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Robin Simpson

Chief Executive of Creative Lives

Since 1991 Creative Lives (formerly Voluntary Arts) has promoted participation in creative cultural activity across the UK and the Republic of Ireland, advocating for the importance of everyday creativity, supporting the creative citizens who organise local voluntary arts groups and encouraging more people to participate.

For many years we often felt like a lone voice championing the grassroots cultural activity that people organise themselves in their local communities.

But in recent years we've seen a growing interest in everyday creativity from policymakers, funders, professional arts organisations, broadcasters and the general public.

In February 2015, the publication of the report of the Warwick Commission on the future of cultural value marked a significant milestone in the growth of interest in everyday creativity.

The Warwick Commission report, Enriching Britain, Culture, Creativity and Growth, called for the opportunity to live a creative life.

I'm delighted that we are joined today by our first guest, Vikki Heywood, who was the Chair of the Warwick Commission.



Dame Vikki Heywood

Chair, Warwick Commission

RS

Vikki, maybe you could tell us a little bit about the Warwick **Commission first?**

I was invited by Warwick University to have a Commission on culture and creativity. That was the brief. I had a fantastic group of commissioners who came together and it became blindingly obvious to us quite quickly that what we needed to do was create a forum in which we could focus people's minds on the concept of an ecosystem.

That is something that is now referred to all the time when people talk about creativity, but nobody was talking about it in 2015. What the Commission really did was it nailed forever the idea that there is some kind of separation between the professional and the non-professional, the paid and the voluntary - we all want to live a creative life and indeed, have a right to live a creative life.



RS

The Warwick Commission report says "the value of everyday cultural activities needs to be more fully acknowledged and supported. The amateur and voluntary sector may be of pivotal importance in spearheading the creative participation revolution".

Why did you feel that that focus on the everyday was important?

\mathbf{VH}

That is something that is now referred to all the time when people talk about creativity, but nobody was talking about it in 2015. What the Commission really did was it nailed forever the idea that there is some kind of separation between the professional and the non-professional, the paid and the voluntary - we all want to live a creative life and indeed, have a right to live a creative life.

RS

There was one specific recommendation in the report which said "the BBC, together with other cultural networks such as What Next and Voluntary Arts should launch a high-profile campaign aimed at raising the profile of everyday arts and cultural participation across the UK".

That recommendation led very quickly to the launch of the Get Creative campaign in February 2015. Stephen James-Yeoman, from BBC Arts is with us.

Stephen James-Yeoman

BBC Arts

RS

Stephen, do you want to tell us a little bit about Get **Creative and its origins?**



It's very important to say that Get Creative is not BBC Get Creative. Get Creative is not a BBC-only campaign. We are one equal partner with the other partners, such as the Arts Council, Creative Scotland, Crafts Council etc.

We wanted to have a holistic approach, where we said to organisations big and small - which is I think is a different way of saying professional/non-professional, whether you are the RSC or whether you are a literary group in Trowbridge - we said "you can be part of a campaign, a project, that is encouraging people to get creative, however you feel you are able to be part of that and however suitable it is for you to be part of that, here's a platform for you".

And it's been interesting in the last six years, how Get Creative has adapted and changed. There have been mis-steps; trying to say to audiences "make something in your bedrooms, we'll put it on the BBC" - I think that's just impractical.





SJY

Where we are now, using Get Creative as a moment in the calendar where we say we are going to really, really shout about creativity and you can be part of that—we'll make the programmes, we'll reflect what you do, we'll point audiences to where they can find things to do close to them which are free or at a very low cost where you can just try something out - I think that's a really good place to be for Get Creative.

RS

Stephen, what about the effect that Get Creative has had on the BBC?

I'm interested in, is it a coincidence, is it the zeitgeist or are there direct links between the work that started in 2015 around Get Creative and the preponderance now of TV shows like the Pottery Throw Down, the Life Drawing Live, that interest from the Bake Off onwards, I suppose, in people learning creative activities and doing creative activities?



