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Towards a finer ecology - a study of fixed term subsidy for theatre in England

O'Connell, Chris

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By

C.O'Connell

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The work contained within this document has been submitted by the student in partial fulfilment of the requirement of their course and award

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Chris O'Connell

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the University's requirements for the Degree of Master of Research

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Abstract

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This study contests that subsidy for theatre in England, as administrated by Arts Council England, is constricted by historical preoccupations that organise culture and are neither progressive to the organisation's goals as outlined in its document *Great Art For Everyone* (2010), nor adaptive to twenty-first century society.

It explores the notion of what is often referred to as 'the wider theatre ecology', interrogating what is understood by the word 'ecology'. Finally, it outlines an alternative model for subsidy that invests not in buildings, but in a finer ecological approach that refutes hierarchy in subsidy and brings theatre organisations across cities or regions together into a matrix of provision.

Contents

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To my dad.
In Memory of Sheila O'Connell.

Introduction

It is the intention of this study to postulate that Arts Council England's[1] current programme of fixed term subsidy for theatre is constricted by a matrix of historical preoccupations that organise culture, and that have changed little since the organisation's creation over half a century ago. In light of the above, the study also considers that Arts Council England administrates a programme for subsidy that is neither progressive to the organisation's goals as outlined in its document *Great Art For Everyone* (2010)[2] nor adaptive to twenty-first century society. Having discussed this, this thesis then goes on to consider what other models of subsidy might be applicable, or indeed, more appropriate in meeting and addressing the needs of the contemporary landscape of English theatre.

It is important to mention that as well as being the author of this thesis, I am also a theatre practitioner with some twenty years experience. I acknowledge that although it evolved through a desire to construct a critical analysis of my professional experiences, writing this study presented some challenges. As a practitioner with Theatre Absolute, in Coventry, with first hand experience of both receiving and, in 2011, being refused NPO[3] subsidy from the Arts Council, my opinions expressed within this thesis might understandably be viewed as being subjective. It was important, therefore, to ensure that the research methods I adopted were able to equalise any concerns of subjectivity. It was crucial that the people I chose to interview possessed developed professional knowledge of the subject matter, were able to respond openly to the issues I explored, and that their voices and opinions would remain authentically their own. My experience as a practitioner also offers the study a unique perspective in light of the fact that, had I not been a

[1] As it is currently known, 2012. The Arts Council has changed its name over the course of its history. To avoid confusion, for the purposes of this study, unless stipulated, the more generic term the 'Arts Council' will be used.

[2] See http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/browse-advice-and-guidance/strategic-framework-arts

[3] See http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/national-portfolio-funding-programme/

practitioner embedded within the structures of public subsidy for theatre, the research imperative of my thesis might never have evolved.

The study was written from a post-positivist standpoint. By this, it seemed clear from both my long-term professional experience, and academic research of the subject matter, that there are no overall truths or certainties that can be applied to my subject. For example, it is not possible to prove that to administrate subsidy in one way, is categorically better than doing so by another, or indeed that the theatre produced will be 'better'. The ontological stance of my study, however, felt clear: subsidy for theatre and the arts, historically and currently, is controversial. I almost exclusively utilised qualitative research. It was not a choice made from the outset. Large amounts of secondary quantative data exist, and would support aspects of my research. For example, in the last thirty years the Arts Council has commissioned a series of reports and enquiries into subsidy, public participation, and attendance in the arts. For example, its *Theatre Assessment (2009)*[4] and its *Target Group Index*[5] contain significant quantitative data. However, the prospect of generating fresh primary research material through a largely quantitative approach, felt inappropriate for the study at hand. This was informed by my belief that data alone would not be sufficient to express the emotional landscape of subsidy for the arts.

The study has referenced published texts regarding the formation, politics and constitution of the Arts Council, both past and present. Additionally, the study draws heavily on unique research material such as interviews and written personal testimony, collated via meetings with Arts Council employees, arts administrators, playwrights, theatre makers, directors and producers.

Primary research has revealed that there is little evidence of other studies of this nature, which challenge the current model of theatre subsidy in England and imagine alternative models that may be utilised, in order to achieve a

[4] http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/publications/theatreassessment.pdf
[5] http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/pdf/TGI_arts_attendance_2009_10v2.pdf

more representative strategy for subsidy. Documentation on the Arts Council website which records an Open Space[6] event hosted by Improbable Theatre circa 2007, perhaps comes closest to this study in terms of its provocation: "If you were the Arts Council, how would you do it?" The event, however, was a practical and discursive exercise and not recorded in any recognisable academic document such as this. The Arts Council itself has commissioned a variety of reports throughout its history[7] that have recommended strategies of investment or sought to address inadequacies in its programme of subsidy. Yet, significantly, there appear to be none that have suggested alternative models for subsidy.

Fundamentally, this study strives to articulate what it perceives to be a central juxtaposition for the Arts Council; that the model of subsidy which it currently uses and has implemented over the last sixty years is related to the value system of the historical period into which it was born, but is alien to that which now exists in the twenty-first century.

Following its formation in 1945, a year later the Arts Council of Great Britain, as it was then known, was granted a Royal Charter[8]. Pledging to develop greater understanding and accessibility of the fine arts, the Arts Council encountered a nation and a century that had already witnessed huge social, economic and political changes. Following the First and the Second World Wars, both through an increased demand for labour and the sacrifice of men of all ages and class fighting alongside each other, the position of the working class had been strengthened. Additionally, the roles of women had developed and both leisure time and the economy had expanded. However, American historian Jay Winter believes Britain's most decisive break with the conservative traditions of class and gender that had defined much of the

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[6] See www.improbable.co.uk for information on their Open Space initiative.

[7] See *The Glory of the Garden: the development of the arts in England : a strategy for a decade* 1986, or *The Roles and Functions of the English Regional Producing Theatres*, Peter Boyden, 2003. Arts Council publications

[8] See *Arts and Cultures: The History of the 50 Years of the Arts Council of Great Britain*, Andrew Sinclair, page 401

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, occurred from 1945 onwards. Stephen Brooke summarises Winter's view;

> […] it became necessary to thoroughly remake Britain...the changes ushered in by post-second world war governments were enormous: the welfare state, immigration, decolonization, the economic boom [...] the sexual revolution.
>
> (Brooke 2007:39)

Accepting Winter's view, the establishing of the Arts Council in 1945 took place, not only in the wake of social change, but on the wave of a *continuingly* evolving society. The Arts Council's pledge as expressed in its first Royal Charter was in step with this mood of change. Likewise, during the Second World War the achievements of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA) had done much to unite a nation not only in terms of morale, but also in recognition of what the arts could 'do for the people'. However, this study asserts that what the Arts Council established via its choices for subsidy was an organisation that from the outset appeared, arguably, to be both patrician and elitist. One the one hand, it was hoped that the arts become more accessible, yet, as the following chapters explore, Arts Council priorities for subsidy caused it to invest most heavily in 'experts' and the approved locations of prestigious national institutions such as the Royal Opera House[9], and the Royal Shakespeare Company[10].

What Stephen Moore refers to as "...bureaucratic rationality [and]...a faith in improvement" (Brooke 2007:29) played a major role in the changes that underpinned post 1945 society. These he explains are some of the principles of modernity, which depending on one's definition of the latter, is defined by "the idea that the world...can be objectively known and therefore controlled and improved." (Brooke 2007:29). The creation, for example, of the Welfare State in 1945 by the Labour Government, was a modernist vision that ushered in social benefits to improve the lives of the British population. Better provision

[9] See http://www.roh.org.uk
[10] See http://www.rsc.org.uk

in education, a national health service, child benefits and national insurance created more equality of opportunity, both socially and economically. The patrician attitudes of the Arts Council, therefore, may in many ways be attributable to the age in which it was formed.

However, as Gabe Mythen outlines, in the decades that have followed the Second World War,

> [...] the building blocks of society have effectively been shaken up and relaid. Far reaching transformations in family structure, employment patterns and welfare provision have redrawn class boundaries, shuffled gender roles and chopped up social identities.
>
> (Mythen 2004:1)

In the twenty-first century, one might argue that society is far from being fastened down by older, more rational certainties. According to sociologist Zygmunt Bauman, modern society is one that has become both liquid and fluid;

> [...] patterns and codes to which one could conform, which one could select as stable orientation points and by which one could subsequently let oneself be guided [...] are nowadays in increasingly short supply.
>
> (Bauman 2000:7)

Bauman's notion of liquidity is explored further by Priban, outlining the way in which it

> [...] reflects the diminishing role of the spatial dimensions of social life and highlights the central importance of the flow of time and social change...[It is]...change, flexibility, mobility and overall 'lightness' that matters in liquid society.
>
> (Priban 2007:1)

More recent publications, such as that by Mark J. Penn in 2007, enhance these viewpoints, suggesting that the processes of a liquid society are ongoing and intensifying;

> We live in a world with a deluge of choices. In almost every area of life [there is] wider freedom of choice...than ever in history, including new kinds of jobs, new foods, new religions, new technologies and new forms of communication and interaction.
>
> (Penn 2007:xvi)

The huge changes, therefore, that have occurred in society since the creation of the Arts Council become integral to facilitating the ideas that are explored within this study.

It should be said that there is no intention herein to advocate the abolition of the Arts Council. Ostensibly, Arts Council England in 2012 is a more transparent and modern organisation than it was over sixty years ago. However, it is a misunderstood organisation, the reason for which may derive from its decisions pertaining to subsidy. As Richard Witts comments;

> [...] a question that vexes plenty of those who come into contact with the Council: [is] why do [...] smart people often make stupid decisions?
>
> (Witts 1998:2)

This may appear flippant, yet as Witts continues and affirms, there are those that have;

> [...] sat around the table [in Arts Council decision meetings] and watched thousands of pounds 'float in the air and land in the wrong places.'
>
> (Witts 1998:2)

Constructed over three chapters, this study initially examines the origins of state subsidy and that of the Arts Council. The next chapter details the state of play for Arts Council England, 2012, in particular how its National Portfolio (NPO) programme of subsidy relates to external factors such as the public, building based theatres, and to artists. In its final chapter, the study interrogates other possibilities that may create an alternative framework for theatre subsidy in England. A predominant aspect of this third chapter imagines how a theatre ecology might support alternative frameworks, but

also involves the dissection of what a theatre ecology might actually comprise. The word ecology in this instance demands some definition. A modern day vocabulary for the arts often cites or makes reference to the "wider theatre ecology" (Guardian 2012). Theatre critic Lyn Gardner, for example, expands that "in theatre's delicate ecology a small-scale touring company has quite as important a place as the National Theatre, and you can't have one without the other." (Guardian 2012).

Gardner's assertions have merit, but the use of the word ecology in this context feels unsatisfactory, because the National Theatre *could* nevertheless continue to exist in the absence of small scale touring companies. An ecology in its truest biological sense understands that "all organisms, including humans, depend on the ability of other organisms...to recycle the basic components of life." (Raven/Johnson 1996:571). The third chapter therefore seeks to build on Gardner's instincts, but explore a deeper and finer definition of ecology, one that is informed by the evolving behaviour of a 21st century society, and one that binds theatre organisations into a programme of non-hierarchical importance and subsidy.

Chapter One

The birth and journey of subsidy in the arts and theatre

As a nation, Britain has historically viewed the notion of public subsidy for the arts with an air of suspicion. In her book, *The Nationalisation of Culture*, Janet Minihan reflects on how Britain's;

> [...] traditional and firmly ingrained dislike of powerful central authority, of meddlesome bureaucracy, had to be overcome before culture could be considered a legitimate concern of the state.
>
> (Minihan 1977: x)

It was indeed an evolutionary journey: from the laissez-faire attitude to the arts so typical of early nineteenth century Britain, through the morale boosting activities of the arts during the Second World War, to the leadership and vision of John Maynard Keynes[11] and the eventual creation of an arts council sanctioned by the State. Since its formation in 1945, the Arts Council has played a central role in the cultural life of the country. As described by its current website, it believes "great art and culture inspires us, brings us together and teaches us about ourselves and the world around us". (Arts Council 2012). It "champions, develops and invests in artistic and cultural experiences that enrich people's lives". (Arts Council 2012)

Alongside its pastoral convictions, the Arts Council has had to make decisions about what, whom it funds, and why. It currently holds a budget of £1.04 billion, running from April 2012 to March 2015. Both historically and currently, the rationale via which public subsidy for the arts is approached can be seen to be underpinned by some key principles. These should be acknowledged. As is evident in its investment in world-class theatre companies such as the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), organisations such as the Royal Opera House (ROH) and the nation's many museums and libraries, the preservation of the country's artistic prestige and national heritage is of significant importance.[12] Oliver Bennett, outlining government rationale for the support of culture describes its civilising mission. In his report to a conference at

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[11] See *'The Life of John Maynard Keynes'*, R.F.Harrod, Macmillan.

[12] In October 2011, the Arts Council assumed additional responsibility for the functions of the Museums Libraries and Archive Council (MLA)

Warwick University in 1994, he reports how in 1987 the Secretary-General of the Arts Council wrote;

> The arts like religion, are an influence for good behaviour...They contribute to out spiritual, emotional and moral health...
> (Bennett 1995:28)

Additionally, other approaches to public subsidy are formed by recognition of the economic impact the arts can have within society. A recent report from the Centre For Economics and Business (CEBR) indicates that public subsidy of the arts accounts for 0.1% of public spending, but generates up to 0.4% of Gross Domestic Product. Investment in globally renowned national institutions such as the aforementioned RSC, ROH, and the National Theatre, support this rationale. Indeed, the CEBR's report verifies "overall, 10 million inbound visits to the UK involved engagement with the arts and culture." (CEBR 2013). Also integral to considering a vision for public subsidy is the notion of empowerment, social regeneration, and the subsequent impact both on cohesion, diversity, and access. These are some of the founding principles of the Arts Council, encapsulated in its first Royal Charter (1946). Charged with "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" (Sinclair 1995:50) it reflects the influences of a newly created Welfare State, a blueprint to facilitate the betterment of the general population. Alan Davey, present day Chief Executive of the Arts Council, develops this rationale in the organisation's document *Achieving Great Art For Everyone;*

> Public policy is increasingly focused on meeting the needs of communities at a local level. There are major opportunities for the arts to become even more integral to local life, with art and arts buildings often vital to regeneration...We are becoming clearer about how the country's artistic excellence is reliant on, and benefits from, the richness and innovation that diversity brings. In supporting this artistically led approach to diversity, we will continue to push for equality in access. (Arts Council 2012)

The various approaches to subsidy as outlined above are robust and one would not seek to alter them. Indeed, the argument developed in this study is imagined with these approaches in mind. What the study seeks to assert however, is that the current administration of subsidy for the arts, and for theatre in England, hinders their fulfilment.

In the light of Minihan's observations, this chapter will trace how the case for subsidy in the arts and in theatre first emerged, how the Arts Council came to be and assesses some of the landmark moments of its history up to its present position as Arts Council England.

Although artists, in some form or another, have historically been subsidised by patrons or royalty, the purchase of the Elgin Marbles in the early nineteenth century is a significant example of very early State subsidy of the arts. At such a time, the appreciation of art, largely fine art such as paintings and sculpture, was almost exclusively to be found in London. It existed within the domain of the rich. Privately funded collections or activities were accessible to the upper classes and aristocracy via private galleries, societies and academies. As Minihan outlines:

> In the absence of cultural enterprises sponsored by the state, these societies served as the major source of artistic activity in the life of the country.
>
> (Minihan 1977:5)

Yet within these circles there was an anxiety at the array of artistic riches in the possession of Britain's European neighbours. For example, ancient works and artefacts by old masters brought back to France by Napoleon Bonaparte following his conquests of Europe, were held in The Louvre in Paris. London's collections could not compare. A nation's collection of art, linked intimately to the taste and the prestige of the ruling aristocracies, was indicative of its civilisation, its prowess and its intellectual supremacy.

The attitude of the British government, content that those who enjoyed and collected it should support art, offered little enthusiasm or dialogue. In the belief that a nation should be prepared to pay for and own a significant work of art such as the Elgin Marbles, pressure was applied from various quarters. In 1816, a Parliamentary select committee was formed to consider the state purchase of the marbles. Dating back to the fifth century, they were derived from a collection of Greek marble structures originally made by the sculptor Phidias, forming a part of the Parthenon and the Acropolis, in Athens. At personal cost, the marbles had been purchased by Thomas Bruce, the 7th Earl of Elgin, and brought to Britain over a ten-year period, from 1802 to 1812. Persuaded by a rising consensus and recommendations from the select committee, the British government agreed to reimburse Lord Elgin to the sum of £35,000, and the Elgin Marbles were installed in the British Museum. This by no means signalled any long-term attachment to the idea of state subsidy, as it might be more generally understood. Yet there were those who continued to advocate on behalf of the arts and their belief in its ability not only to define a nation's prowess, but of the benefits they offered to the common man. In 1840, at an annual general meeting of the London Arts Union, honorary secretary George Godwin, assured those present that:

> The influence of the fine arts in humanising and refining - in purifying the thoughts and raising the sources of gratification in man - is so universally felt and admitted that it is hardly necessary now to urge it.
>
> (Minihan 1977:78)

By this period of the mid-nineteenth century, aristocrats and connoisseurs were no longer the sole arbiters of museums and galleries; industrialists and financiers had begun to lead the way. The unstoppable force of the industrial revolution was beginning to take a physical and emotional toll on the British nation. In industrial towns and cities, changed beyond recognition, with living conditions bleak and political unrest becoming common place, recognition of the arts and its pivotal role in society inevitably began to emerge. The Museums Act of 1843 granted rights to local authorities to provide cultural

facilities and the Public Libraries Act of 1855 enabled local rates to be used in the setting up of schools of both arts and sciences. Such developments offered wider access to the arts to the lower and the middle classes, both in London and across Britain.

A parallel dispersal of the arts began to occur at the same time in the theatre. In the early years of the century, constrained by limitations imposed by The Licensing Act (1737), theatre was only allowed in two houses in London, both at Covent Garden and Drury Lane. With the repeal of the act in 1843, more theatres began to open, not only across London, but also throughout the rest of the country. Led by the likes of Henry Irving, Herbert Beerbohm Tree and Charles Kean, actor/manager theatre companies began to flourish. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, calls grew for the creation of a subsidised national theatre. Supporters included respected critic and poet of the age, Matthew Arnold. Well known for his attachment to the edifying properties of art and critical of the state of British theatre compared to its European neighbours, whilst remembering a visit to the theatre in Shrewsbury, circa 1860, he expressed his distaste for the perils of a mass produced culture:

> Never was such a scene of desolation, scattered at very distant intervals through the boxes were about a half a dozen chance comers like myself; there were some soldiers and their friends in the pit and a good many riff raff in the upper gallery. The real towns people, the people who carried forward the business of the life of Shrewsbury, and who filled its churches on Sundays, were entirely absent
>
> (Whitworth 1951:34)

Arnold put great stall on the visit of the French company Comedie-Francaise to London, in the 1880s.

> The performances of Comedie-Francaise show us plainly, I think, what is gained - the theatre being admitted to an irresistible need for organised communities - by organising the theatre. Comedie-Francaise shows us not only what is gained by organising theatre, but what is meant by organising it.
>
> (Whitworth 1951:35)

Jackson (2010:19) considers Arnold's notion that theatre be 'organised' to be indicative of his belief that "theatres needed something that could not be achieved by market forces alone, by the lowest common denominator and by what was understood to be popular." It is true that aside from a national theatre, what Arnold was craving was the state subsidy of "the repertoire system favoured on the European mainland." (Jackson 2010:19). Calls such as Arnold's were clearly heard. By 1913, a potential site for a national theatre was identified. Had it not been for the outbreak of The First World War in 1914, a national theatre may have been built in and around Bloomsbury and not at its current South Bank location.

