



WHAT IS CO-CREATING CHANGE?

Co-Creating Change is a network and programme which explores the role which artists, cultural organisations and communities can play to co-create change together around the UK and beyond.

WHAT DOES CO-CREATION MEAN?

We know that co-creation means different things to different people in different settings. The working definition we are currently using (which we fully expect to change and evolve and actively encourage you to feedback and challenge it) is, for now, as follows:

Co-creation is a collaborative way of working which enables people and communities to be actively involved in shaping the things which impact their lives.

It shifts power, resource and ownership towards the people the work is intended to benefit, as opposed to the traditional 'top down' approach.

It encourages every individual to activate their creative potential and realise their own ability to make change.

CO-CREATING: POWER, RESOURCE AND OWNERSHIP

The Agency Scale was our first attempt to dig a bit deeper into the kind of co-created practice we had in mind when we proposed the network. The Agency Scale encourages us to think how power, resource and ownership are genuinely shared in any project or organisation.

We think, in more conventional models of "arts participation" that power, resource and ownership often remain, largely, with the artist, producer or cultural organisation, rather than being shared more equally.

This is not to place a value judgement on which approach is better or which is preferable. We just want to be honest about the fact that there is a difference between the two approaches – and that one of the key motivations for setting up the *Co-Creating Change* network was to focus on practice in which power, resource and ownership are shared.

CO-CREATING: CREATIVITY AND ART

Another area of distinction, which we think is worth highlighting, is whether a project or organisation chooses to focus on "creativity" or on "art". Of course, most focus on both! But bear with this distinction for a moment.

We think some co-created practice tends to use a creative process to inspire projects or outcomes which might not be intended as art. Whereas other co-created practice specifically uses art-making process to make art.

Again, this is not to place a value judgement on either approach. We just want to be open about the fact that when we developed the idea of the network we were especially motivated by the "creativity" approach - partly because there is less current support and understanding of this approach. But both will feature as part of the network.



WHAT IS CREATIVITY?

Creativity can take many different forms. From dreaming up different futures; to re-imagining spaces; to generating new solutions and ways of working; to perceiving the world in new ways; to making connections between seemingly disconnected things.

We believe creativity is an everyday superpower that we all have, on tap, we just need to access it, it's free, it's yours and mine.

WHY ARTS, CULTURAL ORGANISATIONS AND COMMUNITIES?

People who work in culture have easy access, and a level of expertise, to one of the most powerful ways of bringing people together and making positive change... our shared human creativity.

We believe we hold the keys to creating a better future...working with everyone in our communities to unlock their creativity.

Through *Co-Creating Change*, we are interested in exploring our collective responsibility to nurture the creativity of everyone in our community.

We are interested in the creative processes you use to encourage people from all walks of life to activate their own creative potential and realise their own ability to make change.

As a sector we have a multitude of creative processes which support people to tap into their own creativity, build a sense of purpose, as well as new ideas, knowledge, skills and networks. Enabling everyone to make change – rather than waiting for it to arrive.

As we face more difficult and complex problems as a society – we think now is the right time to come together to support each other to grow our capacity to undertake this work. As a network we have an incredible range of trusted relationships with many communities around the country. Unlike the government or corporate sector, we have no hidden agendas and aren't bound by short term thinking. We also have an incredible range of skills and methodologies. But many of us are working in isolation and our work is generally not well understood.

CHANGE: TO WHAT END

When we developed the original idea for the network we were interested in the way that creativity and art can bring about positive change. We did not have a fixed view of where change might occur – in individuals, in groups or communities, in specific territories, in an organisation, in the sector and so on.

We did have a clearer view that we are interested in change when it is co-created or co-authored - rather than change which is imposed by one person on another, one group on another, or one organisation on another.

EXAMPLES OF CO-CREATION WE'VE BEEN INSPIRED BY

Since starting to write and talk about this work - we've been inspired by so many different creative ideas for change around the country including:

- Knowle West Media Centre's **We Can Make** project, which has brought together local people with artists, academics, architects, designers and policy makers to explore how communities can play a leading role in developing new affordable sustainable housing.



- Slung Low's **Cultural Community College** where the local community can teach and learn anything from CPR to Indian cooking to Stargazing.
- The Lowry's **Young Carers project** which works with young carers to develop tools to train health professionals how to better work with young carers.

OUR OWN EXPERIENCES

We've also been forever changed by our own experience of developing and running **The Agency** with our partners **Contact** and **People's Palace Projects**. We adapted the programme from Rio de Janeiro where it had been developed to support young people from favela communities to make their own change. Traditionally many 'top down' policies had worked against, rather than with, the energies of people from the favelas and this programme was designed to counter that and put power in the hands of the favela youth. The Agency uses a creative process to mobilise young people from low socio-economic backgrounds to develop and lead their own initiatives which have a positive impact on the place in which they live. It was the first time we as an organisation had supported people to develop ideas which most often weren't arts projects. Because of The Agency we aren't anymore just developing theatre but are using our creative process to develop boxing classes; craft campaigns; football tournaments; revision apps and bike workshops.

The work we did with young people on The Agency inspired us to change our organisational purpose from one which was very focussed on the development of theatre as an art-form to one which is about the whole communities' creativity – to inspire people to take creative risks to shape the future. This shift in purpose feels relevant to how we have ended up here – chairing a national network for change.

OVERALL AIM

To work together to advocate for a better understanding and appreciation of co-created practice both in the arts sector and beyond

OBJECTIVES

1. Develop a more collegiate and skilled sector by supporting the network to come together and share skills and knowledge
2. Develop co-created practice by commissioning the development of new or existing co-created methodologies
3. Better share, grow and spread methodologies by supporting a number of the commissions to "tour" nationally and/or internationally with multiple partners
4. Develop the market for co-created practice by hosting an annual international marketplace event
5. To work with funders, critics and policy makers to develop the conditions within which this work will flourish

PROGRAMME ACTIVITY

1. Network gatherings – twice yearly for all members
2. Professional development sessions led *by* members *for* members
3. On-line space to share conversations and resources
4. Commissions – to develop and grow methodologies for co-creation
5. Annual marketplace of co-created practice
6. Advocacy meetings – for funders to listen and learn from the network