SJY

That would be a very nice thing to think, wouldn't it? I don't think I'm qualified or paid enough to be able to talk on behalf of the whole BBC and its strategy programming!

But what I can talk about from a BBC Arts perspective, is that we absolutely do look at programmes that we are commissioning and say, "What are we commissioning around and for the Get Creative Festival in the spring? What is it that we can use as a charge, as an arrowhead, to be able to go on to programmes like the Jo Wiley show or the One Show, and talk about creativity?

What are the routes in?" And that is a direct consequence of being part of Get Creative. It's really interesting, the number of shows now that are in this space-there's one starting now with jewellery. It's heartening, I think.

RS

Geoffrey Crossick was one of the Warwick Commissioners, but also Director of the AHRC Cultural Value Project, the AHRC Cultural Value Report, Understanding the Value of Arts and Culture, which was published in March 2016 and speaks quite a lot about everyday participation.



Prof Geoffrey Crossick

Director of the AHRC Cultural Value Project

RS

What are your thoughts, Geoff, on how we've come to value everyday participation more over the last few years?

GC

When I was asked by the AHRC whether I was interested in directing the Cultural Value Project, I emphasised from the beginning that it had to cover all of art and culture, not just publicly funded, but it had to include commercial and it had to include what I then, outrageously, called "amateur", but that we now call everyday or grassroots, or we have other terms for. And it seemed to me very important to try and understand the vast mass of people's engagement with art and culture, which actually is through their own creative activities - as one can see from Taking Part - the huge amount of engagement through people's own arts practice and cultural practice.

It seemed to me that this needed to be locked into it all and I agree very much with Vikki and Stephen, that this is all part of a system - "Ecosystem" is the way in which we talk about it now. We do far too little to understand what makes that ecosystem work. It's become a slogan we talk about, rather than something we can really evidence connections within.



GC

When we think about the way that everyday cultural activity has come to be valued, what disturbs me is the way that over the last few years it has become so fashionable to value it. This is not a comment on Creative Lives, which has valued it for a long, long time. But it's become so fashionable to value it that I wonder whether this might itself raise problems. There are two things that concern me.

One of them is that Arts Council England now has focused upon it. This is obviously a positive step but I'm anxious about how the Arts Council, having seized hold of everyday creative activity, will decide how to support it and how to fund it. Because one of the things Creative Lives' work shows is that the areas of support that are needed are quite precise. Your recent report 'Common Ground: Rewilding the Garden' showed that.

The danger is that if it gets locked into a national funding system that is not well suited to support it the result might not be as helpful as might be hoped. That's my first concern - how the Arts Council will make this operational.

My second concern is about the other way in which it's now being very actively valued in policy terms social prescribing. The way in which everyday arts practised by people has come to be locked into what I once memorably heard a public health specialist call the "medicalisation of everything".



GC

I don't object to social prescribing - and arts on prescription - I think a lot of it will be very valuable, and it's good that people are being directed to that. But I fear that the value of everyday culture is being locked into specific policy agendas which are not, for most people, what it's all about. That's my big concern at the moment.

RS

You started to talk about inequalities. There's a point where the Cultural Value Project Report says that "focusing on barriers to participation or the deficit model by which absence from certain kinds of cultural engagement is what matters, can distract attention from the cultural practices to be found in supposedly excluded populations and communities.

This expanded approach may not dispose of the question of inequality but it can help us understand the more complex realities that include what one important research project everyday terms participation."

We'll come to that project in a moment. But could you touch on that issue of everyday creativity as an equalities issue?



GC

Yes. I think it was an important point we were trying to make. With another hat on, I'm Chair of the Crafts Council, and one of the things I've been encouraging the Crafts Council to be doing over the years is to get away from the concept of barriers: the factors that stop people coming to what is very much, in the public realm, a white-dominated craft world, when we know that there's a huge amount of craft practice going on within ethnic minority communities, for example, which simply don't become visible. The Crafts Council has been trying to grasp hold of that.