The First World War was of course a landmark event for the British nation and with more important things to consider and a war effort to finance, there is little evidence of calls for state subsidy of the arts gathering much momentum at this time. However, it is with the advent of the Second World War and the creation of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts (CEMA), where the story of modern state subsidy for the arts begins. A linear path of progression can be traced from this point through to today's Arts Council England. Although upholding its historical antipathy to state interference, and:

> Despite the aversion towards anything that could be termed 'cultural', in 1939, the British Government decided to take part in a privately instigated initiative to fund the arts, originally classical music, theatre and visual arts.
>
> (Weingartner 2012:4)

This initiative was administrated and steered by CEMA, whose mission was to preserve the morale of the population during wartime through the promotion of the arts. As Eric White notes:

> The declaration of war brought about the immediate revival of ENSA (the Entertainments National Service Association) which had been set up during the First World War to provide entertainment in bulk to the troops...Yet as the months went by and the full implications of the approaching struggle began to be realised, it was clear that this

> time...the special needs of the civilian population...would have to be taken into account.
>
> (White 1975:23)

The inspiration for CEMA is attributed to Dr Tom Jones, who as Secretary of the Pilgrim Trust, was charged with administering a £2million endowment fund donated from the American millionaire Edward Harkness. Originally established to help preserve the nation's heritage, it was Jones who proposed that £25,000 of the trust's funds be used to support arts activity across the country in the time of war. Proposing his idea to Lord De la Warr, President of the Board of Education and Lord MacMillan, it was agreed that, in order;

> [...] to avoid an artistic blackout and sustain morale, money should be made available to support cultural activities throughout the country. A week later the Treasury indicated that it would match any subvention from the Pilgrim Trust up to £50,000. All that was left was to formally constitute the body. And on 11 January, the Council for the Encouragement of Music was convened.
>
> (Rebellato 1999:39)

Supported by its £25,000 from the trust, bolstered by the government's match of a further £25,000, and urged on by its self appointed slogan 'The Best For The Most', CEMA went to war in its own way. Armed with four objectives, its specific aims were to ensure;

- the preservation in wartime of the highest standards in the art of music, drama and painting
- the widespread provision of opportunities for hearing good music and the enjoyment of the arts generally for people, who, on account of wartime conditions, have been cut off from these things
- the encouragement of music making and play-acting by the people themselves
- through the above activities, the rendering of indirect assistance to professional singers and players who may be suffering from a wartime lack of demand for their work.

(Sinclair 1995:30)

As well as supporting ongoing performances in theatres and music halls, the subsidy provided by CEMA allowed actors, artists and musicians to tour work

across the country. They went, in particular, to specific areas of the nation in which there was a high concentration of workers, both in manufacture and in munitions. Under the auspices of CEMA, performances were held in communal air raid shelters, arranged for evacuees who had landed in new and strange locations and taken into factories, canteens and schools. In 1942, following the resignation of Lord MacMillan as the inaugural chairman of CEMA, John Maynard Keynes, a student of Eton College, a Cambridge don and an economic adviser to the Treasury, was appointed as CEMA's new chairman. Keynes was a long time admirer of opera and classical music. What emerged with his appointment were early indications of the pre-occupations of the Arts Council to organise its view of culture. In her article, Victoria Alexander describes how under Keynes' influence, "CEMA shifted its focus from the popular arts towards the interests of the art establishment and the social elite." (Alexander: 2007).

Its activities had provoked discontent from within the professional ranks, some of whom such as John Christie, founder of Glyndebourne Opera, had become concerned with a proliferation of support for amateur performers and performances, leading to claims that CEMA was populist in its programming. Richard Witts offers a jocular view:

> The names of certain artists on the CEMA circuit immediately evoke the era: Browning Mummery...the Blech Quartet, Topliss Greene (baritone) and Ella Pounder (piano). Some of the venues too, sound surreal:...the Dick Institute in Kilmarnock and the RAF Camp Theatre in Rhyl. Yet it cannot be denied that wartime audiences got solid value out of CEMA.
>
> (Witts 1998:75)

On his appointment as Chairman, Keynes was swift to drive a wedge between the amateur and the professional. According to Andrew Sinclair (1995:36), during the remaining years of the war, Keynes moulded CEMA into an: "arbiter of artistic excellence...His desire was to form a policy for a national culture." For Dan Rebellato (1999:41), the level of Keynes' influence could be

felt as CEMA altered the emphasis of its vision, and "amateur activity, touring and regionalism - were successively abandoned." What emerged, Rebellato claims, was a focus that turned "towards their precise opposites: professionalism, buildings and London." (Rebellato 1999:41).

Despite these sea changes, orientated via the artistic preferences of John Maynard Keynes, by the close of the Second World War state support for the arts was no longer the controversial subject of yesteryear. Sufficiently convinced of CEMA's achievements, the government sanctioned the official formation of, and in 1946, ratified what became known as The Arts Council. On BBC radio in 1945, Keynes announced:

> I do not believe it is yet realised what an important thing has happened. State patronage for the arts has crept in. A semi-independent body is provided with modest funds to stimulate, comfort and support any societies or bodies brought together on private or local initiative that are striving with serious purpose and a reasonable prospect of success to present for public enjoyment the arts of drama, music and painting.
>
> (Wallinger and Warnock 2000:142)

Managing to sound both triumphalist and wistful, he assured listeners:

> The artist walks where the breath of the spirit blows him. He cannot be told his direction...he leads the rest of us into fresh pastures...Let every part of Merry England be merry in its own way.
>
> (Wallinger and Warnock 2000:142-143)

Interestingly, as if the wartime touring activities of CEMA were already losing currency, the Arts Council's predilection for the iconic duality of art and buildings was becoming apparent. Continuing in the same speech, Keynes announced: "We look forward to a time when the theatre and the concert hall and the gallery will be a living element in everyone's upbringing." (Wallinger and Warnock 2000:143).

Significantly, whether to administrate appropriate autonomy, or to insulate against controversy or failure, The Arts Council was constituted in such a way that it remained a step removed from government, operating via an 'arms length' relationship. Still upheld today, the arms length principle essentially allows government, although granting subsidy to the Arts Council, to ensure independence from any direct involvement in the administration of art. In 1946, a Royal Charter outlined the Arts Council's aims. Most notably, it had been formed;

> […] for the purpose 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.
>
> (Sinclair 1995:401)

Of CEMA's wartime activities, Keynes declared: "At the start our aim was to replace what the war had taken away; but we soon found that we were providing what had never existed anyway." (Wallinger and Warnock 2000:142). Within this last statement, lie the roots of what might arguably be considered a misappropriation of Britain's 'artistic' culture by the Arts Council. Differing accounts cite the wartime activities of CEMA as the beginning of a new dawn, which engendered mass support and interest in the performing arts unlike at any other time. In 1943, for example, William Emrys Williams, war time director of the Army Bureau of Current Affairs and later Secretary General of the Arts Council, 1951-63, described his dream for a post war Britain. It was to be a nation dotted with a network of cultural centres. Based on what he saw as a growing demand for arts and arts education, Williams wrote:

> Instead of our present dispersal of the public library down one street, the art gallery (if any) down another, the workingmen's club somewhere else and so on, let us place Civic Centres where men and women may satisfy the whole range of educational and cultural interest...Let us so unify our popular culture.
>
> (Pick 1991:23)

In the same publication, however, author John Pick (1991:23) refutes the rhetoric of those such as Williams, because it;

> […] grossly distorts what was happening...aggrandizing the extent of the wartime demand by implying that before the war Britain was a cultural desert. Its vastly impressive libraries, its universities, its city halls, town halls and its nine thousand village halls, the myriad places where people had met in the thirties are all summarily dismissed.
>
> (Pick 1991:23)

The solemnity of purpose in Keynes' 1945 radio announcement, his wish that "buildings be widely spread throughout the country." (Wallinger/Warnock 2000:143) and the emphasis in the Royal Charter on the accessibility of the fine arts, is commented on by playwright David Edgar in his article *Why Should We Fund the Arts?* What is encapsulated is a;

> […] theory of artistic value that you could call patrician: art's purpose as ennobling, its realm the nation, its organisational form the institution, its repertoire the established canon and works aspiring to join it. In this the council was seeking to reverse a rising tide of populism (art's role as entertainment, its realm the marketplace, its form the business, its audience mass).
>
> (Edgar 2012)

If now there was to be state subsidy of the arts, it would be on the terms of those who had argued its case over the last century: not on those whose taxes were used to fund it, rather the old certainties of the establishment. Preferring, not to ask: what can we do as a nation, the question appears more to have been: what can we *do* for the nation? Positioned by the societal prefixes of the time, wealth, education, class, The Arts Council was fashioned, as Edgar suggests, on a patrician agenda that placed its trust in experts and approved places of excellence and supporting the high arts, in particular those produced in London. Although Keynes, in his BBC radio announcement, urged that "every part of Merry England be merry in its own way", he also spoke of plans for London;

> [...] it is also our business to make London a great artistic metropolis, a place to visit and to wonder at.
>
> (Wallinger/Warnock 2000:143).

Following the wartime bombing of the Queen's Hall, there was a need for a "proper place for concerts" (Wallinger/Warnock 2000:143). There were hopes also for the re-opening of the opera and ballet in London's Covent Garden and for the building of a national theatre. In her paper, Olivia Turnbull verifies the impact of the Arts Council's patrician instincts:

> The stamp placed on the Arts Council by its first Chairman [...] with his emphasis on the civilising nature of art, defined the post war years. The organisation's prioritisation of cultural excellence [was seen] largely in terms of text based drama for a minority elite as defined by the metropolis.
>
> (Turnbull 2008:11)

Kate Dorney and Ros Merkin add weight to Turnbull's evidence, reporting how the Arts Council;

> […] despite taking over the 14 regional offices of CEMA in 1946, in 1951-2 these became six regional offices and between 1952 and 1956 all regional offices were closed despite a Select Committee suggesting that the provinces 'where the Arts are not so readily available to the public' provided a more 'valuable field than the metropolitan area for the activities of the Council'.
>
> (Dorney and Merkin 2010: 4)

Considering historical precedence such as this allows one to empathise with present day accusations that the Arts Council pursues an elitist programme of subsidy and is one that denies the imperative of its Royal Charter. What seems apparent is that the Arts Council's decisions are habitual, shaped not only by the example above, but also by funding decisions such as those that followed in the early 1950s. Post war austerity at this time influenced both the nation's work and its leisure time. In the summer of 1951, despite enjoying huge success in its contribution to the Festival of Britain, the Arts Council was forced to assess the limits of its subsidy in the light of such austerity. Although

driven by the endeavours of its Royal Charter to not only make accessible but to elevate the fine arts, the Arts Council had to decide how best to divert its meagre subsidy.

Contemplating the prospect of there being more claimants than money, it was, Andrew Sinclair reports, William Emrys Williams as Secretary-General of the Arts Council, who recorded in the 1951 Annual Report of the Arts Council:

> Might it not be better to accept the realistic fact that the living theatre of good quality cannot be widely accessible and to concentrate our resources upon establishing a few more shrines like Stratford and the Bristol Old Vic?
>
> (Sinclair 1995:36)

Williams went further. Citing the Royal Charter's pledge to raise and spread the fine arts, his suggestion was that it may be best to do the first rather than the second, thus devoting the Arts Council's subsidy to two or three leading theatres. Appropriating the words of the Greek poet Meleager, Williams concluded they were best supporting "few, but roses". In the wake of the Arts Council's deliberations during this period, concerns grew, as Pick writes, that the Arts Council's intrusions were;

> [...] seen not as a short term shoring up of an industrial weakness, but as an integral part of favoured clients' industrial development. Theatre companies favoured with grants were characterised not as weak and fallible, (and thus in need of state charity) but the 'best'.
>
> (Pick 1985:10)

By the middle of the following decade, it was these kinds of perceptions that the Labour government set out to address. Leavened by societal changes fashioned from the desires of a post-war generation to stand apart and define itself, the arts had begun to experience a shift in the status quo. Certainly, there was some relief from the austerity of the previous decade. In the late 1950s and into the 1960s, a nationwide building spree had seen civic theatres built in cities like Coventry, Nottingham and Chichester. Indeed, in 1965, the

Housing the Arts[13] scheme was launched, aimed at replenishing Britain's stock of theatres that had been either damaged or lost in the Second World War. Via the Department of Education and Science led by Minister of State Jennie Lee, the Arts Council was in receipt of £5,700,000 a year for use as subsidy, and, furthermore, in 1965, commissioned by Lee, 'A White Paper Policy for The Arts: the First Steps' became a landmark publication. As Lawrence Black records, the paper;

> [...] tallied with Prime Minister Harold Wilson's modernizing homilies. It asserted that 'in any civilized community the arts…must occupy a central place'; welcomed the prospect of 'increasing automation bringing more leisure' and aligned itself 'against the drabness, uniformity and joylessness of much of the social furniture we have inherited from the industrial revolution', in favour of 'making Britain a gayer and more cultivated country'
>
> (Black 2006:119)

Influenced by the changing values of the new decade, in 1967 the Arts Council's Royal Charter also saw some revision. Its pledge to develop 'understanding and practice of the fine arts exclusively' (Sinclair 1995:401) was altered so that the word *exclusively* was removed. Increasingly concerned with what today might be more commonly termed as access, or engagement, Labour's agenda for the arts was to shift the emphasis away from the prevailing Arts Council obsession to fund the cultural elites of the Royal Opera House and the Royal Shakespeare Company. In its own words, the paper described, "…the growing recognition of the importance of strengthening contacts between regional and civic associations in different parts of the country" (Wallinger/Warnock 2000:146).

What had grown in the years since the Arts Council's formation and what has continued to lean heavily on its resource, was a network of regionally based repertory theatres. In cities as far apart as Leeds, Colchester, Plymouth and Worcester, access to the arts had become more widespread. Theatres such

[13] See http://www.reading.ac.uk/ftt/research/ftt-givingvoice.aspx

as these, often staging weekly repertory performances, became a fertile training ground for writers, actors and directors.

With the benefit of the experiences of Peter Stark, speaking at the conference *Subsidy, Patronage and Sponsorship: Theatre and Performance Culture in Uncertain Times*, London, July 2012, it is possible to gain a detailed understanding of this wider regional engagement and how in 1960's Britain the arts were exploding from the inside out. Stark, an expert in cultural policy research began his career in the community and experimental arts scene of the late 1960s. He describes burgeoning local provision in places like Birmingham, at the Midlands Arts Centre, the Dovecote Arts Centre, in Stockton and at the Bubble in North Tyneside. As a young man, he was passionately involved with Birmingham Arts Lab and well placed to witness the work of artists from across Europe, exerting their influence on the work of home grown actors, writers and directors. Small-scale fledgling theatre companies began to emerge as artists came together to create their own work. At The Birmingham Arts Lab there were regular tours and performances from companies such as The People Show, The Welfare State and The West Indian Narrative.

As Stark remarks, there was no subsidy at this time for this more experimental type of work, yet in response to the growing movement of new work the Arts Council initiated changes through the creation of a New Activities Committee. It was a period that saw "tides moving into conflict with established arts policy." (Stark 2012). So evident was the shift in theatre culture that in 1971 the Arts Council appointed a Small Scale touring officer, the very first of which was Sue Timothy. Speaking with Stark at the same conference, Timothy's job description was to promote, co-ordinate and support the work of the alternative theatre movement. Red Ladder, 7:84, The Pip Simmons Group, Foco Novo, Belt and Braces, Bradford College of Art Theatre Group and many more, came under her auspices. In the main, there was what she indentified as a ‘paternalistic’ atmosphere within the Arts Council. Senior officers of a

more liberal disposition were content to allow her free reign to develop the work that was surfacing across a whole range of disciplines: community work, political theatre, performance art and new writing. It was certainly some distance away from the early vision of John Maynard Keynes. In direct contrast to the patrician model of subsidy Keynes and subsequent colleagues had established within the Arts Council, Timothy remembers how;

> […] all the companies were really anti-establishment and anti-capitalist and their working structures democratic and in the main co-operative. They were united in an opposition to the status quo, they wanted to create an alternative to the West End and to the repertory theatres who were seen, in the main, as middle of the road and elitist and what's more were swallowing up the bulk of public subsidy.
>
> (Timothy 2012)

By the beginning of the 1970s, touring in the now legendary Ford Transit van, this alternative theatre movement became determined to play to new audiences. It established a nationwide counter culture of theatre venues that became commonplace in the form of arts labs, arts centres, trade union halls, community centres and pubs and clubs. Roland Rees, founder of Foco Novo Theatre Company remembers, "with a few audacious exceptions, mainstream theatre represented a fossilised tradition which did not reflect the reality many of us saw around us" (Rees 1996:19).

Despite these changes in theatre practice in Britain and the recommendations of the 1965 White Paper, the Arts Council continued largely to focus its support on buildings within the regional theatre network, and the nation's major companies. Its latter commitments fuelled ongoing accusations of elitism and a London bias. In 1974, in a neat paradox no doubt inspired by the experimentation of the alternative theatre movement, the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC), despite its superior resource, opened The Other Place, (TOP), in Stratford-Upon-Avon. In his book, *The State of The Nation, British Theatre Since 1945,* Michael Billington outlines how the founding of TOP served only to instigate discussion around the nature of the RSC's more

formal operations. Ergo, if they could produce work of quality and excellence in an old tin building once used to store scenery, why was there a need for the level of subsidy that allowed them to work in the more opulent surroundings of its main stage space?

According to Billington, an article he wrote for the Guardian in 1974 largely ignited the debate. Struck by the stripped back simplicity of the work of director Peter Brook at his Bouffe Du Nord space in Paris, Billington questioned the necessity of the 'machinery' so often central to the work of the big companies in Britain. He recalls:

> The debate that was started in 1974 opened up issues that were to resound through succeeding decades...The difficulty of allocating resources fairly between 'official' and fringe theatres. The fear that buildings would come to dictate policy.
>
> (Billington 2007: 236-37)

As explored shortly in this study, Billington's anxieties are manifest in current Arts Council programmes of subsidy. However, it would be fascinating to imagine in what ways a strategy for the arts might have evolved had it not been for the economic disaster of the late 1970s, which was precipitated by crippling strikes in the workforce and a middle eastern oil embargo that stifled the apparatus of economies across the Western world. So it was, following the election in 1979 of the Conservative government, led by Margaret Thatcher, that the working class voice of the left was disassembled and the progressive gains of the alternative theatre movement were thwarted. A new imperative was placed upon the arts: what could they contribute both to the economy of the country and to international trade? They were to operate via what Victoria Alexander (2007) refers to as an "enterprise culture...emphasising three key principles: the efficiency of markets, the liberty of individuals and the non-interventionism of the State."

Not unsurprisingly, the finances of the Arts Council were swiftly checked. A report, written by Ian Brown and Rob Brannen testifies that during that time:

> The theatre felt under severe pressure from the restrictive public funding practices of the Thatcher government and had been particularly shocked, as had much of the public service, by the damaging reduction of one per cent from all budgets in the middle of the financial year, 1979-80
>
> (Brown and Brannen 1986)

In 1980, on Christmas Eve, the Arts Council cut its subsidy to forty-one arts organisations, eighteen of which included theatre companies. As the decade progressed, fiscal pressures pitted managerial priorities against those that were artistic, giving birth to a precedence in which the potential profitability of a production or a season of work became the new measuring stick. As Victoria Alexander remarks, "the arts were now to be judged with economic yardsticks and were exhorted to throw off the culture of dependency." (Alexander 2007).

