

Space for Art, Space for Learning, Space for Inspiration - a game changer.

Graham Sheffield

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It's a long while ago since art - the arts, were mere glorifications of empire, monarchy, religion, a building - symbols of wealth, of power, of influence, or of the strength and particularity of a culture, from the top to the most humble of craftspeople. The Romans, the Greeks, the Chinese, the Ottomans, the Mughals, the Aztecs, Incas, the pre-Colombians, the European empires of the 18th and 19th centuries.

It's also a long while - 80 years (not much by comparison) since the British Council was founded "to build trust and appreciation for the UK overseas" and to project "the richness of culture in the UK across the world." PLEASE USE QUOTES FROM OUR CHARITABLE PURPOSE...SHORT AS POSS!

These days, in most developed economies, the era of large un-restricted state subsidies for the arts is coming to a close. In others (such as the US), philanthropists and corporate support is increasingly hard to find, except for the blue-chippiest of institutions. But in emerging economies, the BRICS, and others such as the MINT countries, a distinctive policy trend is emerging: a realisation which is clear to them, and bizarrely unclear to the western economies which have led the way for so long - that, in the wake of the massive decline of the traditional manufacturing and industrial economic base, in the wake of the failure of traditional "armed force" to settle disputes, in the wake of the seepage of power from central unitary governments to devolved administrations, to cities, to citizens, and in the wake of the growth of social media and the internet, which has given (for better or worse) so much choice and freedom of expression to the individual citizen.....in the wake of all of this (plus the discreditation of much of the global political class) the new "gospel" is the rise of the so-called "creative economy"....a completely different construct, where individual entrepreneurs and creative brains in all sorts of media (art, fashion, design, gaming, architecture, and so on, as well as the traditional arts) are the drivers of innovation, of a new business, of a new kind of society.

What is easy to miss however is the bald fact that the state, if not a permanent subsidiser of the arts, as in the old days, has to foster and nurture the platforms, the foundations, the soil within which this new society will thrive - and that will demand of them a continued investment in the arts - the predominantly commercial and predominantly subsidised sectors working together. It will also demand an understanding that, if authorities are to support the creative economy to (asking the arts to do more to justify public expenditure) achieve all sorts of desired social gains: skills for employment, linguistic skills, environmental understanding, social cohesion, mutual trust, and so on, there has to be an understanding that the old guiding principle of artistic excellence being the touchstone by which all is judged, that that principle is not breached...that the arts in general do not become simply another tool for social development. yes, they can help (on some case a lot), but they and the artists who create, must be allowed to maintain the integrity of their inspiration and mission.

What's good about this brave new world, is that finally ARTS DO MATTER. For so many years, in the UK, they have been in the paddling pool of politics, marginal at best, ignored at worst. Now every government I have come across speaks the cool (but inaccurate) language of SOFT POWER, and the equally cool CREATIVE ECONOMY, without fully understanding the meaning of either.

Ultimately it all comes down to LEARNING of course - the ability to learn languages, English in particular but not only, the ability to study for future employability, and the ability to understand different cultures of an increasingly interdependent, but intolerant world. And this is why the British Council is so well-placed at this particular time. Each pillar of our new agenda - in English, in Education and Society and in the Arts, plays wholly to this "learning" mission...and not only in the

projection of the UK, but also in increasing the international perspective of the British themselves, better language skills in Arabic, Spanish and Chinese for example, as well as better knowledge of hitherto distant cultures.

I am pleased to say that, since I came to the BC two and a half years ago, we have managed to increase by 15% year on year (from a dark period in the arts ten years ago) the number of arts events we support, and we have also committed to spend an additional £7m in each of the next two years to support the agenda I have just been advocating. This investment doesn't come from public funds (which now account for only 17% of our £800m turnover) but from our increasingly successful exams and contracts business, ploughing profit back into our charitable objectives.