I really dislike the concept of barriers, because barriers have to be crossed to get to something - and barriers, as defined in the past and to some extent in the present, in cultural policy terms means barriers to a defined world of cultural activity, which is regarded as important, not least because it's publicly funded, and that is seen as a source of inequality.

We argued in the Cultural Value report that we need to get away from the conception of barriers. By all means, talk about unequal access to publicly funded art and culture; that is a valid question. But don't then assume that other people do not have rich cultural worlds of their own.

We found lots of evidence of that, not least using some of your material - you were on the advisory group for the Cultural Value Project, Robin, as were some other people on this call. And I think that turning away from barriers, towards what people are actually doing, reveals that within supposedly excluded —non-included— groups, there is a huge amount of art and cultural activity going on. It just isn't recognised and seen because there is a discourse of inequality of access that dominates all of it.



Prof Eleonora Belfiore

Warwick Commission report co-author

RS

Professor Eleonora Belfiore, was one of the authors of the Warwick Commission report, but was also a member of the team leading the AHRC research project, Understanding Everyday Participation, **Articulating Cultural Values.**

Ele, what are your thoughts on the journey we've been on over the last six years or so?

EB

Thanks, Robin. It's actually been quite fascinating to listen to the interventions so far, because I was one of the Co-Directors of the Warwick Commission working with Vikki, I was working on the Understanding Everyday Participation project and I was also on Geoff's steering group for the Cultural Value Project, which also funded some of my research. So it's interesting to see presented back at me the connections between all these initiatives.

When we were putting together the plan for the Warwick Commission, I was already part of a project that was documenting what people did in their everyday lives that gave meaning to them - in parts of the country ranging from Exmoor to Gateshead via Peterborough so it was quite a comprehensive picture.



EB

The things that were emerging were that people's lives were not cultural deserts - but that legitimate public funded culture didn't quite appear as prominently as perhaps one would have hoped or assumed on the basis of the justifications that are given for public funding. And also, for me personally as a researcher, there was all this work going on but there were very few channels for the insights from research to feed directly into policy debates.

So, what we were trying to do with the Warwick Commission was to act almost as a go-between, as a facilitation. What we were doing with our Commissioners was exposing them to the latest research so that when we were having conversations, we had the latest data, the latest interpretations.

All of these projects were happening at the same time, there were massive overlaps in the people working on them, because there was a group of us who had a commitment to this work. I think it was one of the few periods where there was a genuine conversation/debate/exchange, between academics, arts professionals, policymakers, and I'm not sure that that happens often enough.

For example, we might hold a meeting in London between the policymakers and the organisations who produced data, trying to think, "okay, how can you exchange data between yourselves? How can we create channels of communication between the data producers and people who need the data?" And it was clear that what was needed and what people were appreciating in the Warwick Commission was that convening role. The problem of the Warwick Commission is that it ended and so that convening of debates, that bringing people together, we couldn't do it any more. And in a sense we all went back to working in little silos.

And that's what the Understanding Everyday Participation project wanted to address. It wanted to really challenge the deficit model. It wanted to do it for the benefit of a more realistic and better based cultural policy debate, because cultural sociologists have looked at the sociology of the everyday for decades, so perhaps it wasn't really that innovative knowledge for them - but for cultural policy it was new.

One of my fondest memories, and perhaps it's a slightly confusing memory, was during a project funded by the Cultural Value Project on the politics of representation of the Gypsy Traveller and Roma community in an area of rural Lincolnshire, around Spalding. So, within the same week, at one point I would be in London with Vikki and some of our Commissioners in some big building in London discussing with the 'great and the good' of British cultural policy, the future of the arts and cultural value, and then the next day I would get into my car, and drive to Spalding, to the Romany Museum, and be talking with community artists working with some of the most disenfranchised communities - and really I felt on my skin the disconnect.