In the opinion of a variety of artists and theatre makers with direct experience of the era, Margaret Thatcher's assault on the arts had also been politically motivated. By the mid 1980s, many regional repertory theatres were crippled by a lack of resource. Likewise, subsidised companies such as John McGrath's socialist 7:84 Theatre Company, which had been empowered by the alternative theatre movement a decade earlier, had seen their subsidy completely withdrawn. In the 2009 Guardian article *Acceptable in the 80s,* playwright and novelist Hanif Kureishi asserted "...she [Thatcher] actively hated culture, as she recognised that it was a form of dissent." (Guardian 2012). David Edgar's view in the aforementioned article *Why should we fund the arts?* contests that:

> Margaret Thatcher sought to shift power from the producer to the consumer, using the market to disempower the provocative (from political groups to the high avant garde) in favour of the populist.
>
> (Edgar 2012)

As the more stridently commercial work of composers such as Andrew Lloyd Webber, via hits such as *The Phantom of The Opera*, began to dominate the professional theatre landscape, there was disquiet amongst others. In 1984, in response to a growing sense that theatre and the arts were being emasculated, the Arts Council commissioned *The Glory of The Garden Report*. It was proposed as a responsive strategy to the financial climate and to discern how better to sustain regional theatres and arts organisations. The report returned a range of anodyne managerialist recommendations, such as urging the Arts Council to identify "actual and potential creative strength in relation to both new and established work," or to assess "the efficiency shown in using available resources and the accuracy and control of budgeting." (Pick 1991:83).

Perhaps most significantly, however, the report revealed that despite the ongoing cull against theatre subsidy, the ongoing preferences of the Arts Council for the national institutions of theatre and art remained unswerving. The report's findings considered that it was "inequitable that London, which holds about one-fifth of the population in England, should attract about half the Council's spending." (Arts Council 2012). By the early to mid 1980s, theatres had begun to close and as this study asserts in subsequent chapters, the Arts Council's pre-occupations appeared to be outstripping its resource. In his essay, Anthony Jackson reports that by the early 1980s the National Theatre[14] and the Royal Shakespeare Company commandeered some 50% of the whole of the Arts Council allocation between them. It was a time, he writes, in which;

> [...] arguments intensified about not just the level of funding but the ideologies that underpinned the decisions made.
>
> (Jackson 2010:18)

[14] See http://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk

Summarising the performance of the Arts Council throughout the 1980s, John Pick is direct:

> The Arts Council, by [in *The Glory of the Garden Report*] adopting the government's language, had done nothing for artists, but it had, for a while saved itself..." [in] "...the way it had adopted the massively inappropriate language of the pre war Business School to describe what British artists did, the way it discussed the arts as if they mattered only as economic counters and the way it had discussed the life of art as if it were nothing more nor less than an industry.
>
> (Pick 1991:85)

By the turn of the new millennium, the previous two decades had left the Arts Council battered and with limited opportunities for creativity or innovation. It is true that the creation of the National Lottery in 1994 had provided new funds for capital projects that saw new theatres built, or existing ones renovated. Equally, the election of a New Labour government in 1997 offered renewed hope for the arts. Its first Culture Secretary Chris Smith declared that the new government brought with it "...a profoundly democratic agenda, seeing culture access as one of the egalitarian building blocks of society." (Smith 1998:3).

However, the artistic soul of the Arts Council appeared ragged, with little energy for expressing or investing in its vision of work for the nation's stages. In 2000, Peter Boyden's report entitled *The Roles and Functions of the English Regional Producing Theatres*, described an industry that had become inward looking and that was failing to engage with its communities. The report, according to Robert Hewison's paper, revealed;

> […] a long term decline in the audience for drama [...] In particular, regional repertory theatres were failing to nurture new writing talent, or directors, or actors, or technicians...Ensemble companies had virtually disappeared, there were fewer creative people on the payroll and pay was poor. Morale was low, deficits were rising and most of the fifty theatres covered by the report were technically insolvent.
> (Hewison 2012:2)

Boyden's findings indentified a lack of innovation in the industry as the biggest barrier to change. In 2003, the Arts Council became officially known as Arts Council England and was re-organised to constitute nine regional offices and a national office. It was also able to convince the government of a need for more investment and secured a 72% increase in its budget for grant in aid subsidy. Bolstered in 2007 by a pledge from the Treasury of a further £100 million over the next three years, the Arts Council implemented its programme for Regularly Funded Organisations (RFO). Distinguished by an autonomy that allowed its regional offices to appoint companies it felt were best suited to contribute to the needs of its locale, the RFO programme offered fixed term three-year subsidy. Companies ranged in size, from the more obvious national institutions such as the National Theatre and the Royal Opera House, to regional building based theatres, to independent small and mid scale touring companies. Between 2008-2011 the Arts Council invested £1.3 billion RFO funds into eight hundred and eighty arts organisations.

As the journey of both subsidy for the arts and of the Arts Council enters its most recent period, a financial crisis unheralded in any other era has been brought to bear on public life, both in Britain and across the globe. In 2008, mirroring the pattern of an intensely unsettling first decade of the 21st century, the world's financial markets collapsed. The dominating consequence of the crash has provoked curbs on public spending that are reminiscent of the Thatcher period of the 1980s. Britain is in an age of austerity. Numerous reports on reduced public spending describe a country in which:

> The Tory-Lib Dem government have already overseen: the scrapping of Child Trust Funds, a rise in VAT costing an average household an extra £275 each year, entitlement to child benefit for people earning over £44,000 being removed costing families £1,055 each year for the eldest child and £749 for younger children and a freeze in the value of child benefit, causing families with children to lose over £100 per annum.
>
> (Labourlist 2012)

In the light of the Autumn Statement 2012, chancellor George Osborne has confirmed that austerity measures will continue until 2018. Most certainly, the arts, as the following chapter will go on to illustrate, have been hit hard. The Conservative/Liberal Democrat government has been outspoken in its belief that as a sector the arts must develop closer links with philanthropy. In a keynote speech in 2010 to the European Association for Philanthropy and Giving, former Culture Secretary Jeremy Hunt announced that:

> The best model for financing the arts – one that secures not just financial independence but artistic independence too – is one in which cultural organisations can count on a plurality and diversity of funding sources
>
> (Department of Culture Media and Sport 2010)

His replacement and current Culture Secretary, Maria Miller, recently insisted that the arts needed to "[...] get better at asking, not just receiving." (Guardian 2012). Not only in the arts, but also across all aspects, the coalition government's standpoint is clear: in its quest to be sustainable, the nation's economy must erase debt and dependency.

Historically, the Arts Council has been here before. As this chapter has illustrated, the austerity measures of both the 1950s and the 1980s tested its strategic guile. Interestingly, with regard to theatre subsidy, what these two periods of history revealed is the ingrained DNA of the Arts Council. In the 1950s, whilst still very much in its infancy and enduring post war measures, it focused its subsidy on "few, but roses." (Sinclair 1995:88). As the decade passed and the greater prosperity of the 1960s and changes in society offered more alternatives, it did little to repeal its heavy investment in flagship organisations such as, for example, the Royal Shakespeare Company, the National Theatre, or the Royal Opera House. Similarly, in the 1980s, as it came under sustained pressure from public spending restrictions, it imagined not how best to use its subsidy and honour its Royal Charter's pledge to spread as well as raise, but instead to prop up an ailing regional theatre

network, and to maintain the larger portion of its investments in some of the country's key theatrical institutions. As will be explored in Chapter Two, a similar steadfastness applies in current times under what are, once again, difficult times financially. However, during what might be described as a Golden Age under New Labour, Chris Smith's vision of "culture access" (1998:3) and the uplift of subsidy brought about by the Boyden Report, the same pre-occupations remained evident.

As expressed in its introduction, this study is primarily concerned with challenging current models of Arts Council subsidy; but it is important to ask why, in view of its modernist aspirations as expressed by John Maynard Keynes in 1945 to "breed an environment of spirit", the Arts Council has remained so conservative. As an ex-Senior Research and Information Officer at the Arts Council, Robert Hutchison offers some insight. Quoting the chair of an Arts Council Organisation Working Party, the Council expressed its belief that it "...should be free from tied interests or allegiances [and that] members should be truly impartial in their decision making." (Hutchison 1982:27). Yet Hutchison later points out how;

> [...] vested interests were fully involved in the Arts Council's decision making from the outset...In the case of the Royal Opera House...the facts are stark indeed. Between 1946 and 1981, there have been 47 trustees and directors of the Royal Opera House. (Hutchison 1982:27)

In later years, there are other extenuating circumstances that may have perpetuated the status quo within the Arts Council. Producer Matt Burman views the Culture Secretary's announcement in March 2012 not to renew the tenure of Arts Council chair Liz Forgan, as an example of how the arms length principle so valued by the Arts Council, has become all but eroded. He notes also that Alan Davey's previous employment, (prior to his appointment in 2007 as the Arts Council's Chief Executive), was as Director for Culture at the Department for Culture, Media and Sport. Burman's observations perhaps suggest a subtext for cultural control that circulates between government and

the Arts Council. When further considering the question of conservatism, Burman expands. In Britain, he believes, there is "an inverted snobbery towards the arts and towards the practice of culture." (Burman 2012). It is a mindset sustained by some outside and by some within the arts. It has, Burman claims, compelled the Arts Council both in the past and in the present day to "express what it is that we [artists] do in economic or social terms, rather than in the intrinsic value of the work." (Burman 2012).

Developing this logic, what arguably appears most tangible when viewed at opposite ends of the historical spectrum, from the purchase of the Elgin Marbles to the global branding of the country's national institutions, as supported by the Arts Council, is the imperative of prestige. As explored in the introduction to this thesis, the importance of supporting a nation's prestigious arts organisations is a key rationale in the approach to subsidy. However, in Chapter 2, the study will postulate that this mindset and the Arts Council's continued emphasis on theatre as buildings, is detrimental to other approaches to subsidy, such as diversity, access and innovation, and constrains the organisation's aims and objectives, as expressed in its document, *Achieving Great Art For Everyone* (2010).[15]

[15] See *Achieving Great Art For Everyone* (2010), Arts Council website

Chapter Two

Arts Council England and subsidy: State of Play, 2012/13

As the previous chapter outlined the origins both of state subsidy and the creation of the Arts Council, this second chapter will explore them both in their present day context. It will focus, amongst other things, on how the Arts Council's historical pre-occupations influence both its modern day decision-making and its goals. This will be examined through the Arts Council's relationship both to the public and to building based theatres. Firstly, however, it is necessary to examine the nature of its current programme of subsidy and the associated finances.

The Arts Council and its strategy for subsidy

In March 2011, The Arts Council phased out its Regularly Funded Organisation programme (RFO), replacing it with its National Portfolio (NPO), funding programme. The latter programme is described on the organisation's website as "a 10-year strategic framework for the arts." (Arts Council 2012). Its vision is described within its document *Achieving Great Art For Everyone* and is shaped by, "five goals for the arts and, under each of the goals, a number of priorities for the next four years." (Arts Council 2012).

The NPO subsidises the arts across dance, theatre, combined arts, visual arts and literature. It is worth remembering that this study is concerned only with the administration of NPO funds for theatre. The Arts Council's five goals are listed thus and are chosen to ensure that:

- Talent and artistic excellence are thriving and celebrated
- More people experience and are inspired by the arts
- The arts are sustainable, resilient and innovative
- The arts leadership and workforce are diverse and highly skilled
- Every child and young person has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts.

(Arts Council 2012)

In essence, the Arts Council's investments are governed by the strategic framework that informs its NPO programme. Arts organisations in receipt of funding are expected to contribute to no less than two of the goals, as described above. The NPO was developed in consultation with artists, audiences and local authorities and open to all to apply. It received submissions as wide ranging as those from the flagship Royal National Theatre, to the emerging Eclipse Theatre Company[16] in Sheffield, whose work is made primarily from a black British perspective, to the participatory provision of Doncaster Community Arts (DARTS)[17], all of whom applied on the same basis, i.e. how they would contribute to the achievement of the Arts Council's five goals.

The NPO holds a budget of £1.04 billion, of which £956 million is grant in aid, £54 million for touring and £31million for children and young people. The whole budget currently funds six hundred and ninety-six organisations. Alongside the NPO subsidy is an £18 million a year income from the National Lottery which is earmarked to support touring and distribution. Additionally, the Arts Council administrates *Grants For The Arts*, which is a Lottery funded programme offering subsidy to non-NPO clients and other arts initiatives. A total of £202 million is earmarked for *Grants For The Arts* for the period 2011-15. The creation of the NPO has meant that two hundred and six organisations funded under the previous RFO programme are now without subsidy, but that one hundred and eleven new organisations have been included in the NPO. Of the £1.04 billion, there will be an investment of approximately £308.7 million in one hundred and seventy-nine *theatre* organisations. As has historically been the case, the national theatre companies and institutions have been best served. Of the £1.04 billion allocated to NPO, over three years the Royal National Theatre receives £53,680,009 and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) £48,177,849. Although it is not theatre subsidy per se, the £77,426,062 of grant in aid

[16] See http://eclipsetheatre.org.uk/about-us/history
[17] See http://www.thepoint.org.uk

awarded to the Royal Opera House (ROH) makes it difficult to ignore its relevance to this study. Such a considerable amount of subsidy must impact on the Arts Council NPO resources.

In many cases, decisions regarding subsidy are made in partnership with local authorities throughout the country. In 2009/10, £102 million was invested by local authorities into the Arts Council's RFO programme. Investment at local level into its newly formed NPO will undoubtedly be variable and in some cases diverted, as central government funding to local authorities has been cut by 28% over the four years 2011-15.

In launching the NPO programme, the Arts Council has had to consider other financial aspects that are problematic. Its 2010 settlement from the Treasury saw its grant in aid subsidy cut by 29.6%, from that previously allocated by the New Labour government before losing office in 2010. The incoming Conservative/Lib Dem coalition insisted that the Arts Council pass on only 15% cuts to "front line" arts organisations and that it should also impose upon itself a 50% cut in its operational costs. This was to be done by June 2013. In October 2012, the organisation announced a review of its proposed cuts, which in summary lists a loss of one hundred and seventeen (and a half) full time posts, from five hundred and fifty-nine (and a half) to four hundred and forty-two; a reduction from eight to four executive directors; a reduction in office sizes resulting in a 50% cut in property costs; and a realignment of its regional and central overview, adjusted to accommodate just four major offices in London, Bristol, Birmingham and Manchester. Following the Treasury's original settlement, the Chancellor's 2012 Autumn Statement imposed a further £11.6 million cut on Arts Council subsidy running through 2013 to 2014.

When interviewed for this study, Neil Darlison, the Arts Council's Director of Theatre, in London, felt the prospect of the cuts had left staff;

> […] trying to think about what a half size Arts Council might look like and what actually it might do and what it can't do. I think the problem with the Arts Council right now is it doesn't know what it's *not* going to do.
>
> (Darlison 2012)

For an organisation charged with administrating subsidy for the arts, it is a debilitating process. One that for Darlison means, "with a hundred and fifty to two hundred less people there's going to be no discussion about art, I don't think, or there's going to be very little." (Darlison 2012).

The message from Chief Executive Alan Davey is clear, as he writes in *Achieving Great Art For Everyone:*

> At a time when the arts are at their best, we need to hang onto the fact that we really have found a way of supporting the arts in this country that works – combining money from local and national government, from the National Lottery and from private and corporate giving, delivered at arm's length from political expediency. We need to keep that, it is in itself a precious national treasure...Overall, we will have less public money to spend. Less from the Arts Council, less from local government. The fiscal elements of the successful mixed economy of the arts will have to work harder. We will work in this period to try and deliver more from the private sector, by improving fundraising skills and the overall culture of giving to the arts, but this is not a quick job or a quick fix. And in the meantime the bottom line is that the Arts Council and our funding partners will have to make tough decisions, exercise judgement and try to do what is best for arts and culture.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

It might be argued that Davey's determination to do what is best for arts and culture, is made all the harder by the creation of an NPO subsidy that leaves the Arts Council open to old accusations of elitism. Although the NPO's 'open for all' application process is the first of its kind, the Arts Council awarded a staggering £179,283,920 between the Royal National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera House. Of course not all of this is spent on delivering performance per se, these are major institutions with unwieldy staffing and managerial costs, as well as spends for departments co-

ordinating outreach, new writing and more. However, such a figure sits uneasily next to Davey's urging to the arts fraternity to adopt a fiscal steadfastness. The nagging question remains as to whether the Arts Council is administrating its funds wisely, or even fairly. The politician Hugh Jenkins, writing in his book *The Culture Gap* (1979) recalls:

> In its first annual report The Arts Council quoted Keynes as saying that 'The day is not far off when the Economic Problem will take a back seat where it belongs...' He could not have been more wrong. The needs of the Arts Council increased at a much greater rate than its grant and the more money it received the hungrier it became for still greater resource.
>
> (Jenkins 1979:41)

Although writing this over thirty years ago, Jenkins is prescient in his depiction of an organisation, that in its determination to hold onto the prestigious global branding of its national institutions via a top down vision of the arts, arguably outstrips its means. In the light of intense and on-going pressures on the UK's economy and only thirty years since the crushing financial restrictions of the Thatcher era, the realities of sustaining a creative economy remain palpable. It puts one in mind of Francois Matarasso's evaluation of policy makers in the arts, in which he asserts that they "...tend to focus on financial issues, rather than on economics in its deeper sense, as the management of society's resources." (Matarasso 1997).

Certainly, in response to the 29.6% cut, ACE insisted there would be no equal pain for all despite doubts, as expressed by Leila Jancovich, Senior Lecturer in Cultural Policy, Arts and Festivals Management, Leeds Metropolitan University, "[at the time of the cuts]...a lot of people were saying this is the time when the big institutions have to take the biggest hit..." (Jancovich 2012). Expanding her point, Jancovich believes there is a division within the Arts Council, manifested as a fault line that runs between its central and regional offices. Within the latter, Jancovich says there were certainly people of the above opinion, yet in the national office;

> [...] they do still believe that the risk taking and access is all very nice, but what they're really there for is [to support] the opera and the ballet.
>
> (Jancovich 2012)

Of the 15% cut the Arts Council was instructed to hand on to frontline organisations, Jancovich is unequivocal as she explains:

> On its own the Royal Opera House gets nearly 10% of the total Arts Council budget and from the interviews I've been doing, most people, even those within the Arts Council, acknowledge it [the Royal Opera House] could run as a commercially viable organisation. Without that funding it would not close, other people would step in. Politically there might be uproar, but it would not close. So my argument quite seriously would be that maybe you do cut one of the opera houses sitting a hundred yards apart from each other in central London, if that means you don't have to cut any arts across the country.
>
> (Jancovich 2012)

On the face of things, the battle for cultural equilibrium is one that won't be going away. Colin Tweedy, a senior figure in the art world and vice-president of Arts & Business, warned in an interview with The Independent "...that the arts sector is focusing on a "London-centric, middle-class elite" while failing to reach the majority of the British population." (The Independent 2012). The article went on to report how Tweedy is;

> [...] calling for a "radical" rethink of priorities and a possible redistribution of public funding to increase arts participation and interest beyond the capital. He told The Independent: "81 per cent of all private philanthropy is in the capital. Most - around 75 per cent - goes to just 25 institutions...But [across] the rest of the UK the balance is not there. The focus is on what I would call a middle-class elite. We are failing - profoundly, if we're not careful - to engage the majority of the British population.
>
> (The Independent 2012)

A Guardian news report both extends and offers a twist to this argument as it describes the film and theatre directors Danny Boyle and Nicholas Hytner condemning the current coalition government's stance on arts funding. They take the view that the government's insistence on the arts community working more closely with philanthropists to raise money is wishful thinking. In

Hytner's view, the ability of arts organisations to raise money in this way is restricted "in poorer areas of the country outside London." (Guardian 2012). Over the course of the late autumn, 2012, Hytner has been engaged in a war of words with the government's Culture Secretary, Maria Miller, whom he has accused of doing next to nothing to encourage philanthropy. Bluntly, Hytner believes "the arts [in the UK] are on a knife's edge" (Guardian 2012).

