacaixa.org/en/cultura

302 From a piece about the play written by Julia Rone for the A Restless Art website:
https://arestlessart.com/2017/07/12/anyone-can-do-it/

303 Solnit 2016: xii

304 Bourdieu 1984: 29

305 These lines by Louis MacNeice appeared on the title page of *Use or Ornament?*, 'There is no reason for thinking / That, if you give a chance to people to think or live, / The arts of thought or life will suffer and become rougher, /And not return more than you could ever give.' (MacNeice 1966: 106). They seem equally true today.

306 O'Neill 2002

307 Cf. Gil Scott Heron's *The Revolution Will Not be Televised*, Flying Dutchman Records, 1971.

308 Turino 2014: 122

About the author

François Matarasso (b. 1958) is a community artist whose work embraces creative projects, research and writing. His previous books on participatory art include *Regular Marvels* (1994), *Use or Ornament?* (1997) and *Where We Dream* (2012). He lives in Britain and has experience of work in many European countries. www.parliamentofdreams.com

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