SLIDE SOUTH SUDAN GLOBE TO GLOBE, WITH CAPTION

I firmly believe that the arts can and do deliver more for nations than they are traditionally given credit for - but difficult to measure, and often not a straight path between failure and success...for example the success of a theatrical venture with South Sudan will not directly lead to a breakout of nationwide peace. You have to take a long view. Our view on the unfolding Syrian tragedy is that, when any kind of stability returns, the arts, as well as a comprehensive programme of skills training and language learning will be a necessary requirement, alongside more basic humanitarian needs. In the meantime we try to find ways to work with displaced Syrian refugees in Jordan and elsewhere.

So, how in general are we responding at the British Council to this new world order through our artistic plans? I will give you five clear headings, all of them to do with partners, with space - physical, virtual and intellectual, and all of them about learning. Our overall aim is to develop long term legacies and relationships between artists and arts organisations from the UK with their peers around the world. New programmes and projects will interlink with and refresh our existing work.

SLIDE PARTNERSHIP PLUS BULLETS - SMALL PIC?

First, we are now a partnering organisation, not merely a grant giver. Even with increased self-generated funding, our falling grant demands a wholesale rethink of the way we work. With all our major initiatives we seek synergy with the ambitions and aspirations of others - artists, companies, institutions, trusts and foundations, other public sector bodies, so that we can maximise the resource and the impact of our work. One example of direct interest is our work with Arts Council England, whose CEO is your current chair. Instead of a bland MOU, we have developed a joint dynamic action plan across a range of ventures, from a long term investment into and with Brazil, to a comprehensive and long term plan for the international development of young artists in all disciplines from England (similar plans exist with the other arts bodies of the UK).

Long term is the key: yes to exciting events, but we must always be thinking about the long term effect and the spirit of these events and experiences living on.

SLIDE CREATIVE ECONOMY AND SKILLS PLUS BULLETS - SMALL PIC?

Our second profound change is that we are investing in the creative economy and in creative, technical and entrepreneurial skills across the arts spectrum - a comprehensive and profound programme of cultural skills development - everything from theatre and film technical skills to heritage management and audience development. This is in response to significant demand from many of our overseas offices, including several in Latin America.

This will complement and consolidate existing British Council skills activity in arts and education, focusing on the cross-fertilisation of enterprise and vocational skills with the creative and cultural sectors. The unit will draw on UK expertise in the area of cultural skills and identify opportunities globally

for partnerships that include arts, education and government. Partners will include arts organisations, further education colleges, higher education institutes, government departments and individual artists.

Together, these partners will build sustainable cultural skills programmes that'll ensure that the cultural industries are equipped with highly skilled workers, who can contribute to mutual economic and cultural benefit. And these programmes will be linked closely to the regions and countries where we are focussing the bulk of our artistic showcasing activity.

One example from this country is the Royal Court Theatre's development work with Chilean playwrights as part of their International Playwriting Scheme

Elsewhere, in East Asia, we have a successful and evolving social enterprise programme, which has trained over 2,700 entrepreneurs since 2009 and reached almost 200 million people across Asia. There, creative entrepreneurship is driving the arts, responding to a growing voice in support of the arts to inspire and transform societies. Our cultural skills programme will develop incubators for creativity across social enterprise and culture, developing skills exchange and learning opportunities between entrepreneurs and the creative sector.

SPECIFIC EXAMPLE NEEDED - OR CAPTIONED SLIDE

By 2020 the British Council aims to be amongst the leaders in cultural skills provision. We will develop partnerships and programmes and train 5000 people per year across the globe, enhancing their cultural skills and benefitting their wider sector as well as themselves. It will also benefit the institutions and individuals of the whole UK by providing opportunities to engage and benefit from this work.

Completely interdependent with and linked to our work in skills is our refreshed approach to the Creative Economy. Instead of trying to spread our limited resource too widely, we will work intensely in a series of focus countries, including Brazil, Indonesia, Spain and Portugal, over a number of years, and often linked to an upscaling of our arts showcasing work.

Programmes will be developed according to local need and will involve both influencing policy as well as empowering talent.

We are refreshing our approach to growing creative talent (alongside the skills development I have mentioned just now). Our programme for Young

Creative Entrepreneurs celebrates its tenth anniversary this year. It has now run in over 50 countries and has a strong network of 500 graduates, supporting innovative and entrepreneurial leaders in the creative and cultural industries around the world.