His words are both a necessary challenge and an irony. As artistic director of the Royal National Theatre, Hytner leads one of the Arts Council's theatre superpowers in whom over £53 million is invested from the NPO programme. It is true that Hytner, as the head of the nation's theatre should be instigating such a conversation and that his call for more investment is to safeguard the arts generally. Yet an equally vital conversation might focus on the Arts Council's myopia and its distribution of the funds it currently has.
Martin Sutherland, Chief Executive of the Royal and Derngate Theatres in Northampton adopts a tenacious point of view when considering the £10 million profit generated from the global success of National Theatre productions like Michael Murpurgo's *War Horse*, (2007). The production was originally subsidised by its grant in aid from the Arts Council and Sutherland would rather Hytner instigated a corresponding conversation on how organisations like the National give back to the subsidised sector. Theatres such as Sutherland's "...will not receive a penny back from that investment. Not only do the National Theatre hold on to the profits, they're also using the staff who are paid for through subsidy to deliver those shows." (Martin Sutherland 2012).

It is a lack of vision on the part of the Arts Council that is taken to task by Sheena Wrigley, Chief Executive of West Yorkshire Playhouse. On Radio 4's *Today* she commented:

> I think there was a significant blind spot when the Arts Council made its last allocation of funds through the National Portfolio reorganisation...It tried very hard to look at some kind of equality

> across the regions, but I think they completely didn't take into account the impact of local government investment.
>
> (*Today* BBC Radio 4 2012)

By this, Wrigley explains that on-going cuts imposed by government across public spending have by dint, had an effect on arts provision from local authorities across the country. At the time of writing this study, Newcastle City council have been the most recent local authority to declare its intention to reduce and in some cases, cut its arts provision[18].

In 2010, Somerset County Council cut their arts provision to the county by 100%.[19] In 2011, in North Yorkshire, the county council cut its grant to the Stephen Joseph Theatre[20] by 84%. As Wrigley concludes, shrinking local authority budgets financially results in "a huge amount of disparity, which I don't think anyone in the Arts Council really thought through." (*Today* BBC Radio 4 2012). The impact of the Arts Council's administration of NPO subsidy is echoed further as Will Gompert, reporting for the same *Today* programme, tells of "an emerging financial crisis in regional theatre that is putting the whole system of talent development in this country at risk." (*Today* BBC Radio 4 2012).

Of the 30 building based theatres included on the Arts Council's NPO spreadsheet, they are subsidised £86,879,123 between them. As this study will explore and Wrigley's comments suggest, such a figure is not enough to meet the realistic costs of a building based theatre network. On appearances, the first round of NPO awards appear to have been driven by the Arts Council's determination to uphold its organising control of theatre and the arts, to preserve the status of its national institutions, and, where possible, its building based theatres. Such an approach by the Arts Council suggests an appreciable dilemma. Preserving the country's flagship organisations, with

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[18] See http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/entertainment-arts-20424898

[19] See http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/2010/nov/09/arts-cuts-somerset

[20] See http://www.yorkpress.co.uk/leisure/theatre/8863302.print/

their associated global esteem, in addition to maintaining its regional theatre network, makes a case for the arts at a time when public spending is so particularly stretched. However, one might also draw the conclusion that the Arts Council is apportioning money via a system of subsidy that, because of its commitments to national institutions such as those already mentioned, renders the programme financially unviable. Additionally, through its current use of subsidy, the great art 'for everyone' in the Arts Council's mission statement may prove increasingly more difficult to achieve as other smaller grassroots, or alternatively constituted arts organisations across the matrix of subsidy are forced to close, are starved of funds, or a community's cultural offer becomes compromised.

In order to consider the Arts Council's relationship to building based theatres in more detail, a regional perspective from Coventry in the West Midlands, helps to illustrate the contradictions inherent in the pre-occupations of the Arts Council as so far described.

In 1958, the Belgrade Theatre[21] opened in Coventry. It was the first city of its kind to build and launch a not for profit building based theatre. With a seating capacity of eight hundred and fifty-eight in its main house and an average of two hundred and fifty in its recently added studio theatre, its history includes the premiere of Arnold Wesker's trilogy of plays *Chicken Soup with Barley*, *Roots,* and *I'm Talking about Jerusalem* from 1958 to 1960. It also saw the founding of the country's first ever Theatre-in-Education company, in 1965. In the mid 1980s, a rich vein of independent professional theatre makers emerged, some of who sustain themselves to the present day. Subsidised variably via the Arts Council's Grants for the Arts, RFO and NPO programmes, companies such as TIC TOC, the Snarling Beasties, Triangle, Theatre Absolute, Talking Birds and Highly Sprung achieved, or still do achieve, national and international success. They have worked in a variety of disciplines and spaces across the city. Talking Birds in particular have

[21] See www.belgrade.co.uk

pursued site-specific work in churches, office blocks and car parks. TIC TOC Theatre in university student unions and clubs and Theatre Absolute currently in a converted shop front theatre in the city centre's shopping precinct. Despite its relatively small population of 300,000, Coventry clearly generates a diverse arts and theatre scene.

Over three years, from 2012-2015, a total of £4,890,710 is to be invested in Coventry between four NPO funded organisations. Two of those organisations are building based, The Belgrade Theatre and Warwick Arts Centre (WAC), commanding £4,378,075 between them. Two independent organisations, Imagineer Productions and Talking Birds are left with £307,260 and £200,375 respectively to deliver against the Arts Council's NPO aims and objectives over the next three years. As it receives theatre, film, music and exhibitions, it should be added that WAC's allocation is across Combined Arts, and not solely theatre. Similarly, Imagineer Productions, who produce spectacular outdoor events, are also funded across Combined Arts. Clearly this study is most pertinent to decisions of subsidy pertaining to theatre.

It is difficult, however, to understand how the use of subsidy in this way best allows a flexible platform for providing great art and theatre for everyone in Coventry. In its current form, with the local authority's arts grant allowing a top limit of just £1,000 for small arts organisations, the development of emerging theatre artists and companies within the city is at best, under supported. A second and more tangible concern is that it is unrealistic to expect one heavily funded theatre organisation (The Belgrade), to be representative of the ever expanding public of a city as diverse as Coventry. Over one hundred and fifty languages are spoken in city schools and communities including white British, Asian, Iraqi, Iranian, Somalian, Eritrean, Congolese and many other nationalities. Hamish Glen, artistic director of the Belgrade, whilst in no way advocating the closure of his own building, believes a far better job might be done "by investing in different forms of theatre making...and different communities and agencies in the city." (Glen 2012).

Glen's belief being that such an approach would provide much greater reach; an objective of course, that is central to the Arts Council's aims.

The Arts Council and its relationship to the public

If the Arts Council's current use of subsidy, both nationally and in places like Coventry, may lead to compromises on its delivery to the public, it is acknowledged that as an organisation it dedicates substantial time and effort to researching public opinion, largely via the commissioning of reports and surveys. There are for example, a series of research documents stretching back to 2006, which have all gone towards informing their present day aims and objectives. In 2008, the Arts Council launched a three year research initiative called the *Public Value Programme*. It used its findings to put public value at the heart of the Arts Council;

> [...] and evidence how people's lives are enriched through their experience of the arts...[and] how we can engage a wider range of voices in our decision making
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Its findings are now encapsulated within the Arts Council's 10-year strategic framework, *Great Art For Everyone*, as cited earlier in the study. *The Public Value Programme* itself was borne out of the findings of the Arts Council's first public value inquiry two years previously, in 2006. This was known and launched as, the arts debate. Using a mixture of techniques such as interviews, discussion groups and open consultation, it gathered the views of over one thousand five hundred individuals and organisations. The debate asked amongst other things: why the arts matter, discussed and agreed on the importance of quality and innovation and explored how barriers to participation could be overcome. It also addressed some challenges for the Arts Council. In a report *What People Want From The Arts,* a summary of the arts debate, reported how amongst;

> [...] members of the public and the arts community there is very little understanding of how we [the Arts Council] currently make decisions. Many people would like our funding processes to be more transparent.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Most interestingly, the same report indicated that there "was also a strong call for both members of the public and arts professionals to play a greater role in decision-making." (Arts Council 2012). There is some, but little evidence that the Arts Council has responded pro-actively to this. As will be explored, its *Creative People and Places* fund (CPP) is shaped by public interaction and the NPO process is transparent in its structuring. However, the evidence reported in the arts debate was collated for report in 2008, some two years before the Arts Council announced the creation of its NPO programme. Although the NPO model for subsidy was developed in consultation with constituents such as the public and audiences, all *decisions* regarding subsidy were made by the Arts Council, with no public involvement. This is no surprise. It has historically always been the case and is arguably the most *efficient* way to manage such a process, both for practical purposes, in terms of time management and to maintain standards of quality and excellence. Yet, as the above comments illustrate, the public clearly desires more involvement.

Other research sources deployed by The Arts Council include its *Taking Part* survey, the *Target Group Index* (TGI) and what the Arts Council calls its *Stakeholder Focus* research programme. Stakeholders by definition are a collective of respondents who reply to a set number of questions collated by the Arts Council. They include members of the public, individuals within the arts sector and organisations with whom the Arts Council has a regular working relationship. Its most recent findings for 2012 are still to be published, but the following excerpts from its 2011 *Stakeholder Focus* report offer some interesting insights. Asked about advocacy and favourability with regard to the Arts Council, one stakeholder reported:

> People tend to get very much an entrenched view on the Arts Council from stuff they've read in the papers, so the uninformed just see them as a government body that's slashing arts. The informed probably realise that they've stripped out significant amounts of administrative support rather than actually taking it out of the frontline services. I would definitely advocate for them and the role that they play.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Some stakeholders were less sure of the Arts Council when it came to disseminating its message:

> I would probably speak poorly of the Arts Council to other people…It's a lack of contact at a strategic level, and we don't seem to be able to have a serious, strategic conversation with anybody.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Additionally, although some were positive in response to the document *Achieving Great Art for Everyone*, other stakeholders were less sure:

> My own view of *Achieving Great Art for Everyone* is that they're good at and are focused on the 'great art', I think the 'for everyone' bit still has a question mark next to it for me, in that I don't think that we quite know what we mean by everyone, least of all how to then go off and deliver that.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

In a written response to the 2011 Stakeholder report, Alan Davey manages to strike a chord of both optimism and caution:

> Overall, the research shows an encouraging picture of increasingly positive relationships with our stakeholders. The majority of stakeholders felt they had a good or fairly good working relationship with us...but there is also a clear sense that the challenges the Arts Council face have the potential to threaten our ability to achieve our goals and fulfil our mission, and to maintain the right kind of relationships. (Arts Council 2012)

Judging what those relationships should look like is part of the skill of the organisation. How closely does it allow itself to get to those outside its constituency without compromising its overview of the arts? Since its formation in 1945, it seems remarkable that the Arts Council has not managed to move closer than it has to the people that 'pay its wages', allowing them greater input into, and a keener influence, over what their money supports and the art that happens in their community. That isn't to say the thinking hasn't been happening. This is evident in the report commissioned by the Arts Council from the organisation Involve, entitled *Participatory Budgeting and the Arts* (Involve 2009). It was in this year, galvanised by the Labour government's Duty to Involve Programme, that the Arts Council's attentions turned to the processes of participatory budgeting and decision-making. Chapter Three will explore the implications of these processes in more detail.

Developed in Latin America in the 1980s, participatory involvement in areas such as budgeting and decision making offer a platform for the public to establish more direct dialogue between themselves and public service agencies and organisations. According to the report from Involve, the Arts Council considered participatory budgeting "as having potential implications for its work in involving the public and stakeholders in decision making and in its work with local authorities." (Involve 2009)[22]

In lieu of the incoming coalition government's decision to discontinue the Duty to Involve programme, it would appear that any future potential has been left unexplored. On further investigation, the Involve team confirmed that there has been no follow up from the Arts Council to the initial report of 2009. However, the recent launch of the latter's *Creative people and places fund* (CPP), is cast in a similar mould to the ideas that inform participatory processes. CPP, currently an action research programme, allows communities to come together in areas of low arts engagement to create a

[22] See Page 4 of the Involve report

programme of arts provision, apply for subsidy and administrate their own budget:

> The Creative People and Places fund will focus our investment in parts of the country where people's involvement in the arts is significantly below the national average...We will invest in a small number of places of greatest need...This investment will encourage long-term collaborations between local communities and arts organisations, museums, libraries and local authorities. It aims to empower them to experiment with radically different approaches and develop inspiring, sustainable arts programmes that will engage audiences in those communities.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Subsidised via a £37 million budget, the project is headed by Meli Hatzihrysidis, Senior Officer for Engagement and Participation at Arts Council. He explains in more detail about some of the drivers behind the fund:

> What we've done is we've said, this is the list of the bottom 20% of 71 local authorities, that for our purposes we are saying are of low engagement...And we've said go away and form a consortia of organisations, both of arts and non arts, that's what is key here this is not just about arts organisations, this is about communities coming together and deciding what it is they want for themselves.
>
> (Hatzihrysidis 2012)

Once formed, in order for a consortium to be eligible to apply it needs to nominate a lead partner. For Hatzihrysidis, this is an important aspect of the thinking behind CPP. "We said we didn't want that to be the Local Authority, because, and this has been quite contentious...we want the money to go to the community and as close to the community as possible..." (Hatzihrysidis 2012). It is encouraging to observe the breakdown of organisations that have come together to form various consortia. Hatzihrysidis confirms:

> In one place we have a private haulage company who have come together with the local NPO, which is an arts centre, but you know, down the bottom end of the NPOs, we're not talking about the top end...The goal is art, anything they do they must deliver an artistic programme, but it must meet the needs of that community.

(Hatzihrysidis 2012)

Some of the grants awarded will be up to £3 million over three years and as Hatzihrysidis concludes, "that's unprecedented money for some of these organisations." (Hatzihrysidis 2012). During the writing of this study, Arts Council England announced its first round of successful applicants to the CPP fund. Its website describes a consortia partnership formed between the NPO funded New Vic Theatre and B Arts, both in Newcastle-under-Lyme and Staffordshire University. Supported by a grant of £2,999,431, they will deliver *Appetite*, which is described on the Arts Council website as;

> [...] a 10-year vision to whet Stoke-on-Trent's appetite for the arts. Using a food metaphor the consortium including arts and community and Staffordshire University will aim to deliver 'an expanding menu of cultural sustenance to people in Stoke-on-Trent'.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Transported was another success. Supported over three years by a CPP grant of £2,592,183, it consists of a consortium of members including the Lincolnshire Artists Forum and artsNK. Its aims are to;

> [...] develop inventive ways of getting people involved in the arts where they live, meet and work, providing inspirational experiences and empowering local people to take the lead in shaping their own arts provision.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Perhaps most interestingly, as mentioned earlier, working alongside a haulage company, *Transported* aims to take projects into communities on the back of lorries and trucks, transforming the vehicles into "...flexible artwork and arts spaces, touring to local festivals, schools, workplaces and towns and villages." (Arts Council 2012).

No doubt as a response to some of the Arts Council surveys listed earlier, the approach of CPP feels like a transparent and democratic process. Its criteria have been carefully moulded and it also sees the Arts Council in step with current times. Certainly since the election of the coalition government, an increased emphasis on localism has emerged, attempting to loosen the grip of centralised decision making whether it be in government, or within bureaucratic organisations such as the Arts Council. The headline statement of the guide to the 2011 Localism Bill asserts that, “The time has come to disperse power more widely in Britain today.” (Gov.UK 2012)

Ros Robins, Regional Director at Arts Council in the West Midlands, is aware of this, as she talks of an "...increased emphasis on localism." (Robins 2012). She believes there is a growing awareness of a necessity to be "working with local needs...the well being agenda, quality of life - it's here to stay." (Robins 2012). She continues, "the use of public subsidy and how the voluntary and arts sectors work together to support communities and ideas of local decision making won't go away." (Robins 2012)

There is however, a caveat. CPP is a model for arts provision per se and does not offer a specific alternative to subsidy for theatre. In addition, as stated earlier, it is currently considered an action research programme, which means it is not an officially sanctioned Arts Council programme. It is unclear therefore if the £37 million budget assigned to fund CPP for the next three years, will be built upon in the future. One assumes that in many ways this will depend on the success of the fund and of the work created. Vital discernable success will present a challenge to the Arts Council. Quality work curated and created by 'the people' under the auspices of the *Creative people and places fund* would surely be viewed as a significant milestone in the Arts Council's on-going mission to create great art for everyone.

In the process of researching this study, however, the idea that the people should play a more active role in the arts has been met with some lukewarm

responses. Meaningful democratic involvement of the people challenges the Arts Council's control of a national and organising view of the arts. Leila Jancovich's opinion is that "it was set up [after the war] to instil a sense of national pride and re-unite us through a unified sense of British culture." (Jancovich 2012). Encapsulating these values as ones that are conservative and directly opposite to the values of challenge and change, she concludes that "...there's always been that tension from the beginning, is it [the Arts Council] there to preserve traditional British culture, or is it there to support challenging new culture, OR is it there for the audience?" (Jancovich 2012).

For John McGrath, current artistic director of the National Theatre of Wales, the equation is straightforward:

> There is no theatre without the public, is there? Audiences are half of the deal...there's this idea that there's this precious thing being made in secret that people need to learn to like. I think it misunderstands the nature of the art form...There's a large amount of the artist's imagination that can go into that, but ultimately it's work made in a dialogue [with the public].
>
> (McGrath 2012)

Although concurring with McGrath's point of view, Martin Sutherland, for whom the audience are key investments to any meaningful artistic intervention, alternatively asserts:

> I'm quite strongly of the view, that we've appointed our artistic leader, a really good artist who needs to respond to the context he's working in, but actually my task is to make sure the resource is there so that artists can make great work for as broad an amount of people as want to see that work.
>
> (Sutherland 2012)

Sutherland adds that the "task of the Derngate is to make sure there is something for everybody so they [the audience] understand the value of what their tax is paying for." (Sutherland 2012). There is a more uncompromising

view expressed by some, which believes the public don't know what they want and that it is the job of artists to give them what they didn't know they wanted.

A variation of this idea is expressed by Neil Darlison;

> If you give the people what they want, they'll get what they always had...That whole idea of some consensual public forum is, I think it's a bit difficult creatively.
>
> (Darlison 2012)

Perhaps the most robust barrier to a more democratic facility is the anxiety from those in control that if allowed a more participatory role, the public would return an artistic programme that by nature would be populist and lowbrow in its content. Leila Jancovich concurs, "it's quite clear that there's a lot fears in the arts world that if you ask the public what they want they won't want art." (Jancovich 2012). However, it is a mindset she believes to be misguided:

> Certainly from the research I've done...If you ask people to list do they want health, education or the arts, the arts won't do very well in that list.
>
> (Jancovich 2012)

Jancovich points out that if the question is asked another way, the response begins to change. "If you say: what kind of world do you want to live in, then actually the arts do a lot better." (Jancovich 2012). In many respects, she concludes, it is all about how you ask the question. In the first year people might say they want their roads improving and their bins collected more regularly, but in the second and third years they might start to talk about cultural experience. Most succinctly, Jancovich considers the notion that the public don't want art, to be a skewed logic. It may also be "the public don't like the arts that's offered to them, or *how* it's offered to them." (Jancovich 2012).