Because I was talking about cultural value with both groups, when there were two conversations that could have been happening in different universes - they seemed to never meet. That really gave me a sense that this is what we are doing - we are trying to connect these different debates and these different people who are talking about the same things but in such wildly different contexts.

I think that's the legacy of not just the Commission, not just the Understanding Everyday Participation project and Geoff's Cultural Value project, but of the coming together of people from different perspectives really trying to figure this thing out. And I hope this is what we can keep from that legacy. Meetings like these.





RS

Apart from these academic reports and studies, one other indication of the increase in the profile of everyday creativity over the last few years - the arrival of new organisations focusing on this area, such as 64 Million Artists and Fun Palaces, both of which were established in 2014 and both played a key role with Creative Lives and BBC Arts in the development of the Get Creative campaign.

Fun Palaces is an annual, nation-wide celebration of culture at the heart of community using arts, science, crafts, tech, digital, heritage, and sports activities as a catalyst for community engagement. It takes place over the first weekend in October each year. We are joined by Lewis Hou, who is the Fun Palaces Scotland Ambassador.



Lewis Hou

Fun Palaces

RS

Lewis, what do you think about our story so far around the rise of interest in everyday creativity? Do you recognise that? What's your experience on the ground in Scotland?

 $\mathbf{L}\mathbf{H}$

Fun Palaces is a year-round campaign for cultural democracy and, for us, that increased interest particularly magnified over the last year. With institutions and more established or institutional arts and culture closing down, and the very real challenges within that, what is left is the resilience and the everyday creativity that communities are just doing to connect with each other.

For us it's about how we can continue focusing on the hyper-local, on inequalities, and on whose cultural value is counted. That is the biggest question when it comes to thinking about who are in these rooms, who are in these conversations - and that's been picked up already today in discussing the types of communities that arts and culture and creativity have valued - they certainly tend to be more privileged and usually the more "converted". And we've become very aware of how we can challenge

those conversations.



I,H

I think another interesting development is because of the language being adopted more and more, of cultural democracy - as opposed to the democratising of culture or participation or socially engaged arts - there is sometimes a struggle there, and a challenge to make sure that we are genuinely handing over power to communities.

Intentionally or otherwise, very often there is a co-opting of these terminologies which can support the kind of "business as usual" models within arts practices and culture, which we do need to gently challenge. In the ecology it is important that we get the balance right between valuing professional artists and the part that institutional arts has to play, but also not gate-keeping and not maintaining a dependence model. We've been looking at how we do that in lots of different ways within Fun Palaces.

Last year we went into the idea of "tiny revolutions of connections" - very small, different opportunities and different ways of communities connecting with each other, particularly focusing on offline and hyper-local, acknowledging that lots of things have gone online and the digital divide and who's been left out of those conversations.

And up in Scotland we've been trying to connect practitioners and community members and researchers together with the community of practice and with our culture and well-being community network, to share these conversations, share practice, share the resources. Because there's a lot out there and what's missing, perhaps, is the space to be able to share learning across sectors around inclusion, around anti-racism, around the research about the benefits of well-being so we can advocate and share good practice.



RS

We haven't yet touched very much on a definition of everyday creativity this morning, which is perhaps a slippery eel for us to grasp.

But there is something, I think, for Creative Lives in that notion of what we refer to as self-governance, even cultural democracy - people taking control over their own creativity. It's both the fact that it is the value you get yourself from doing it rather than what you produce at the end that is the important thing. And also that notion of you deciding what you want to do, you controlling it, you organising it.

\mathbf{LH}

As you say, there are lots of different definitions and it can feel guite academic. When we ran a workshop in Inverness, the summary that I constantly go back to is: "how do we support everyone to make culture and not just consume it?" With nuances, that has the key elements of what we are support about the everyday, and valuing trying to everybody's creativity and broadening what counts.



Catherine Mugonyi

Trustee of Creative Lives

RS

Lewis talked about the effect we've seen over the last year particularly, and with the closure of big institutions and with a lot of people being locked down at home. We've definitely seen a lockdown effect in terms of encouraging people to try different creative activities at home.