Our work on creative hubs and cities is also particularly exciting. We are developing cultural infrastructure to bring together all important stakeholders in the creative economy space. Much of this work involves working extensively in partnership. A current example is the three year contract recently signed with Medellin City Council in Colombia. We will help them to build the technical capacity of the arts sector in that newly revitalised city. Medellin was recently named the most innovative city in the world!

Many professionals in this region look to the UK as a useful model for the creative economy, but of course the UK has much to learn itself. So we aim both to influence and to learn from the current cultural and political discourse in Latin America.

We are also developing a new approach to working with new creative infrastructure projects. There's been an explosion in new cultural developments over the last few years, particularly in China where it is estimated a new museum opens every day. The UK is often seen as a leader in developing major new infrastructure and we are best placed to advise on the cultural aspects of these.

SLIDE SPACE - SOME BULLETS OF THIS WITH PIC - NEW LIBRARY?

Possibly the most radical of our changes to come, but the least well-developed, is that to do with the potential of SPACE itself, the third in our five pillars. Digital, intellectual and physical.

For some years now our once renowned Library network has languished in the shadows, overtaken by seemingly more attractive ideas, and overtaken by the explosion in digital technology in terms of books and reading. At the same time we are increasingly aware of the need in many countries for the provision of convening space, of space for free expression and debate, in short of "safe" space in locations where such benefits are at a premium.

By linking those two concepts together, and by incorporating the very best in current library practice, we believe we can completely reinvent the concept of a British Council library as a space for learning, for debate, for some performance, for digital interaction, and (yes) for borrowing books.

This is an exciting venture for me personally; we will pilot the new library template within the region of South Asia, where most of our library inventory sits.

Similarly in the performing arts, we all know of the rapid expansion of multi-million \$ infrastructure projects for the arts, often with little thought as to what will go into them to sustain them. And beside, many countries cannot afford such vanities.

We hope to work with a new concept, based on the notion of a temporary, low cost, and demountable performance space, similar to that called the SHED, on London's South Bank, developed by Steve Tompkins of Haworth Tompkins Architects. In many ways it's the perfect new social platform for the arts - developed, designed, built and maintained by the community who wished it, with local talent working with UK expertise. Simple, inexpensive, modular, flexible, and much, much more light-footed in its imprint, and less formidable for those communities unaccustomed to the formality of the arts.

As I say these are early days - the SHED is only at the earliest aspirational phase, but we have high hopes for such an idea as the prototype for a global project that will redefine the way we DO performing arts - and it's entirely complementary to the Library plan.

Linking ALL of this together is our emerging new approach to a full digital offer to those engaging in Arts with the British Council.

Aside from the social media potential of our programme - immensely broadening our reach, quality digital content is fast becoming a significant opportunity for developing an ongoing legacy for our major showcasing seasons, as well as a creative platform in its own right, much better able to serve those vast countries like China, India and Brazil, and much more attuned to the way the younger generation engages with and consumes the arts. We are currently developing plans for widespread showcasing of artistic works made for digital platforms, including partnering with the Space, which is a digital platform for the arts initiated by Arts Council England and the BBC.

In addition we are also working to develop opportunities for arts professionals to develop and learn online through a kind of cultural professionals network

SLIDE SHOWCASING PLUS BULLETS - TRANSFORM IMAGE?

Fourth, showcasing platforms, the trusted method of "broadcasting" the richness of the UK's arts scene overseas. It's still integral to our work, but we are recasting the old ways into a mutually beneficial and reciprocal model, based on a long term sustainable model between countries - no longer simply a UK export model.

We want longer term partnerships with significantly greater opportunities for exchange between any two countries. It is through intense engagements with partners in these countries that we are able to accelerate programmes, be more innovative in our relationships and those we facilitate between arts organisations. For example in 2012 we launched Transform in Brazil. A four year programme of showcasing, skills building and cultural exchange bridging the Olympics in London and Rio. This cultural and educational relationship with Brazil is an excellent example of the benefit to the UK of reciprocal, as opposed to unilateral, engagement. We can learn from the social agendas that Brazil follows within the arts, from its CESC performing arts centres, plus its work in favelas and from its outreach through social and education systems – in so many ways a more sophisticated approach than our own. At the same time we have much to

share with Brazil in terms of our skills, training and arts management programmes.