This final statement resonates. For example, it could be argued that the *Creative people and places fund* has been rolled out to areas with low engagement in the arts that are low only because of antipathy to the Arts Council's subsidised offer. As explored so far, with a focus so acutely trained

on the importance of subsidising its national institutions, there is a danger that the Arts Council's definition of art and *what* art they want people to aspire to, becomes a linear viewpoint that allows for little flexibility. Evidence from their own 2008 research, *What People Want From the Arts*, underscores this:

> For many, art is an integral part of day-to-day life. Most people believe that a wide range of things can be considered 'art', from music, painting and drama to fashion, design, architecture, cooking and sport.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Additionally, the Arts Council should not ignore the challenge of commentators such as Owen Kelly, writing in 1985 in his paper *In Search of Cultural Democracy;*

> [...] when we hear the phrase 'arts for all', we want to know just what arts are being referred to, and why...Our concern is not with producing the 'right art' but rather with producing the right conditions within which communities can have their own creative voices recognised and given sufficient space to develop and flourish.
>
> (Kelly 1985)

Kelly was responding in this instance to the essay *Arts for All* written by Roy Shaw, Secretary-General of the Arts Council in 1975. Shaw's imaginings for the democratisation of culture were made on the assumption that the arts mean the same thing for everyone. As the two excerpts above confirm, they never will. Kelly talks of establishing the right conditions within which art and communities can flourish. Regardless of its surveys and debates, it is within this hugely complex arena that the Arts Council must seek to challenge itself as to how it utilises its subsidy.

The Arts Council and its relationship to building based theatres

As has been explored earlier, both historically and in the present day, there have been government culls on public spending that have incurred subsequent claims on the Arts Council's finances. However, it has never prompted the latter to radically imagine alternative ways in which a

diminishing budget might be made to go further. Rather, the Arts Council has retained its greater investments for the national institutions, such as the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera House, but also for the subsidy of the nation's network of regional building based theatres.

In its abridged history of theatre, The Theatres Trust notes, "the period from the 1880s to World War I was the greatest era of theatre building." (Theatres Trust 2012). By the outbreak of the First World War, over one thousand theatres were operating across Britain. The depression of the 1930s and the advent of cinema saw a decline in theatregoing, but by the time the Arts Council was formed in 1945, most towns and cities possessed one if not two or three theatres. What emerged through Arts Council strategy was a growth in subsidy for building based theatre, or 'Reps', that grew throughout the 1950s, 60s and 70s. Beneficiaries included theatres such as the Playhouse in Nottingham, the Everyman, in Liverpool and the Mercury, in Colchester. As outlined in Chapter One, in the 1980s regional theatres were plunged into a financial crisis that left many struggling to make their work. Typically employing large numbers of staff, theatres naturally are a drain on resource: they must budget amongst other things for staff salaries, utilities, insurance, equipment, maintenance and of course allow for its natural costs towards funding an artistic programme. Theatre director Mike Bradwell has some interesting thoughts;

> [...] in the last twenty five years, the biggest single area of growth in theatre, and indeed in most other walks of life, has been the relentless expansion of the administrative and entrepreneurial classes...an increase in administrative personnel means that theatres have had to build extra floors to cope with the new departments overrun with chief executives...diversity-compliance monitors...finance officers...all of whom believe that their worth in the market place is much greater than that of the artists whose endeavours their jobs were created to support.
>
> (Bradwell, 2010: xv-xvi)

Bradwell is vociferous and his logic is unerring. How has it come to pass that building based theatres place such unsustainable pressure on finances, which in essence are allocated for the creation of art? Joanna Reid, Executive Director of the Belgrade Theatre, in Coventry, believes "that buildings are crucial. On the other hand I also appreciate that the idea of buildings sitting on these huge amounts of money is an issue." (Reid 2012).

The Belgrade employs sixty-one members of staff. Over the three years of its NPO agreement, 2012/2015, The Belgrade Theatre will receive £2,874,721 in subsidy from the Arts Council and for the year 2012/13, its annual subsidy from Coventry city council is £1,063,951 gross, but subject to a 25% cut over three years. Its costs in salaries alone are approximately £1.2 million a year. After salaries, its biggest costs are for producing six homegrown pieces of work, with average losses of between £30,000 to £50,000 per show. Its other major cost is in marketing, calculated at £350,000 per year. Sustaining such a budget is a strain for buildings. Certainly in the case of The Belgrade, they are in the process of adjusting to the changing aspects of its turnover. According to Joanna Reid;

> [...] funding used to be 70% of our turnover where as now it's just under 50%...A chunk of that is to do with that we earn more than we did...another big dip in that is that we had funding cut.
>
> (Reid 2012)

Amongst the number crunching one has to remember, however, that theatres are not financial institutions, but places of creation and expression. It is not something that is lost on Martin Sutherland. As Chief Executive of Northampton Arts Management Trust, which steers the Royal and Derngate Theatres, in Northampton and The Cube in neighbouring Corby, he is forthright about the artistic constraints the NPO programme has imposed on organisations such as the three he manages. "I think for us it is the simultaneous changes to the G4A, so what we haven't got any longer is the ability to innovate." (Sutherland 2012).

G4A is a shortened term for the Arts Council's Grants For the Arts scheme, which is subsidised by Lottery funds. As a separate strand of subsidy to that which is fixed term and designed to support project work, under the old RFO it offered arts organisations the prospect of supplementing existing funds. However, under new terms and conditions, organisations that are NPO clients are not allowed to apply for G4A subsidy to bolster or enhance their creative programming. In Sutherland's view, the fixed contract of NPO means there are little chances to respond to new opportunities or to "expand what we do. In the previous structure, with G4A, if you had a great idea you could choose to innovate and apply." (Sutherland 2012).

With the funding structures being so rigid, for Sutherland it means "there's a risk we all become a bit dull." (Sutherland 2012). Solutions to restrictions on artistic innovation have begun to result in more co-productions between building based theatres. However, Sutherland claims these co-productions are more about cost reductions than beginning out of any genuine artistic interest. He believes such stymieing constraints are attributable to the Arts Council myopia described by Sheena Wrigley earlier in this chapter. When designing the NPO portfolio in the way it has, the Arts Council, he says, missed a trick. "It's probably more for me about the distribution of funds nationally and a missed opportunity to address the disproportion of funds to cities and to London." (Sutherland 2012). Ultimately, Sutherland is critical of the Arts Council's risk adverse mentality that appears only to sustain the status quo and shackle creativity:

> They [the Arts Council] didn't take the opportunity to reward innovation or encourage risk taking...They had a once in a funding cycle chance to really either demand that buildings work better and are more porous and work with more people externally, or actually genuinely challenge buildings to do what they said they were doing previously [under the RFO programme].
>
> (Sutherland 2012)

It is right for Sutherland to crave more artistic freedom. For film director Danny Boyle, inspiration from his local Octagon Theatre, in Bolton, was a launch pad for his early professional directing career, nurtured in theatres around England's North West. As he states in his recent disagreement with Maria Miller, he believes that building based theatres "create communities […] what they provide is something else to believe in." (Guardian 2012).

However, despite sanctions on creativity, what appears to return to plague regionally building based theatres with unerring frequency is the prospect of financing them. The restrictive public funding practices of Margaret Thatcher's Conservative administrations have been documented. The late 1990's are significant for the Boyden report that was commissioned to breathe life into a stultified model of subsidy that had left building based theatres undernourished. In the late Autumn of 2012, as will have been gleaned from Sir Nicholas Hytner's comments earlier in this chapter, the building based theatre community is in crisis once more. As featured in the aforementioned Guardian report published in November 2012[23], Hytner, alongside Danny Boyle and twenty-three building based theatre directors including Erica Whyman from Northern Stage, Gemma Bodinetz from the Liverpool Everyman, David Thacker of the Bolton Octagon and others, gathered in London. Their aim was to press the case to government that, as local authority grants dwindle, regional theatre will become endangered as pressure on their funding increases.

It is accepted that buildings are of importance to their communities, but is it right for such a resource heavy system of theatre making to be seen to lurch from one crisis to another? Is there a time approaching when the ongoing struggle for the sanctity of building based theatres is considered worthwhile? Lyn Gardner's recent words bear this out:

[23] See http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2012/nov/15/danny-boyle-maria-miller-outrageous-snub?INTCMP=SRCH

> Because we've done something the same way since the start of the 20th century doesn't mean we have to continue to do it the same way forever, particularly when theatre has changed so much. (Guardian 2011).

Gardner's article, although relating to some of the fiscal issues as raised above, offers a second question for discourse, i.e. what degree of creative authority do building based theatres continue to command in a modern theatre making society? Of course, they retain relevance in one way in that work is regularly created, rehearsed and performed in theatres up and down the country over the course of any artistic season. Yet, with their numerous and hungry costs, do 'buildings' provide an efficient and sufficiently dynamic creative environment in which to aid the Arts Council's vision of achieving great art for everyone?

Traditionally, building based theatres have operated via a top down structure: an artistic director is appointed to run the building, thus effectively disseminating his or her artistic preference to the community in which the building sits. Prosaically and in a worst-case scenario, this becomes a one sided relationship that filters the artistic input and output of the theatre to reflect the tastes of that one person. The implications of this will be explored in more detail in a test case of Kaleider's work in the following chapter. Typically, building based theatres share the same locale with other *non*-building based theatre companies, many of whom come with national and international reputations. For example, in Leeds, there is the West Yorkshire Playhouse and the multi award-winning Unlimited Theatre, in Bristol the acclaimed Action Hero work alongside the Bristol Old Vic and in Sheffield, Third Angel are neighbours to the Sheffield Theatres consortium. Since the NPO programme was created, the Arts Council has become more vocal in encouraging building based theatres to function not merely in their own right, but as more widely accessible creative hubs sharing and collaborating with artists and arts organisations from varying identities. The reasons for this may be attributable both to the need to make resources go further in the face of an

ever decreasing Treasury settlement, but also to assuage the logic of their NPO budgeting. A third way leads one to wonder if the Arts Council recognises that its aspirations towards greater engagement and an increasing localist agenda, can be adequately met through building based theatres. In a liquid world, as defined by Bauman, 21st century communities both define and demand access to art in changing ways. As a consequence, building based theatres must re-imagine the rules of engagement, both with the public and with artists.

Ros Robins' impression is that some theatres have been yielding impressive results, such as the aforementioned Bristol Old Vic, York Theatre Royal and the West Yorkshire Playhouse. It has she says, "been interesting watching the pace of change," sensing in most cases it is "to do with leadership and the ideas and the energies of the people that are leading those organisations." (Robins 2012). She expands her point. "With the best of them [...] it is often about their outreach work, or their education work." (Robins 2012). She also acknowledges that some of it is equally about "the type of work that they are commissioning and encouraging to be developed. And that is the only way they will stay relevant." (Robins 2012). Possibly influenced by the historic pre-occupations of the Arts Council, Robins, whilst acknowledging that not all building based theatres are as progressive as they might be, allows for some leeway in the matter:

> That's the bit the Arts Council can't prescribe, we can encourage, we can incentivise through funding, but ultimately we have to accept the vision of those leaders otherwise we become instrumentalist.
>
> (Robins 2012)

Whilst largely concurring with Robins' viewpoint, Neil Darlison, the Arts Council's Director of Theatre, in London, is at odds with her comment of appearing to be instrumentalist:

> On less staff […] it's a case of we're going to have to be more interventionist because we're going to have to franchise out those conversations about culture to local artists...we're not going to be able to hold those conversations because there won't be the staff or the people.
>
> (Darlison 2012)

Expanding on the above, Darlison considers that "the responsibility for culture [...] is going to be with the organisations in the area, it's going to be with the NPOs as much as it is with the Arts Council." (Darlison 2012). This last point is stimulating. As Arts Council staff structures dwindle and building based theatres become assigned as official conduits for culture, this perhaps illustrates an underlying rationale for the nature of an Arts Council investment that leaves so many of its clients wanting for more.

Taking into account reports such as those featuring Hytner and Boyle, and the financial peril faced by many building based theatres and their calls for more subsidy, the distribution of subsidy even as it currently stands feels like an uneasy balancing act. On the one hand, the Arts Council recognises that the currency of building based theatres commands less than it once did. However, it would appear it commits its investments on the premise that buildings *might* work more collaboratively with an eclecticism of artists and organisations in the surrounding locale that work both within and without buildings. For instance, this may include companies that tour, companies that work site specifically, or companies that stage large-scale open-air events. Logically, therefore, by association with these artists and companies, building based theatres potentially offer more diverse opportunities to and justify their creative authority, within the communities in which they sit.

Peter Stark, a cultural policy adviser and former Director of Northern Arts considers such demands on building based theatres to be an impossible ask:

> On the one hand you're asking those companies to produce more, to do more co-productions nationally, to tour, [assume] responsibility for creative and cultural partnerships, to work with other major performing

> arts companies in their area on things like marketing and sharing back offices...and you're loading all this onto those companies and you're also saying, oh and by the way, will you give up some of your money and your staff resource time to work with smaller companies?
>
> (Stark 2012)

The sustainability of such relationships isn't the only issue facing building based theatres. There is also a question of audiences and the associated attendance figures that come with them. According to a Daily Telegraph article published in January 2012:

> The number of theatregoers at subsidised venues fell from 14.1 million in 2009 to 13 million (in 2011)...Theatres where non-national companies perform have fared even worse - reporting a 13 per cent decline.
>
> (The Daily Telegraph 2012)

In Northampton, Martin Sutherland challenges this. Whilst recognising that audiences in Northampton for 2011/12 are down on the previous year, he is confident that the ongoing financial collapse of the UK and global economy has contributed to this downturn. He is keen to stress, "audiences are down here [at the Royal and Derngate], but our audiences generally are up, because we've expanded what we're doing with our touring." (Sutherland 2012). He is assured, "we will still deliver more audiences through this building, even in a declining market, than we would do if we were an independent theatre company." (Sutherland 2012). Correspondingly, Joanna Reid of the Belgrade Theatre points out that alongside audiences, the number of performances will also have declined. Looking simply at the audience figures presents an inaccurate picture. As Reid concludes, "less choice of things to see, leads to fewer audiences." (Reid 2012).

The attendance or non-attendance of audiences in building based theatres, however, does endure some historical context. In his paper 2012 paper, *Taking Part Apart*, Robert Hewison presents some insights into the issue of

attendance at subsidised theatres. Following Peter Boyden's report in 2000, Hewison notes that in spite of the Arts Council securing a £25million uplift to theatre subsidy in April 2003, audience attendances did not grow exponentially. Sourcing evidence from the Arts Council's *Theatre Assessment* for 2009, Hewison reports that of seventy-four sample organisations funded by the Arts Council at the time, "there were more people employed, salaries were higher, production values better" (Hewison 2012). Yet, he continues, referencing the *Theatre Assessment* itself, which confirms:

> Total attendances for the sample of the 74 regularly funded organisations have remained static.
>
> (Arts Council 2012).

Hewison is at pains to understand why, despite more than £100 million of extra money having been invested since 2002, the audiences at key core-funded theatres had not increased. (Hewison 2012). He questions if what is at issue is "the wider social context in which theatre - and indeed all subsidised culture - exists." (Hewison 2012). In his paper, he introduces collated evidence gathered via the *Target Group Index* (TGI). The index consists of an annual sample from 24,000 adults, carried out by the Market Research Bureau, to which the Arts Council subscribed in 1986. What strikes Hewison is evidence from the TGI survey that;

> […] between 2001/2 and 2005/6 the percentage of adults attending plays in England did actually rise, from 24.4 per cent in 2001/2, to 30.7 per cent in 2005/6.
>
> (Hewison 2012)

The point he goes on to make however is that 69.3 per cent did not attend. (Hewison 2012). Acknowledging in the 2009 *Theatre Assessment* that a higher level of education and social status are more likely to encourage people to attend the theatre and that black and minority ethnic adults are less likely to attend, conversely, Hewison notes;

> [...] the 2008 analysis of Taking Part significantly points out that: 'Even among educated, high social status individuals there is still a substantial proportion of people who have little or no engagement with the arts'.
>
> (Hewison 2012)

Returning to the regional perspective of the Belgrade Theatre in Coventry, for artistic director Hamish Glen, the issue of attendance figures is an on-going concern. Wary of what he calls 'The Bums-on-Seats Council', Glen's experience in the West Midlands offers a concise perspective on audience engagement and his personal experience of the ways in which he has felt artistically compromised. What emerges, is that as the Arts Council continues to place much of its investment in building based theatres, there appears, certainly in the Belgrade's case, to be an associated expectation to gain sufficient audience figures in order for the latter to justify its NPO status. Glen explains:

> I had quite a radical artistic policy, which inherently militated against co-productions and militated against maximum reach, as they [the Arts Council] call it. So the biggest change has been one in the sense I've had to re-think the artistic policy because it became increasingly clear that reach is really what the Arts Council are all about...if you haven't reached the targets in the initial NPO agreement, then there is a serious issue of loss or substantial cuts.
>
> (Glen 2012)

He accepts that this anxiety may be borne out of the Arts Council's desire to prove it is money well spent, thus justifying its investments to itself and assuaging the Treasury. His colleague at the Belgrade, Joanna Reid, quantifies this, noting the changing personality of the Arts Council over the course of her professional career, which saw her working away for a number of years in theatres in Scotland, before returning to England in the mid-late 1990's:

> Twenty-five years ago working in England, the Arts Council then and the Arts Council I came back to, [after Scotland] I couldn't believe they were the same organisation, because in that period they had stopped

> being advocates [for art] and had started being a government department.
>
> (Reid 2012)

As Glen expands on how the artistic offer of the building has to be constructed, the intricate ambiguities of running a building based theatre become clear. In October 2012, the Belgrade's main house hosted *20th Century Boy,* a stage musical produced by Bolanic Productions, in tribute to the late rock star Marc Bolan. Glen asserts:

> I would never have used my subsidy towards a project like that without the pressure from the NPO agreements...We did a production called *The Father*, [by August Strindberg], huge critical acclaim at a national level, but by definition just won't do the numbers that a new musical will do...
>
> (Glen 2012)

For Glen, the compromises to pursuing his artistic preferences resonate, but the logic, which may seem unpalatable, provide solutions in fiscal terms for the Belgrade. Financially, the theatre has done much to secure its finances and rely less on public sources. As the local publication the Coventry Observer reported, in 2011, the theatre earned £350,000 through commercial interests that included building sets for other theatres and hosting conferences and workshops. (Coventry Observer 2012).