Catherine Mugonyi is a creative programmer at The Harris in Preston but also a trustee of Creative Lives. Catherine. I'm interested in your take on what you've seen locally in terms of everyday creativity during lockdown and the pandemic effect?

CM

I feel in a better position to speak from my role in a voluntary organisation rather than "the day job", because I feel like I've been in it, in it and surrounded by it. So - I'm also part of what was essentially a group of friends that set up a voluntary organisation in Blackpool ten years ago when we were still eligible for youth funding... can you imagine!

This was because we didn't have anything to do. The only option was you could go to a pub or a bar, or spend a fortune on a cinema ticket and there was just nothing to do. But we all liked creative stuff.



We are very much volunteer-led and we try to amplify other people's work and their voices - the stuff that they are already getting on with - because we can't be experts at everything. That's just been a principle all the way through. We are very much an enabler, we have so many volunteers in different project areas, some who are film fans who run a community cinema, some who are writers who want to write about arts and culture on the Fylde Coast and publish them online in a magazine.

We've got people who love textiles; people who love painting and drawing. But the really important thing is that they all lead on those projects. We support and we advise and we try to let them shine. We are located in one of the most deprived areas of the UK and we don't have access to as much "stuff" as if we were, say, down the road in Preston or in Manchester. We don't have many amazing, accessible spaces. We've got some beautiful buildings and a great beach, but things aren't open to everybody.

So sometimes we need that collective pull so that we can actually get things done, and we can celebrate the good things that we do have, because sometimes it feels like we don't have much.

CM

Something that Geoff mentioned really jumped out at me was about how fashionable everyday creativity is. It's positive, but it's also a worry, because this is the thing that - (funnily enough) we do every day. We're used to it. We feel like all of a sudden "Oh, we're kind of experts now".

We have big institutions and organisations that are maybe funded by the Arts Council saying, "What do you do about this?", and we think hang on a second ... we're used to pulling together people at ground level, not advising 'the great and the good'. We don't necessarily have the language to do that. But, also, it's not necessarily on fair terms. You wouldn't expect a consultant or an academic to do loads of work for you for nothing, or at least without a balance of power or agency. So why would you expect a community organisation to do that?

I just really worry that this is going to become more of a 'thing', and it's going to drive people away from their voluntary organisations, because they didn't get involved to be an adviser or consultant. They got involved to celebrate that lovely cultural thing that they do, whether it's on their own or with friends.

That drifts over into the whole area around social prescribing. Locally, we used to have a funded Arts for Health service, which was decommissioned, because there have been so many cuts and it's one of those things that's just not seen as essential. However, we frequently get referrals from mental health services saying they'd like to refer someone, and while we are very open to people coming and joining in, or if they need a bit of support in a way that helps their creativity, we are not mental health practitioners. We are not professionals in that respect and that is a specialist job and that probably used to be a specialist job that was lost or made redundant. It's just not right, because we are not those specialists, and a lot of us don't want to be.

So while it's great that everyday creativity is the phrase on everyone's lips, and that people are actually talking about it and we are benefiting from the exposure, exposure never paid the bills. But also, it's not why we got into this it's a strange situation.



Dr Franco Bianchini

Associate Director, Centre for Cultural Value

RS

One of the other recommendations from the Cultural Value Project led to the establishing of the new Centre for Cultural Value, based at the University of Leeds. We are joined by Dr Franco Bianchini, who is an Associate Director of the Centre for Cultural Value.

Franco, I'm interested in your thoughts - I'm interested in exploring the lockdown effect a little bit, what we've seen around participation over the last year.

FB

Like everybody else, I've observed a massive mushrooming of everyday creativity, particularly during the first lockdown in different countries. I'm not sure to what extent it has been researched and I have not noticed the need to support such growth of creativity becoming a policy priority. As far as we know on the basis of the research work on the responses to the COVID crisis, both in the UK and internationally, it hasn't been a policy priority.