SLIDE TRANSFORM MONTAGE

Highlights of Transform so far have included a silent Hitchcock film restored by the British Film Institute screened on Copacabana Beach, to an audience of 5,000 people with a live musical score, a new literary festival FLUPP in a Favela in Rio and the first ever exhibition of work by Lucian Freud in Brazil.

Our ambition is to have about three to four of these initiatives running concurrently at various stages of development: we have a plan similar to Transform in India, called Reimagine, which'll run till 2017, and other major start-ups include Mexico in 2015 and Indonesia in 2016.

SLIDE ARTS AND SOCIETY: BULLETS AND IMAGE

And finally we are starting a long term intervention into the idea of the power of arts in post-conflict or disturbed societies. This is not an easy game: in the summer of 2012 the Council helped bring about a South Sudanese Shakespeare production of Comedy of Errors as part of the Globe to Globe season around the time of the Olympics. The production, a first for the new nation, involved cast from all ethnic and tribal sides, and proved a big statement about the possibilities for peace and reconciliation as South Sudan developed as a newly independent nation. Less than 18 months later the country is at war, and just before Christmas we evacuated all of our staff from the country. Failure? Well no...I think if you seriously believe as I do that the arts do have an influence in such situations, you have to be prepared for setbacks, and to take a long term view of these things. Disappointing, yes, terminal, no!

Creativity and the arts can have a profound impact on socio-economic development, particularly in situations of crisis, by building trust between different peoples, supporting freedom of expression, and increasing civic engagement. So, armed with this belief, we are developing a portfolio of work, linking our Arts and Society teams, focussed on making a real impact in this area, and hopefully creating a centre of expertise and experience in this field for others also to build on and learn from.

We already have some examples of innovation in the arts and society space: in 2012 we commissioned research into artistic practices and social change in North Africa. Based on this research, we supported a Development Grants for Artists scheme, which forged links with emerging artists in the Middle East and North Africa, as well as newly established independent organisations. For example, we are backing the development of a cross-sector committee between artists, architects and urban planners to promote art in public spaces in Cairo as a catalyst for urban regeneration.

In Venezuela, we are also supporting art in public spaces as a way to promote social cohesion and dialogue. A new project in partnership with the EU, entitled "*El uso de espacios públicos para incentivar la participación cultural, educativa y*

social de jóvenes en situación de riesgo will give at risk youth "a place to go" with cultural, educational and social activities in open spaces. The ultimate aim is to reduce violence and increase positive youth participation in Caracas.

FLUPP, a literary festival of the police pacification unit, run for and by and in a favela in Rio, promotes creativity and literacy skills while promoting social cohesion between groups who work and/or live in the favela.

In a similar way, Camara Chica was a series of film workshops with young people in Havana and elsewhere in Cuba. We worked to help them learn all aspects of film-making, and they then had the chance to produce their own short films, on the way developing self confidence, as well as skills in team work and storytelling.

SLIDE WORLD VOICE

As we all know, Music can bring people together in a way few other art forms can. We are currently developing an innovative music education project called World Voice: this will bring together an international network of music and education professionals to ensure hundreds of thousands of children and young people across the world have access to the learning of singing of the highest quality.

The network uses an infrastructure of multi-media platforms to enable teachers and pupils to access resources and teaching guides. This will establish a tradition of shared performance of each other's national and regional traditional songs. Countries will post performances online and collaborate with their neighbours.

What better way to link the world's young people, through their own voices, their own traditional songs and stories, at the same time learning about their peers in other lands - listening, learning, performing, inspiring, and using the wonderful digital platforms we now have to extend the reach, the quality and the impact of this idea. With projects like this, it is clear that the artistic imagination in all of us here has much to contribute to the betterment of this world we live in....

CLIP from Cathy's trailer film

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