Although staging the premiere of *20th Century Boy* is another example of the Belgrade's financial acumen, working with a commercial producer serves a dual purpose. It goes back to audiences and attendances. As Glen outlines:

> You're talking about say 30% attendance in a main house show. [*20th Century Boy*] will probably do 60 or 70% with the potential to go on a commercial tour, which would all count as [the Belgrade's] reach and into the West End. Strindberg wouldn't have a hope in hell's chance of getting anywhere near that. But it is clear that that is the sort of reach the Arts Council are interested in for their investment.
>
> (Glen 2012)

Glen's previous work at Dundee Rep circa 2002 successfully produced a challenging diorama of work for the stage, including productions of Chekov's *The Seagull and* the formation, in 1998, of a permanent ensemble of fourteen actors. His home grown productions for the Belgrade have included commissioning new work with a local relevance, such as Alan Pollock's *One Night In November* (2008) re-telling the night of the 1940 Coventry Blitz and the hard hitting *Stars In The Morning Sky*, by Alexander Galin (2012), depicting the plight of social cleansing by the Soviet authorities in 1980's Moscow. Pollock's play has been revived twice in the main house, yet other homegrown productions such as the aforementioned *The Father* and Galin's play have struggled to attract audiences. It is this that strikes Glen the most. Describing life at the Belgrade since being included in the NPO, he cites an increased pressure from the Arts Council to raise attendances and a pre-occupation with audience reach to be the most significant change for his organisation. Coming around to the realities of co-producing *20th Century Boy* in order to place more bums on seats, Glen is frank:

> I said [to the Arts Council] I'm going to change the artistic policy, in the face of these circumstances and they went 'great that's what we've been looking for'.
>
> (Glen 2012)

The positive aspects of such an arrangement for the Belgrade are that it costs them nothing to co-produce *20th Century Boy*, yet it is still considered one of the six home grown productions they are required to deliver in accordance with their NPO agreement. Essentially, the Belgrade facilitates the set build, fit up and premiere, but the commercial producer meets all of the costs. The share of money the Belgrade makes from the tour and West End productions of the show goes back into the theatre's purse to augment Glen's budget for his five other homegrown productions. "It's one of my six that hasn't cost me anything, so I've still got all my producing money so I can focus on the other five." (Glen 2012)

Naturally, it is a juggling act that covers the cracks of what feels like a precarious arrangement. Coventry City Council (CCC) has just recently confirmed a 25% over the three years to the Belgrade, 2012-2015. According to Reid, by the end of a first round of NPO agreements, accounting for the Local Authority cut, the Belgrade will have received a combined Arts Council and CCC subsidy of £5,737,685. Regardless of these figures, Glen admits that he feels the "building's getting quite close to being critically short of money to be able to produce." (Glen 2012). His colleague and Executive Director of The Belgrade, Joanna Reid, echoes these worries, as she explains that anticipating the next round of NPO funding is;

> [...] rather like Governments going for re-election. All we can think of is what do we need to have in place for when re-apply for us to make a really strong case so they can't pick us off.
>
> (Reid 2012)

The complexities of Reid and Glen's experience of running a building based theatre are both fascinating and sobering. As seen through the Belgrade's collaboration with commercial producers, it would appear there are ways to drive up audience attendance, but what leeway remains between artistic control and justifying one's subsidy? Asked if the Arts Council were to be created today would it begin with buildings, Neil Darlison admits:

> You do wonder whether you would now put all that money into bricks and mortar...There will be no more theatres built in this country, its very unlikely, or Europe in fact, all the new theatres will be built in the Far East, or China, that's where the big capital programmes are.
>
> (Darlison 2012)

Darlison is forward thinking, as he observes:

> We're in a position now whereby the question is absolutely real, and next time the funding process happens you will start to want to think, right we've got 45 approx producing theatres in this country. Do we need 45 producing theatres in this country? Maybe some of them will go.
>
> (Darlison 2012)

Yet his counter argument relies on the historical conservatism of the Arts Council and its reverence for the approved environs of buildings. Regional producing theatres, he says are;

> [...] the training ground for artistic directors, directors and actors and that whole eco system from joining the student drama society to the artistic director of the opening ceremony of the London Olympics
> (Darlison 2012)

This of course is not absolutely true, as many organisations and artists, for example Frantic Assembly, Tim Etchells and Tim Crouch, to name only a few, have perfected a highly successful trade that has been crafted beyond the environment of regional building based theatres. They have all gained national and international renown working in what might be termed the 'independent' theatre sector. It is worth noting, Frantic Assembly have premiered much of their work in co-production with the Drum at Plymouth Theatre Royal: *Pool (No Water)* (2006), *Lovesong* (2012), yet their work was fashioned on the independent touring network of arts centres and festivals in the early 1990s. Furthermore, the participants they have and will continue to influence through their work will not have learned their skills within a regional building based theatre system. Yet a default belief system such as Darlison's arms the Arts Council with compelling reasons to persist in subsidising a regional theatre network that since the 1980s has been in conflict with itself and "one of a dwindling momentum." (Jackson 2010:18).

Darlison has more to say when challenged by the idea that the Arts Council seems determined to preserve building based theatres via a system that doesn't seem viable. "It is viable. You need buildings, you're going to need the facilities it has, the seats it has, the infrastructure it has." (Darlison 2012).
He is right when he describes the communal pleasures of attending large-scale arts events and that it is building based theatres and organisations that have the infrastructure to facilitate work of that nature. Yet he also notes:

> What we're finding and I have done little research, I've got a small piece of DNA here I'm extrapolating out with!...There's more theatre being made in this country than we have theatres and they're sort of doing it for themselves, Performance in The Pub, in Leicester, The Yard in Hackney Wick, it gets by on a bit of grants for the arts and they're looking at their local theatre and they're saying 'I can't get in'.
>
> (Darlison 2012)

Darlison is astute as he observes:

> Theatres more and more, particularly in London, are curated...and so they're [artists] sort of doing it for themselves a little bit and taking spaces and shops.
>
> (Darlison 2012)

However, one might also consider that new spaces for theatre are being sought out not only by artists, but also by audiences themselves. In the last ten years Shunt, a collective of artists and theatre makers, have made work in the railway arches beneath London Bridge station and in a former tobacco warehouse in the London Bridge district. Productions have included *Tropicana* (2005) and *Amato Saltone* (2006). Alternatively, Punchdrunk offer a delirious mixture of classic texts and physical promenade performance, excelling in productions such as *The Masque Of The Red Death* (2007/8) and *Sleep No More* (2003). Their work has been staged in locations such as old Victorian schools, distilleries and disused factories, where audiences have been left to roam and sample the work in any order they choose. In Coventry, Theatre Absolute[24], to whose work this study will return, have seen a growth in theatre audiences whilst creating new professional work in a converted fish and chip shop, situated in the city centre's shopping precinct, only five minutes walk from the Belgrade Theatre. Although only seating a capacity of forty, attendances are nevertheless relative. Producer for the company Julia Negus describes a growth in audiences in the three years since the venue was founded.

[24] See http://www.theatreabsolute.co.uk

The issues regarding audience attendance may find some context in the idea of connectivity: where and how theatre is disseminated to its audience. What are the choices and the opportunities for experience beyond building based theatres? One might wonder at how much the reluctance of any potential theatre going audience member is rooted in an antipathy to the formalities and traditions of a building based theatre? Emerging Coventry playwright Shahnaz Akhter, believes that the mythical perceptions associated with theatre as 'building', with its corresponding foyers and corridors and box offices where "you leave a message for someone upstairs," (Akhter 2012) are problematic to access. Recounting the experience of her brother, contemplating a night out at the theatre, she expands on this idea:

> There is a perception of the theatre, which is personified by a conversation I had with my brother, when we first discussed the idea of going [to the theatre]. “Will I have to dress up to go?” It’s a stereotype I agree, from movies where the men wear black ties and women posh frocks to listen straight backed to a classic interpretation of an old text...For my brother and friends, the theatres and the shows on offer in the theatres, don’t offer the window into the world that may introduce you to a theatre with which you can identify with and want to explore. And for me that is the key word, identify.
>
> (Akhter 2012)

It is this question of identity that is raised in an Arts Council publication by Catherine Bunting and four associated writers. Drawn from information gathered during the aforementioned *Taking Part* surveys, the analysis is based on data from interviews held between 2005 and 2006. Excavating similar views to those of Shahnaz Akhter's brother, Bunting confirms;

> [...] some people feel uncomfortable attending arts events or do not perceive arts attendance as an accessible or appropriate lifestyle choice...Qualitative research backs this up. The arts debate, the Arts Council England’s first public value inquiry, found a strong sense among many members of the public of being excluded from something they would like to be able to access and a belief that certain kinds of arts experiences were not for ‘people like me'.
>
> (Bunting *et al* 2008)

Location plays a part in this. Akhter's brother is a regular attendee at Theatre Absolute's converted shop front theatre, a space he finds preferable to a theatre like the Belgrade. At the latter he explains, "...there is a barrier between me and the play...Being at Theatre Absolute helps you feel more involved with the story. It feels more 'real'." (Akhter 2012). These perceptions are best summed up by Robert Hewison in the conclusion to his paper *Taking Part Apart*, as he states "we need to do so much more to ensure that theatre is both offered and accepted as a communal experience." (Hewison 2012).

One way of experiencing theatre is not necessarily better than another, but public and audience opinion must be acknowledged. For this study, the correlating logic of Hewison's words is that the current theatre offer of the kind that invests largely in building based theatres, which in turn are coupled to recurring financial crises and the complex issues of attendances, delivers an insufficient model through which to best achieve the Arts Council's goals. Any model that might replace it must be open to more democratic processes.
If then, in some cases, building based theatres come into conflict with the public and with audiences, what of their relationship to artists? For actors, the prospect of working at a building based theatre promises a proportionately better weekly wage than that earned, if at all, in a play above a pub or on the fringe. It offers casting in maybe more than one play in a season, and for many it is a natural pathway to beginning or sustaining a career in the theatre. Buildings offer provocations for writers also. For Coventry based artist Nick Walker, whose work as a playwright with his own company Talking Birds[25] has largely been made for site specific venues, or festivals, buildings create a whole other question of scale and the possibilities of how many people are able to see his work.

His play *We Love You City* (2010) was produced by the Belgrade Theatre and was a great success playing to packed houses in what was approximately configured for three hundred seats, in the Belgrade's studio theatre. Set both

[25] See www.talkingbirds.co.uk

in a city and on a football pitch, it placed its audience on both sides, mimicking the seating arrangement of a stadium and utilised a scale of staging that wouldn't be possible in smaller fringe or found spaces. Walker contemplates how with his own independent theatre company it "always felt to us like we can make a good case for how we make the work, where we put the work and the different ways of making the work." (Walker 2012). However he is appreciative of the artist/audience axis:

> We won't be hitting as many people as some of these bigger organisations [...] If at the end of the year I can say a hundred people [saw my show with Talking Birds], then those hundred people may have had a transformative experience...[But] I also think, I don't want it to be just a hundred!
>
> (Walker 2012)

A three-week run in the Belgrade's studio theatre saw Walker's play perform to over four thousand people. He acknowledges this is partly a structural thing, i.e. that buildings are just naturally bigger, and in a healthily functioning arts ecology with quality work on offer, performances will be attended by larger audiences. Certainly the technical luxuries and exposure offered to his work by an organisation like the Belgrade leads him to conclude that the subsidising of buildings is a necessary thing. "It feels important that there's inevitably a kind of focus." (Walker 2012).

Contrary to Walker's opinions, there are other artists and theatre makers who would prefer not to have to 'focus' on buildings at all. Andy Field, a writer, performer and co-founder of Forest Fringe caused some controversy in a blog he wrote in 2010 for the Guardian newspaper entitled *Why We Really Should Demolish The National Theatre.* Dismissing the title of the blog as the decision of a sub-editor, his views however are forthright:

> The National as an organisation is a wonderful, vital idea. The National Theatre as a building is an anachronism: a brutal(ist) articulation of one narrow and archaic vision of theatre that, if not obsolete, is certainly one dimensional...The National can of course

> support Shunt and sell tickets for BAC and Punchdrunk's The Masque of The Red Death, but while those auditoriums remain, like three well lit albatrosses round its neck, they will continue to be its priority...In Sunday school I was taught that a church is not the building but the community that inhabits it and I think the same should be true of a theatre.
>
> (Guardian 2010).

Field's point seems evident in that, although the National Theatre is a voice for the nation, whilst it has three auditoria to fill it will naturally make these and its home on London's South Bank its priority. The same logic extends to the Arts Council. As long as the dominating infrastructure of building based theatres exists, funding these will remain the Arts Council's priority above alternative and more pluralist models of subsidy, some ideas for which are explored in the following chapter.

The artistic director of Kaleider, in Exeter, is Seth Honnor. He considers building based theatres to be increasingly irrelevant and a spent force. In fact Honnor goes on to describe theatre as:

> [...] a damaged brand. It's about that building over there where things happen that aren't for me and you get ice cream in the interval, and that's the best bit.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Honnor and Kaleider are artists creating "live performance projects, with an interest in working in public spaces and rarely in traditional auditoriums; their work seeks to engage with people who might not normally go to the theatre." (Nom De Strip 2012). Their first production *You With Me*, staged outdoors, produced in collaboration with the theatre company Reverb, opened in November 2012. It is described in its publicity as an 'outdoor participative show'. Honnor's antipathy to the idea of theatre appears to be contradictory, but it is perhaps only a question of terms. His reply encapsulates some of the themes of this chapter: "There's a mainstream that falls back to this idea that theatre is a building, not an art form." (Honnor 2012).

These are sentiments that are echoed by Theatre Absolute, in Coventry. Although, admittedly, they make their work in a building, it is unlike any other theatre building. In 2009, they founded the UK's first professional shop front theatre in a disused fish and chip shop in Coventry city centre. It was not created as a pop up shop to create a one off site-specific show, but to be established as a permanent feature in the centre of the city. Taking the view that the Belgrade theatre was not representative of the diverse range of theatre making in Coventry, they negotiated rent-free terms with the local authority and opened in November 2009. Producer Julia Negus explains how;

> [...] for the council it was an experiment in what sort of role the arts might play in regeneration. The city arcade where the shop is situated has an ongoing history of units opening and closing and can be a desolate place to walk through. We worked with the council on the idea that theatre in a shop might play a part in bringing footfall to the arcade.
>
> (Negus 2012)

Theatre Absolute resisted any expectation that their shop would suddenly revive the fortunes of the arcade. However, subsidised £11,000 by a one off Arts Council 'Empty Spaces' grant and £175,000 over the 3 years of their RFO agreement, their first year at the shop front theatre yielded some impressive statistics. With a capacity of forty, the company hosted some fifty two events, ranging from theatre productions to participatory workshops to in-house rehearsed readings, bringing one thousand five hundred people through the doors of the shop front theatre. Beyond the rhetoric of economic regeneration, there are deeper reasons for the company's innovations. Negus continues:

> For us it was always about a cultural provocation. With Warwick Arts Centre up the road, what Coventry doesn't need is another conventional theatre space, but we felt it could be challenged to explore something new. It is about the invitation to the audience.
>
> (Negus 2012)

With its six windows looking directly out on the street and the City Arcade, with bus stops adjacent to it, Argos opposite and an off licence next door, it is visible and at the same time inconspicuous. Negus expands:

> If someone knocks on the front door with any questions they speak directly to the people they need to speak to, they aren't passed over with a promise to get back to them...But often people put their heads in because they are curious what we do. They don't always believe you can make theatre in a shop.
>
> (Negus 2012)

With its low 12 foot ceiling and fluorescent lights, attending a performance at the shop front theatre is to be in an intimate space. Its technical limitations include the use of domestic voltage and only six lanterns for lighting. Which for Theatre Absolute is the point:

> We have taken everything away that we have grown to rely on and put back only what we need. Audiences respond to the simplicity of the shop. They know that at the end of the day they must connect only with the performers and the text.
>
> (Negus 2012)

The idea of connectivity returns. A sample of audience reactions captured by the company over the last two years, bears this out:

-
- Being so close felt like I could share their emotions - which was very powerful.
- Liked the effect of being so close to the actors and in *their* space.
- Intensely engaging...How strange to walk out into the sunshine of the City Arcade. A theatrical experience in a great venue.
- Tremendous acting and a unique space.

As Theatre Absolute continues to work at the shop front theatre until 2015, when its lease expires, the hope is that its audiences will continue to grow. There are no plans to increase the forty-seat capacity, but what Negus is aware of is that both word of mouth and demand are spreading and people are not only returning but also bringing new people back with them. A growing fraternity of shop front theatregoers is more important to the company. Richard Walls, a playwright who worked with the company as a volunteer, articulates his experience:

> Although Theatre Absolute's theatre is a one-time shop, it also reflects a deeper truth: that at its heart, theatre is a service industry...By nourishing relationships over the long term, treating the theatre's artistic policy as a continual conversation with the community it means people can see the benefit of having a theatre in its precinct on a day to day basis.
>
> (Walls 2012)

Connectivity seems again to be at the heart of these words and twenty minutes from Coventry, in Leicester, Hannah Nicklin, founder of Performance in the Pub, is operating with a similar philosophy:

> Why a pub? Because I'm so bored of all these divisions between art forms. And big shiny buildings that act like cathedrals to art/theatre/etc. They have their place, but the problem is it's not a place that's a part of most people's lives. The pub, on the other hand, is. That's why a pub. Single-form buildings only work heavily subsidised by either government (arts council) or large-scale commercialism (cinemas, large music venues), or alcohol (small venues). The latter is way more fun, so let's fill nooks and crannies of these buildings with theatre, performance, dance, exhibitions, craft, music and more. Make our cities exciting, varied places to be. This is my contribution.
>
> (Performance In The Pub 2012).

One gets a sense that artists like Field, Nicklin, Honnor, Negus and others like them are pushing not against the door of the theatres Neil Darlison says people can't get into, but more particularly on the door of the inherently conservative Arts Council and the buildings it champions. Informed by their predecessors in the alternative theatre movement of the 1960's and 70's, Field et al are conscious of the theories of liquidity offered up by Bauman, understanding that to capture the imagination of the public they want to engage with, they must be liquid themselves. Over a decade into the 21st century, a reliance on the traditional presentation of theatre via buildings may be unsatisfactory for a society, which according to Bauman (2000:76) "engages its members primarily in their capacity as consumers. Life, he continues is;

> [...] organised around consumption, it must do without norms, it is guided by seduction, ever rising desires and volatile wishes - no longer by normative regulation.
>
> (Bauman 2000:76)

A cross examination of the Edinburgh Fringe Festival programme for 2012 verifies this in relation to theatre audiences. *One Minute Birdwatching*, a show written and performed by Holly Rumble and staged in a public car park, involves audience members joining her in birdwatching. Whenever they see a bird, they must shout its name if they know what it is, or just 'bird' if they do not. Alternatively, Bryony Kimmings' 2011 production at the festival, *7 Days Drunk*, entertained audiences with the tale of how "over seven days, under professional medical guidance and constant video surveillance, she got increasingly blotto and made art." (Time Out 2012).