Quite understandably perhaps, for different governments, Arts Council England, and equivalent organisations across Europe, the priority has been to try to preserve cultural activity by established, larger organisations as much as possible.



FB

I think it's regrettable that there hasn't been: (a) sufficient analysis of completely new cultural practice - basically, practices started for the first time by individuals and groups in lockdown; and (b) in-depth discussion of policy to build on this explosion of creativity at grassroots level.

There is therefore a risk that we are missing a big opportunity to support new everyday creativity.

RS

We've talked a lot in our Creative Network sessions about the pandemic perhaps providing a fresh start for us to rethink some aspects of cultural policy.

There is a sense that this might be the moment to reset some of this - but also that balanced with this natural desire to make sure we don't lose the big institutions and the sense of that being a priority for funders to some extent.

Dr Dave O'Brien is Chancellor's Fellow in Cultural and Creative Industries at the University of Edinburgh.



Dr Dave O'Brien

Edinburgh University

RS

Dave, I think you've got thoughts about participation and particularly digital over the last year through the pandemic?

DOB

Yes, just to pick up on a few things that have been said already - it's worth saying that Franco is right, we only have emerging senses of what's happened over the last year. There's been some interesting panel data by NESTA and the Intellectual Property Office that's suggested that there was this explosion of digital engagement. But, with that, you can see important stratifications: some things by gender; some things by social status; some things by age. But they weren't asking stratification questions.

The Audience Agency is doing fieldwork at the moment, lots of which is suggesting that the core audiences that have been engaged were those who were engaged already, essentially a kind of shift of consumption modes.

Then a team that I'm part of - we're doing some work with -it's unfortunately very limited data from the government Taking Part survey that was conducted in the middle of last summer, three waves of data. And we are literally just sifting through it now.



DOB

What we're seeing is, interestingly, seemingly, an explosion of digital engagement by people who were already engaged, little or no changes to the everyday cultural practices of people who—and Geoff, as you know, kind of gestured towards this, and it's obviously in Eleonora's comments as well - people who "wouldn't count" for government surveys.

But potentially as well a form of digital fatigue that's emerged for people who were shifting from attendance to digital modes of engagement and then saying, "well, actually, we're a bit bored with this now; it's lost its novelty", plus those who were engaged with digital means already and have just carried on regardless. We know that there's important age, social class, gender and ethnicity elements to that.

So my fear, which I guess other members of the panel have shared, is the extent to which the core landscape of cultural policy in the UK is changed by the pandemic and potentially the fear of a sense that "well, people are engaging digitally, we don't need to employ various people in our organisation who are non-digital". And also, on top of that, "people are producing in everyday means, maybe we don't need to pay staff any more". And I think those kinds of lessons from the pandemic would be absolutely the wrong ones to take.







RS

One of the reasons for the rise in policy interest in everyday creativity is undoubtedly the growing evidence of links between creative participation and well-being. So another report from the last few years, 2017, the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Arts, Health and Wellbeing, published its major report: Creative Health, the Arts, Health and Wellbeing. That Creative Health report noted the lack of research into everyday creativity - which may be undertaken alone or in company and has an immense contribution to happy, healthy lives without necessarily having a connection in health or social care.

We have with us Nick Ewbank, who is currently leading a discovery process into the underpinnings of the relationship between everyday creativity and health.

Nick, do you want to say a little bit about your thoughts on this?



Nick Ewbank

Consultant, Understanding Everyday Creativity

NE

It's been a fascinating discussion so far. I hope I can add a slightly different dimension to it. As has been said, focusing on definitions can rapidly become guite introspective, and defining creativity is definitely, as you said, Robin, trying to grapple with a slippery eel. But I think it's quite important here.

Arts Council England says that by 2030 they want to move to a country where "the creativity of each of us is valued and given the chance to flourish". That sounds like a great plan, but it's quite an ambitious thing to set out to do, isn't it? Is it the job of the Arts Council to do it? Because creativity is not equivalent to the arts. Creativity is not equivalent to culture. and it's not equivalent participation. I think it's bigger than all of those things.