The kind of work produced by artists such as Rumble and Kimmings may be created to directly anticipate the needs of adventurous festival theatregoers, but one shouldn't miss the point. Of course it's inaccurate to suggest that innovation doesn't exist within building based theatres. In 2012, one of the Arts Council's flagship companies The Royal Court staged its first Theatre Local season, taking work created in its Sloane Square premises to alternative spaces at the heart of London life.[26] One of the spaces included an old factory in southeast London, a far cry from its Sloane Square address. In York, long-term collaboration between the Theatre Royal[27] and independent theatre company Pilot[28] continues to redefine the boundaries of their relationship to audiences. Echoing the sentiments of Bauman, many artists are aware that they must stay abreast of the developing technologies of a consumerist society and utilise them as a part of their offer to audiences. Digital technology has become central to Pilot and the Theatre Royal. Steered by the energies of artistic director Marcus Romer, the company has pushed the boundaries with its very own Pilot TV, using a six-camera audience

[26] See http://www.royalcourttheatre.com/season/theatre-local
[27] See http://www.yorktheatreroyal.co.uk
[28] See http://www.pilot-theatre.com

interactive live stream of the 2012 York Mystery Plays. Romer's article in The Stage explains that such approaches have;

> [...] the potential to change how audiences engage with theatre in the digital sphere...The project was developed with digital partner Kinura, who had written a new code enabling anybody watching to shift between the camera views without audio time lag.
>
> (Romer 2012)

The Arts Council itself has been responsive to technological advances. It has collaborated with the BBC Academy to establish The Space[29], an experimental free digital media arts service that aims to;

> [...] build the digital skills of the arts and cultural sector, ensuring that they are at the forefront of emerging digital technologies and making their work available to even more people.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Most, if not all of the above, is driven by connectivity and a desire by artists and audiences alike to re-imagine the established terms of engagement. Why else would the Royal Court with two fully equipped performance spaces create work for a disused factory? This study doesn't advocate the mass exodus of building based theatres, or claim that all art created within them is irrelevant. It doesn't seek to suggest either that theatre made in found or newly imagined spaces offers a panacea to audience engagement. It is worth noting the caution expressed by playwright Nick Walker, a veteran of alternative small-scale theatre making:

> I don't want us to be talking to ourselves. I suppose for all things the smaller independent sector does, one of the accidental, or inevitable demerits of it, is it just finds itself talking to itself.
>
> (Walker 2012)

There may be some truth in this, but does it really matter? For artists who feel their work is rendered more meaningful by playing to larger audiences,

[29] See http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/funding/our-investment/funding-programmes/thespace/

perhaps it is. After all, playwriting or directing or acting offers income and a career for artists to nurture; playing to the same ten people will ultimately be reductive. What of the Arts Council? Yes it matters that a £1.04 billion budget for the arts enables healthy participation and builds and develops audiences. Yet, as real as current arts cuts are, the Arts Council must resist justifying its decisions for subsidy both to itself and to the treasury purely on how many people get to experience art in terms of attendances. Do the more people that see an event, make that event more valuable? This risks undermining the second of the Arts Council's five goals in *Achieving Great Art For Everyone,* which is that "...more people experience and are inspired by the arts." (Arts Council 2012). This can be measured on the one hand by real term attendances in large-scale venues, but it is equally true that more people may come to and return to the arts and be inspired by them through *experience and* the relationships that grow from that. Thus they may witness their first theatre play in an audience of forty in a shop front theatre at the end of a shopping arcade, or amongst eight hundred people in a building based regional theatre. Both of these experiences contribute equally to the Arts Council's mission. They would acknowledge that. For this reason, arts organisations working across these differing spectrums deserve parity of priority. There is an irony to the Arts Council's entrenched interpretation of subsidy. Funding that is allocated to support the financial and artistic balancing act of a regional theatre network, is, as previous and current crises have revealed, not enough to sustain many building based theatres. However, the continued allocation of subsidy in this way, from a diminishing budget, ultimately denies a wider range of access to the public and a vital 'licence' to smaller organisations and artists whose work is comparable, but who choose to work in other ways and locations.

The essential provocation of this chapter has been to highlight the ways in which the Arts Council's existing model of subsidy feels inadequate. There is no intention to comment on the nature of the work created by organisations subsidised via the NPO, or that any alternative model would make the work

'better'. It is concerned only with interrogating the Arts Council's top down emphasis on subsidy. Yes, buildings are important to their communities, but art is more so.

In an ideal world, therefore and to capitalise on its assets, might the Arts Council become more creative and take a finer ecological approach to subsidy that seeds a vibrant theatre culture which is balanced and representative and relies less on historical pre-occupations? As this chapter has seen via the *Creative people and places fund*, the Arts Council is receptive to experimentation, but might it integrate these ideas into its wider strategy?

It is, of course, a provocation that may hold little favour with those who believe that sustained investment in the country's national institutions and building based theatres will always provide the most effective platform for creativity and reach. Martin Sutherland's assertion that buildings will always play to more people is difficult to argue with. Yes they will. Yet their struggle to remain relevant and viable is reflected in recurring financial crises, the alternatives offered by organisations like Theatre Absolute, protagonists such as Andy Field, and the reflections of Ros Robins, as she observes how buildings are changing to develop more inclusive relationships. The necessity of buildings to respond in this way suggests that their potency is less than it once was. The provocation, certainly for the benefit of the Arts Council, can be extended and is succinctly encompassed in the words of Francois Matarasso:

> A century ago, it was still questioned whether education was a desirable thing in itself...But in Western countries, no one now asks whether education has a value or a social impact. Instead, the focus of academic research and of political discussion is on what outcomes can and should be produced, how they emerge from different types of curricula and teaching methods, or what approaches are most effective in specific situations or with different social groups. These are the questions we should be asking of the arts. Not whether they have an impact, but *how* and why and in *what ways,* in which circumstance and for whom.
>
> (Matarasso 2010)

The following chapter will go on to consider how an alternative model for subsidy might offer rich opportunities for theatre and the arts, in England. As suggested in this study's introduction, the rules of engagement in a modern society differ vastly to those that informed the creation in 1945 of the Arts Council. The ideas that will be developed are wedded to the belief that subsidy for the arts is a necessity. Thus, to paraphrase Matarasso above: it is accepted that subsidy for the arts is a positive thing, thus the conversation is about how and in what ways it is best to subsidise. Inspired by this, any alternative models for subsidy are framed by Matarasso's concluding belief that there is "a vast new territory waiting to be explored." (Matarasso 2010).

Chapter 3

An alternative model for the use of Arts Council subsidy for theatre in England

If the notion of ecology is to be applied to theatre subsidy, what is understood by the word ecology in its truest sense? In the introduction to this thesis, ecology is defined in scientific terms.

> [...] all organisms, including humans, depend on the ability of other organisms...to recycle the basic components of life.
>
> (Raven/Johnson 1996:571)

As the ecologies of the natural world, therefore, function through a set of often complex interdependent relationships, might an ecology for theatre subsidy function in a similar way? If so, what are to be its ingredients? In particular then, this chapter will focus on models of subsidy such as those applied to the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) and the National Theatre of Wales (NTW). It will also consider initiatives such as the Open Stage programme at the Theatre Royal in Stratford East and what can be gleaned from the public processes of participatory budgeting and decision-making. To explore some practical machinations of 'ecology', it will take Kaleider, in Exeter, (2012 to the present day), as a test case study. Finally, drawing on aspects of the examples cited above and to substantiate the idea of ecology, the chapter will also outline a structure for a potential new model of subsidy for theatre in England. As the study has so far chosen to examine the allocation and use of present day theatre subsidy in Coventry, it will apply this alternative model to the city itself, utilising the allocation of Coventry's NPO subsidy as it stands at the time of writing.

Beforehand, however, it is worth focusing on examples throughout this study where the word 'ecology' is used in relation to theatre. In particular, in the Introduction to this study, theatre critic Lyn Gardner's definition of ecology is both illustrative and thought provoking, as she asserts that organisations such as the National Theatre and small scale theatre companies are all ultimately interlinked. In light of this, what evidence currently exists of structures in theatre in England that function in what Gardner refers to as the 'wider theatre ecology'? (Guardian 2012).

At the Bristol Old Vic, artistic director Tom Morris has established the theatre's 'Ferment' programme. The 'Ferment' website announces:

> Devisers, directors, writers, dancers, musicians, poets, puppeteers, live artists - you name it. The Ferment is a porous pool into which we invite artists who inspire us to forge new theatrical possibilities and make the theatre of tomorrow.
>
> (Bristol Old Vic 2012)

The programme operates as a year round development scheme for theatre makers in Bristol and the South West. It features two work in progress events, known as 'Ferment Fortnights', in both the January and the July. It entails "a fortnight of scratch and work in progress performances in an informal and lively atmosphere that invites feedback directly from the audience." (Bristol Old Vic 2012). A similar development process operates at the West Yorkshire Playhouse (WYP), in Leeds. 'Furnace', which makes work with theatre practitioners who are either emerging or mid career, "is the Playhouse's on-going new work development programme, where artists work with us to trial and test out new projects." (WYP 2012).

Ros Robins, Regional Director at Arts Council West Midlands describes activity of a similar kind in the West Midlands. In fact Robins confirms that this sort of approach has been vibrant and impactive in the Midlands area over the last ten years. Robins notes that Programmes such as 'Pilot'[30] and 'First Bite'[31], have "shifted the ecology" (Robins 2012). They have been enabled via strategic funds from Arts Council England, as has the current 'Holding Space' programme, to produce a series of micro-commissions and two large-scale plays for premiere across the West Midlands region. At the Birmingham Rep, a more recent initiative has been 'RepFoundry'. According to the theatre's website, developed as a "year long development programme, REP Foundry, will support artists through workshops, making and sharing work and professional mentoring." (Birmingham-Rep 2012).

[30] See http://www.pilotnights.co.uk/intro
[31] See http://www.chinaplatetheatre.com/First-Bite

'Pilot' and 'First Bite', the latter of which is led by China Plate, are development programmes in the West Midlands that have typically held showcase nights for emerging artists at Warwick Arts Centre, The Birmingham Rep, Midlands Arts Centre and others. 'Holding Space', subsidised by a one off strategic grant of £150,000 from the Arts Council, is "a consortium of five arts organisations in the West Midlands who have come together to work collaboratively to help theatre flourish within the region." (Holding Space 2012).

Alongside the Birmingham Rep, Black Country Touring, mac and Warwick Arts Centre, award winning independent theatre makers Stan's Cafe have been instrumental in establishing the Holding Space programme. James Yarker, artistic director, explains how the Holding Space vision is to empower new work towards its most important point, that of production.

> I was getting really frustrated with the fact that scratch nights were everywhere and money to make half a show seemed to be there, money to make three quarters of a show seemed to be there, but people really seemed to struggle to finish shows off. And in my sense that was almost a strategic thing by venues and the Arts Council to cover up the fact that the presentational opportunities are drying up [...] It's really unfair on artists to be asked to make a portion of work, and it inhibits artistic growth.
>
> (Yarker 2012)

It is interesting that Robins chooses the word ecology, because none of these programmes, from the Bristol Old Vic's 'Ferment' to WYP's 'Furnace, to 'Holding Space', are ecologies in a sense that they are a part of an inter-dependent *non-hierarchical* network through which they co-exist. Those who run the aforementioned programmes do so from the 'land-lock' of a building, separated from the artists they support by hierarchies either of status or resource. These 'ecologies' therefore are ultimately defined by whom the buildings or facilitators invite into their process, and by a perception of them being 'the Big Daddy'; that their greater resource somehow sets them apart from other organisations. Thus study is interested then in how a theatre

ecology can be imagined in a finer form, and that is defined by an interplay of mutual need, resource, and decision making.

Certainly, this central issue of 'the Big Daddy' is neatly highlighted by evidence from what was once known as the Coventry Theatre Network. In 1998, Jane Hytch, as associate producer of the Belgrade Theatre, in Coventry, wrote an application to the Arts Council called *Something Wicked This Way Comes* (SWTWC). It was submitted to their A4E (Arts For Everyone) grants scheme and was successfully awarded £500,000 subsidy. SWTWC, including the Belgrade Theatre, led at the time by artistic director Bob Eaton and seven independent professional theatre companies in Coventry, was both a catalyst to and the context from which the Coventry Theatre Network (CTN) was founded and began to create new work for the theatre within the format of what might be considered a form of ecology. Unlike the Belgrade Theatre, which received year on year subsidy, the seven independent companies were all at differing stages of development and subsidy, existing primarily on project-to-project grants from the Arts Council. The central provocation of *Something Wicked This Way Comes* was phrased in Jo Trowsdale's report as below:

> Question: What would happen if a building based regional theatre and a group of small-scale companies were to develop theatre together for a period of years?
>
> Answer: Theatre would never be the same again.
>
> (Trowsdale 2002)

Hytch's vision for the formation of the CTN was that it was as much about what the Belgrade could learn from the independents, as it was to be vice versa:

> We watched around us the absolute dedication and struggle of artists working in the growing small scale theatre sector in Coventry...It was inspiring and exciting to us as producers...It felt like The Belgrade needed to engage with these artists in order to be vibrant, relevant and alive again.
>
> (Hytch 2012)

Although, as Trowsdale (2002) reports "all of the partners engaged in the CTN welcomed the opportunity that the experiment offered, and entered into it positively", she concludes that the most commonly voiced fear in the early stages of the CTN was about how the independence and individual identities of the companies would be retained. Of particular consequence was the insistence from the Arts Council, managing to completely miss the point of the project, that the Belgrade should hold and be the main administrator of the £500,000 subsidy. This sat uneasily with most of the companies in the sense that they were *receiving* funds, rather than being autonomous and in possession of their own funds. Jane Hytch, interviewed in 2002 for the purposes of Trowsdale's report considered in hindsight:

> The money should somehow have been managed independently from the Belgrade, because I think people got into the mindset of doling out the money...we were not the patrons.
>
> (Trowsdale 2001)

The idea of a theatre ecology dispelling assumptions of one organisation's or artist's power, status, or importance over another is all very well, but these are difficult parameters to implement. Isn't it necessary that someone, or some organisation, is charged with making decisions? This is accepted, in part, but what must therefore be imagined are pro-active structures to determine that any ecology ensures organisations do not work in isolation, and that they remain responsive to and representative of the community in which they reside. This means both in the way the ecology generates its work, and in the formatting of how it physically presents itself and operates. The dominating presence of building based theatres is most pertinent to the CTN example cited above. A central idea to this thesis is one which debates the financial resilience or effectiveness of theatre and buildings to speak to a twenty first century society, and what part they can play in a theatre ecology. It is necessary, therefore, to explore what models already exist that contribute to the notion of 'ecology' by eschewing the central anchor point of buildings, in favour of what might be considered a more peripatetic profile.

The National Theatre of Scotland and The National Theatre of Wales

Formed in 2006, the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) was established following devolution of the Scottish Parliament in 1999. With no official 'home' to call its own, the NTS is constituted as "a non building based, commissioning and producing cultural institution." (Robinson 2011).
The company makes its work in airports, in high-rise blocks, in forests, on football pitches, in pubs and factories and in large and small-scale venues across Scotland. On the NTS website, its manifesto describes its mission succinctly;

> [...] there has been no great capital project involving architects and contractors. Instead, we are taking theatre all over Scotland, working with the existing venues, touring and creating work within the theatre community. We have no bricks-and-mortar institutionalism to counter, nor the security of a permanent home in which to develop.
> (National Theatre Scotland 2012)

The lack of any official building means the company, although essentially subsidised as a national theatre, approaches its work through collaboration both with emerging and existing Scottish theatre makers and artists, but also within and amongst what Robinson (2011), in her same paper, calls "a democratically representative sphere." Projects to date have included the multi award winning and globally successful productions of both *Black Watch*, 2006, by Gregory Burke and *Beautiful Burnout*, 2010, by Bryony Lavery. They have also included *Jump*, 2012, made with over 1,000 secondary school pupils across Fife and Glasgow, *Project Macbeth*, 2006, a tour of provincial Scottish theatres made by and with teachers, pupils and actors and *Nothing To See Here*, 2011, created with 250 performers from Aberdeen schools and colleges and the community.

Writing in 2011, Joyce MacMillan's estimation of the company and by dint of this, its structural formation, was that it had endured a sometimes bumpy ride,

courting controversy as it shied away from creating large scale work for the nation's major stages, opting instead for a;

> [...] gorgeous cacophony of site-specific experiment, exciting new work and innovative projects with young people in specific communities... Certainly no one could fault the NTS' massive effort to reach out beyond the central belt and to form bonds with communities from Orkney to Fife.
>
> (McMillan 2011)

It is McMillan's recognition of the NTS' immersion into an ecology of theatre making that Rebecca Robinson (2009:21) builds upon. In her PhD thesis, the latter refers via Jurgen Habermas to the idea of the 'public sphere'. Robinson describes how in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, in coffee houses and salons, the public and the political came together for face-to-face discussion. An interpretative association to Robinson's point seems clear: alternative funding models not unlike that of the NTS, created not to subsidise officially sanctioned theatre buildings, but to allow robust peripatetic artistic programming, can, in a theatrical sense, enable the public sphere to remain empowered and thus more culturally democratic and diverse.

At the opposite end of the UK, the National Theatre of Wales (NTW) and the Welsh speaking national theatre Theatr Genedlaethol Cymrum, both of which have no building, create work in a range of traditional and non-traditional venues. Formed in 2008 under constructs similar to those of the NTS, the English speaking NTW is led by artistic director John McGrath. Unlike their Scottish cousins, the NTW still enjoys an arms length funding relationship with the Welsh Assembly, via The Arts Council of Wales. Also absent of any definable building, the NTW pledges on its website to "open up the possibilities in theatre, identifying topical issues and expressing them in surprising and imaginative ways. " (National Theatre of Wales 2012).

Interviewed for this study, McGrath believes the organisation is absolutely about ecology. "A large part of it is about increasing opportunities and the

range of work produced in Wales and to working in partnership." (McGrath 2012). The organisation was founded "on the concept of community. We formed an online community long before we did anything, so that social network is sort of the founding space of the company" (McGrath 2012). It was, McGrath continues, "to establish that if a national theatre is to be anything, it needs to be a community of people." (McGrath 2012).

Building on this, a central aspect of the organisation is not only its relationship to a wider theatre ecology in Wales, but also to its public. The TEAM[32] initiative, which is comprised of volunteers and ambassadors recruited by NTW from across the country's communities, advocates and disseminates the work of NTW. According to McGrath, two staff members of NTW were originally TEAM members. The ecological route is clear here as the principles of meaningful participation feed out into the community and feed back again into the company. As previously mentioned, NTW is significant because of its lack of bricks and mortar. Having managed a successful building at Contact, in Manchester, McGrath is reluctant to set up too much of a dichotomy that is for or against buildings, but recognises that "too often theatres can set up barriers...they are unappealing for people to walk into [...] and can become holding pens for the business of what goes on stage." (McGrath 2012). Work, he says, "that is in the public realm can make that work easier to engage with or step into." (McGrath 2012). By the pubic realm, McGrath refers to site-specific work, or work that is created in response to towns, cities, or buildings and locations across Wales. Interestingly, he considers work outside of buildings to be "theatrical throughout [...] people will trek up mountains and across towns because often that journey is part of the excitement." (McGrath 2012).

The work of the companies described above presents some interesting possibilities for the use of Arts Council subsidy in England. Of course, these

[32] See http://nationaltheatrewales.org/whatson/performance/ntwteam

are models designed to fund work across a country, but what interests this study is how they might be adapted for operation in cities and communities. In Exeter, Kaleider, led by artistic director Seth Honnor is a recent city based incarnation that emerged in response to the closure of Exeter's building based Northcott Theatre. It now works alongside the latter and other agencies in a partnership of theatre provision across the city and its surrounding regions.

Kaleider, Exeter, 2012 - present day

Consisting of an artistic director and two producers, Kaleider is subsidised by the Arts Council for three years and, most pertinently to this chapter, replaces the historical reliance on the building based Northcott to spearhead the city of Exeter's theatre offer. Opened in 1967 as a four hundred and sixty seat regional repertory theatre, the Northcott Theatre went into administration in 2010 after enduring a troubled recent history that had seen it threatened with closure in December 2007, following an Arts Council announcement that it was cutting its grant. A campaign to save the theatre was launched and in December 2008 it's funding was secured "providing that changes were agreed both in programming and the management team." (Guardian 2010).

By 2010, the Northcott's finances were in disarray and its trustees placed the building into administration. It has since re-opened as a 'receiving house', offering a mixed programme of touring theatre, dance and opera. Not unsurprisingly, the Northcott was unsuccessful in its application to the Arts Council's NPO programme. What emerged was a re-imagining of how best to utilise the £750,000 of subsidy that, in the light of events, had been preserved and ring fenced by the Arts Council for investment in the arts in Exeter and the region. Although the energy of the idea had already begun to ferment via his previous professional experiences, it was at this point that Seth Honnor proposed his vision to the Arts Council for Kaleider and the creative partnerships it might build with arts organisations, artists and the public, across the city and Devon region. The £750,000 was split in three ways,

awarding £361,779 over three years to Kaleider, £375,000 to the Northcott Theatre to produce a year round programme of received work from touring productions across the country and £13,221 to the independent city based Theatre Alibi to provide rehearsal space for Exeter based arts organisations at its multi purpose rehearsal rooms. Kaleider is supported by a further £30,000 from the University of Exeter, a one off £5,000 grant from the city's local authority and in kind support that allows their executive producer to work on behalf of Kaleider via his position as Arts and Culture Manager at the University of Exeter. Aside from the aforementioned Theatre Alibi and the Northcott, it will work in partnership with a range of other performing arts organisations, such as the city's arts centre Exeter Phoenix, the University of Exeter and Daisi (Devon Arts In Schools Initiative), an arts and education development organisation for young people.