There are multiple understandings of creativity. It's been much studied, and there are two main ways in which it's framed. One is the kind of market-led definition which probably is dominant, which frames creativity as being about making things or making new knowledge that has market value.

Then running alongside that, all through history, there's been a kind of wellbeing, or health and wellbeing definition, which actually the Arts Council champions itself on its own website as being the intrinsic value of the arts, funnily enough, where they talk about how the arts and culture "can illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world".





NE

You might extend that to creativity being able to illuminate our inner lives and enrich our emotional world. That's a kind of psychosocial approach and what you are really hearing here is the description two-step process which psychologists, particularly in child development, and psychologists like Peter Fonagy would define as a key part of mentalisation, which is essential for healthy child development, for emotional regulation and for developing empathetic relationships.

So you've got these two overlapping but really quite distinct ways of looking at creativity and I don't think they've been thoroughly explored. interesting that there's some suggestions that the pandemic might be beginning to blur boundaries between leisure, work and consumption, perhaps lead to more relational, post-productive notions of everyday creativity.



David Bryan CBE

Chair, Creative Lives

RS

David Bryan is the Chair of Creative Lives. David, I'm interested in your thoughts on all of the discussion so far and what you make of this focus on everyday creativity and where that might go now?

DB

I'm really very keen on the shift towards acknowledging everyday creativity, although I share the anxieties expressed by Geoff and others about the discovery by the Arts Council of this terrain of engagement, with a machinery that lacks sensitivity as to how to engage local voices and local people in a way that enables them to grow and thrive and nourish a local ecosystem - as opposed to dominate it, direct it and dictate to it.

That balance is yet to be seen and I think we have to be very concerned about that. What is invaluable is that it confirms the focus of Creative Lives, which endorses the power of local champions, local cultural citizens who are endeavouring to make things happen in a resilient way, often without resources. about localised but are engagement.

The language around cultural democracy, self-governance, for me is all fascinating, but it reaffirms the fact that local people are coming together to make decisions about how they impact on their lives and learn together without being told that unless they have a particular history, they are not deemed to be the right kind of leadership.



DB

For me that is really critical, because we've got across the countries a variety of people doing some tremendous work - that we highlight occasionally, in part through the Creative Lives Awards.

Beyond that, those people are toiling away, always resilient, always trying to work out how to make things happen - and this debate reminds me that the work we're doing in supporting, nurturing and bringing a sense of affirmation is really very important, because that affirmation of those groups enables them to feel confident and strong. We have to enable them to feel confident and strong in order that they can do more and negotiate with the changing political landscape.

And my worry about the landscape is that the economics of the arts is going to have a greater drive going forward, both in terms of the perception that we can be exporting goods and that we can be magnets for internal economy and ecology. That may have a detrimental impact upon the arts in the long term, because what gets valued is what is commercial, and what's not commercial is not valued.







DB

We've had some tremendous projects: knitting groups, or groups coming together to do pottery that are in and of themselves valuable, intrinsic, if need be. But I worry that a drive to invigorate the economy as we move into the isolation of Brexit will force us into expedient economic drivers that are not helpful.

All that said, I think that it's crucial that those of us who are engaged in "local" continue to build local confidence, local vitality and local engagement, because that is what has kept our communities alive and vibrant and finding purpose and place: that is crucial in that mix of things going forward.

RS

Thank you to all of our guests today for allowing me to whizz through this whistle-stop tour of valuing everyday creativity.

We've managed to touch on quite a few different aspects of this subject, though only scraping the surface. Do continue the conversation. If you're not already a member, please join the Creative Network Facebook group where we can continue to debate these issues at will.

Creative Network



Photo credits

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	(Right up) Goldies Cymru - Epic Awards 2017 Winner
	(Right down) Epic Awards ceremony



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