Offering some foundations through which to imagine how a finer theatre ecology might work, Kaleider has the intent and the potential to move both the public and artists closer to the centre of arts activity in Exeter. It is, however, best described by the words on its website:

> Kaleider creates live performance projects. The majority of our projects will happen in public spaces and rarely in auditoria. We're particularly interested in engaging people who might not normally go to the theatre in new, performative art projects. The name Kaleider is a mashup of "collider" (sort of obvious that bit) and the Ancient Greek for "beauty" and "form" (bit less obvious). In the act of creating new work Kaleider brings people together who may not normally collide to share their stories and face the future with imagination. We ask and re-ask the question "what can we do together that we couldn't do apart?
>
> (Kaleider 2012)

Born in Devon, both a writer and a director, but preferring to call himself a 'maker', Seth Honnor gained huge experience with Interplay Theatre, in Leeds and Theatre Bristol, before establishing the Kaleider project in 2012. His philosophy and personal vision for the arts compliment the themes of ecology

so far considered in this chapter. "Kaleider's line 'what can we do together that we can't do apart' is absolutely fundamental to what we do." (Honnor 2012) Expanding on this, Honnor has no time for the dynamics of what he describes as:

> [...] the existing theatre set up. Theatre borrows it's way of using audiences from its physical set up of curtains open, present, close, secret...It's a great magic model, but to carry that through into the way we work with each other, it's crazy.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

What is striking about Kaleider's organisational model is that it is fashioned around the principles of social networking, but aims to literally *be* a social network in the most obvious sense. In doing so it aims to facilitate conversation that ultimately allows access and participation to broaden out. It would seem that Honnor's thinking has in some ways crystallised with the birth of the Internet, social networking and user generated content over the last ten years. These elements are significant in that, both for artists and the public, the Internet offers ways in which to establish both a presence and an identity within one's community. In the early 2000s, when Honnor began work as co-ordinator with Theatre Bristol, the Internet became central to his and the organisation's aims of changing the face of theatre making in Bristol. Founded in 2004, Theatre Bristol is described on its website as;

> [...] a collective of producers. We believe that anything is possible. We follow our curiosity, individually and collectively, to work for the benefit of artists to make great art. Theatre Bristol's role is to work with the theatre community and others to create the best conditions for excellent live performance to be made and experienced in Bristol.
>
> (Theatre Bristol 2012)

Eschewing the top down model of the singular voice of an expert artistic director in a heavily financed building who administrates a programme of theatre, they are probably the kind of organisation the authors of the Henley Centre report had in mind, when in 2005 they wrote:

> Arts Council England may want to consider how it can invest more in people as well as investing in organisations. Creative nomads who move between organisations...are likely to have a disproportionately positive effect on developing relationships between different organisations.
>
> (Curry and Gunn 2005)

Artists like Honnor argue that the rich variety of creativity existing in any given area remains largely hidden because the 'experts' in buildings or institutions may, in some cases, only interact with those that manage to become most visible, or closest to his or her's artistic preference. It is a kind of Darwinian survival of the fittest that led Honnor, on his arrival in Bristol, to set about mapping and unplugging the blockage of hidden talent:

> When this job came up at [Theatre Bristol], I said I reckon I can hit nine of your twelve objectives, which were to totally change the theatre industry in Bristol, without needing any extra money.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

What Honnor did was to build a website. Some thirteen years into the 21st century in an age dominated by social media and the Internet, this may seem less dynamic than Honnor intends it to sound. Yet the construction of such a resource at that time enabled information and exchange and a place from which artists could begin to meet or become aware of other artists:

> So we already had this upside down model from the very beginning, it was grass roots up instead of this kind of weird thing where you had an industry on its point...
>
> (Honnor 2012)

He recalls his first day in Bristol, walking through the city centre and asking members of the public what they knew about theatre and the arts in the city of Bristol. They were swift to name the established organisations such as the Bristol Old Vic, the Bristol Hippodrome and the museum and art gallery, but struggled to name others. Honnor's point is that;

> [...] people knew there was other stuff, but they didn't know how to find it [...] I always use this metaphor: it's easy to find the motorway from a terraced house, but it's harder to find the terraced house from the motorway.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

According to Honnor, at one time the Bristol Old Vic was commandeering close to 90% RFO subsidy for theatre in the city. During interview, Honnor drew a variety of diagrams. See Appendix 1(Figure 1) for reference to the following. He explains:

> What happened is you had a funding structure that has these mountains and you had an RFO glass ceiling where basically they [the Arts Council] weren't going to give any more money. And then you had this other G4A on project funding who couldn't get up to this level of RFO.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

What Honnor illustrated was a system of subsidy that was risk adverse, conservative, and one that left Bristol and other cities of a similar nature, with no prospect of meaningful or representative artistic flow. The latter, of course, is exactly what an organisation such as Theatre Bristol set out to create. By working from the grassroots up to discover and nurture relationships with new artists with no previous creative outlets, talent and new ideas are more able to flow around the city. Honnor expands:

> You had this very weird investment model [...] What tended to happen was you that they...[the artistic director of the building based theatre] was sort of spending the money on their main house, *their* work, *their* art, doing *their* plays.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Drawing a second diagram to support his thoughts, see Appendix 2 (Figure 2), Honnor describes the various processes that are generically applicable towards the production of a new play or event: idea, development, production, live event:

> What you get in this model is a very closed thing where there's no risk involved. You hope that the person [making the work] is really good, has a really good idea, doesn't need much development, goes into production and has a live event. Great. All the money channels in this very linear way. What we tried to do in Bristol is open this up.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Honnor develops the image in Figure 2, drawing two lines with waveforms through their middle, set at 45 degree angles to the main line both above and below. He describes these lines as a "social algorithm. By which I mean this is *people*." (Honnor 2012).

The efforts at Theatre Bristol, via social algorithms, were concentrated on opening up the area of 'development'. As Honnor quantifies, "you still end up with a product, but there's a tension between openness and quality." (Honnor 2012). Thus with a team of producers and therefore more than one person involved in the process towards production, people have to make "decisions about is it going to be good?" (Honnor 2012). In the 'top down' system, Honnor argues, if the events "go bad, you've got all your eggs in one basket and that's a real problem." (Honnor 2012). The process advocated by Honnor doesn't guarantee either great art or art that is always going to be to everyone's taste. Yet with a more open discourse to the distribution of subsidy and the processes for making work, what emerges is a more representative and potentially ecological picture of an artistic community's diversity and relevance. In the last decade, Theatre Bristol believes it has changed the face of theatre making in the city:

> The live performance scene in Bristol has changed beyond recognition; the quantity and quality of work now created and presented in the city far exceeds that of most English cities, perhaps all except London. Nationally, Bristol is perceived as a hotbed of exciting new work, with professional artists and producers regularly moving to Bristol from other cities...Our leadership has created a rich network culture which has helped to make the prolific diversity of activity visible and given artists and arts organisations in the city increased ambition and self belief.

(Theatre Bristol 2012)

The influences of Theatre Bristol are arguably evident as one considers the establishing of the Bristol Old Vic's 'Ferment' development programme, which in some cases results in work being programmed into the Bristol Old Vic's artistic programme. However, as the current Arts Council NPO spend over three years on theatre in Bristol indicates, there is still some way to go.

- The Bristol Old Vic, £3,752,573
- Circomedia £325,505
- Theatre Bristol £326,826
- Tobbaco Factory £184,356
- Travelling Light Theatre Co. £607,411

Returning to Kaleider, and bearing in mind the absence in Exeter of a building based *producing* theatre, Honnor is conscious that his organisation must not allow itself to replace, or adopt the identity of the 'expert' moderating the city's artistic offer. Kaleider holds a budget for the next three years, but, Honnor insists, "it [Kaleider] isn't a funder. We have to make collective decisions about what we invest our money in, what shows we make." (Honnor 2012).

The key to retaining objectivity about what is made and how and by who is safeguarded in some ways by Kaleider's staffing structure, which sees two producers engaged by the organisation. It is clearly a signal on Honnor's part to persist with and adopt the principles established with Theatre Bristol. The 'what' is of course important and the central project at the heart of Kaleider's bid to the Arts Council is open and universal, with something for everyone should they want to get involved. Made over three years and playing out over 4 days in 2015, *Ancient Sunlight* will be made with engineers, scientists, technicians, performers, designers, young people, teachers, musicians, artists, writers, actors, politicians and more. Its central premise lies in the question "What would we do with the world's last barrel of oil?"

Alongside Kaleider's centrepiece, Honnor intends that other Exeter or regionally based artists develop and emerge with projects of their own:

> I'm trying to find ways to open up the city and the conversation and the opportunities that are in the city and that might mean using our money to help other companies so they feel supported enough to go and get other money that has nothing to do with us.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Yet this doesn't entail Kaleider using their subsidy, for example, to commission one set of theatre makers, but not another. That way nothing will have changed. Honnor explains the details of how these relationships can work:

> We might be able to give them rehearsal space. So that when they put their funding application in [to the Arts Council] we have some sort of partnership that makes their applications stronger and then you grow your economy in that way...They get product and we're not doing it on our own. We're not funding it, but we're trying to leverage what we can from our power base that we create.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Honnor's belief is that the top down structures of subsidy, as explored within this study, only exist because they are inherently connected to behaviour:

> There's a thing about form...Those systems are in place to fund a specific form which is pretty much a building based containable 'we'll present, they'll come' form.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Organisations like Kaleider and Theatre Bristol acknowledge there has, and continues to be "a change in form, partly because of digital technologies...Of people doing stuff because they can." (Honnor 2012). Artists are creating work outside;

> […] or in other places because they can tell people about it, they can broadcast that an event is going to happen, they can platform things in different ways...

(Honnor 2012)

It is these patterns of behaviour Kaleider will react to. With none of the restrictions or formalities of scheduling that buildings may come across, they can operate in a light touch way to facilitate, or as explained above, do what they can to lever projects towards production. Honnor's awareness of the importance of 'behaviour' feeds the energy of Kaleider's vision. His illustrations of top down subsidy models constructed around mountains and glass ceilings orchestrated by risk adverse artistic directors and the Arts Council, are relevant to his overall thinking:

> We know that anywhere in the world, you can see it in the Arab Spring[33] that this [top down management of society] is not going to sustain. It is a matter of time...This idea of democracy that we have at the moment *will* change. It's not like it might.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

The behaviour of the world in areas beyond theatre and art is underpinned by the assertions cited in this study's introduction. Social liquidity, particularly of the kind that has emerged in the last decade, imposes an effect on our society and as a consequence on that society's culture. Referring back to his earlier thoughts regarding ideas, development, production and event, Honnor says:

> It goes back to this idea of putting everyone in the middle, about being non-linear. It's a really threatening idea. My metaphor a little bit is, you know when starlings murmurate? When they move together, apparently they look seven deep in every direction in order to predict the turn, otherwise they collide...So then there are whole questions about who starts the murmuration? Which starling begins? Is the Arts Council willing to be there, who is it performing for and how, I suppose, do we all behave like starlings?
>
> (Honnor 2012)

The empowering influence of the Internet re-surfaces in Honnor's discourse on behaviour. Largely because of its simplicity, he views Twitter as one of the most sophisticated pieces of social media currently available:

[33] http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/interactive/2011/mar/22/middle-east-protest-interactive-timeline

> And the reason probably is the Follow/Unfollow idea, because it provides huge freedom that does much more than we can measure.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

On the Kaleider website, there is a section describing 'Digital Hat', which it is developing in partnership with the creative agency Albow. It is described as "an experiment in revolutionising how we discover and pay for live performance." (Kaleider 2012). Although driven by concept, it is imagined as a web-based platform that is content focused and involves the creation of a profile by both the consumer, the audience and the artist. There will be a Follow/Unfollow option that allows users on both sides to become linked. Those with a 'Digital Hat' will be able to tell one another about themselves and open up critical discourse and the opportunity to curate and collate arts based information. Although not funded directly through Kaleider's Arts Council award, one senses Digital Hat will be at the heart of Honnor's thinking as the organisation contemplates how best to disseminate its artistic outputs to the community it lives and works in. The website continues:

> We're interested in a Digital Hat that might combine the function of cards like Oyster Card and loyalty schemes like Tesco Club Card with mobile devices such as smart phones and tablets to create a box office function that...responds to the needs of people on both sides of the gifting and receiving transaction...The outcome would enable users to give and receive donations towards a specific product...We're interested in content discovery, there's a quiet but important revolution happening to music via platforms such as last.fm, songkick and bandcamp. Our interactions through these platforms are beginning to develop genuine conversations about ownership and value.
>
> (Kaleider 2012)

The ideas surrounding Digital Hat reveal another layer to Kaleider's mission. They are concerned with challenging established patterns of behaviour not only to allow greater flow for artists and ideas, but also, as the Arts Council have explored in a variety of surveys, to find ways to bring the public closer to art and artists. Honnor enthuses:

> What if you could empty an auditorium and asked them [the public] to pay what they thought it was worth afterwards...to hold them in a place where they could be critical about what they've just seen, but still think about its value and somehow be confronted with that decision.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Crucially, digital hat is not about digital begging. For Honnor:

> It's a human based thing...It's about equality, it's about making me as the consumer the same as the person who's giving it to me...to try and create a system where you don't just get given your coffee, you are actually confronted with a decision about where its come from and a more sophisticated conversation. Even when I talk about that I go 'this is insane, people don't have time for this'. But I sort of think we don't have any choice.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Happy to admit that Kaleider is at the beginning of its journey, above all Honnor knows the work has to speak for itself. Some of its ideas may seem a long way from John Maynard Keynes' triumphalist speech in 1945, in which the latter surmised:

> No one can yet say where the tides of the times will carry our new-found ship. The purpose of the Arts Council of Great Britain is to create an environment to breed a spirit.
>
> (Wallinger and Warnock 2000:143)

Yet not in spirit, only in methodology. The ideas of Kaleider and companies like Theatre Bristol are derived from 21st Century experience of how a modern society functions. They are crucial to consider when imagining a vision of subsidy for the arts that is both progressive and ecological. In Honnor's words:

> At the moment we're in a society where we still value this idea that there are experts and that they know best. And I don't think it will sustain [...] That's why Kaleider's line "what can we do together that we couldn't do apart" is absolutely fundamental.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

The examples of Kaleider and the national theatres in both Scotland and Wales are indicative of how their different approaches challenge the presumed functions and processes of theatre making. Another aspect important to this idea of a finer theatre ecology has to be the role of, and its relationship, to the public. The act of theatre cannot exist without the equal existence of both audience and participants. Yet to follow the scientific definition, none of the components involved in an ecology are passive, rather they influence and act upon each other. As this premise is central to the study's ideas of a new model for subsidy, it is necessary to consider what can be gleaned from existing examples of greater public involvement and influence in theatre and the arts.

The public and decision-making

In 2006, John Knell, one of the UK's leading voices on the changing landscape of the work place, wrote in his paper *Whose Art Is It Anyway?* that "...the prospect of greater choice and personalisation is being used by the Government to drive improvements in public services." (Watershed 2012). Notably, his paper goes on to explore how personalisation is becoming an imperative for the arts, remarking that it necessitates two distinct ideas:

> Firstly equipping the service user with the ability to tailor and personalise the service experience and secondly inviting the user to co-produce the service by encouraging the individual service user to be an active participant in the type of service they receive.
>
> (Watershed 2012)

Personalisation may be relevant, for example, in education, whereby pupils are encouraged to make choices about the type of tuition they receive. Correspondingly, at the Theatre Royal, Stratford East (TRSE), London, pioneering work driven by the ideas behind personalisation has challenged established patterns of behaviour in arts production at the theatre. In 2012, instigated by the theatre's artistic director Kerry Michaels and led by Charlotte

Handel, the Theatre Royal launched their Open Stage programme. Promoted as a community engagement and consultation programme, it was subsidised by The Paul Hamlyn Foundation, the Esmee Fairbairn Foundation and The Arts Council. Its direct premise, as expressed on the theatre's website, was to allow the public input into what should appear from January to July at the venue during the run up to the 2012 London Olympic and Paralympic Games.

> What is Open Stage? Imagine if you got to choose what happens on stage at Theatre Royal Stratford East, what would YOU put on it? We want to talk with as many people as we can, whether you had no idea that there is a theatre in Stratford, or you're a regular visitor. You get as involved as you would like - simply sharing your ideas or shaping the theatre's future by getting really involved in what it takes to make a show happen.
>
> (Open Stage 2011)

The process is described further on the Paul Hamlyn Foundation website, who awarded the TRSE £97,400 in support of the programme.

> A core group of volunteers has been recruited and trained as ambassadors for the project...Shawab Iqbal, distributed questionnaires to friends and family: "Statistically, arts participation within the Pakistani community is quite low, but I've had good response," he says. "I've been surprised at some people's perception of the theatre. It's still seen by many as white middle class so we have some work to do to show it reflects all voices.
>
> (Paul Hamlyn 2012)

As far back as 2010, they began to consult with the community of Stratford and East London, speaking to over 3,000 people. Although the Open Stage programme was rooted firmly within a building based theatre, its process offers a further strand of thinking to contribute to Kaleider's vision of how artists and 'the people', whether they are audience or participants, can operate together via a pattern of non-linear behaviour. Historically, the Theatre Royal at Stratford East has identified itself as a people's theatre. This is evident in its relationship to the work of artists such as Joan Littlewood and

her Theatre Workshop[34] company who were based at the theatre in the 1950s and 1960s.

Head of the Open Stage programme, Charlotte Handel, verifies this:

> If you're a theatre that's looking to involve local people and you really have got your audience at the heart of it, you should be talking to them, you should be staging work that's inspired by them or of interest to them [...] Without that audience you don't exist.
>
> (Handel 2012)

As Handel reports, the notion of inclusivity at Stratford East has always been "a part of our DNA, so Open Stage was about exploring ideas of power and who has that power and why. And then how do you access that, its implications?" (Handel 2012). Not unexpectedly, Handel confirms that the prospect of involving the public in any form of decision-making was received with some caution:

> As an idea some people were kind of "oh my word that's really terrifying why would you do that?" and some people were really excited about it...The key was disseminating that information and encouraging those who were really excited by it to share the love.
>
> (Handel 2012)

The theatre worked in ways not dissimilar to the TEAM initiative utilised by the National Theatre of Wales, using ambassadors, "and working with people to develop them as volunteers...and encourage others to talk." (Handel 2012). According to Handel, the ambassadors concentrated on asking the community within Stratford what would they most like to *feel* at the theatre, rather than the more prosaic question of what they would like to see. The Open Stage team were aware of the scepticism, as expressed in Chapter

[34] See *Theatre Workshop: Joan Littlewood and the making of modern British Theatre*, Robert Leach, Univ of Exeter Press, 2006

Two, which suggests that if the public are asked what they want, they will return a populist programme. For Handel, the truth of this is more complex:

> It's that question of quality and engagement. Initially when we started talking about it, there were lots of people saying 'oh so does that mean people want Telly Tubbies on?' Community doesn't necessarily mean poor quality...I think when you're talking about quality, it's what kind of conversations need to happen to ensure that that work and that experience is of quality.
>
> (Handel: 2012)

There was a lot of enthusiasm expressed for work that was not necessarily new, but a part of the theatre's recent history. Since 1999, TRSE has run its Musical Theatre Initiative, which has spurned new musicals from British voices. Productions have included *The Big Life,* 2005 and *The Harder They Come,* 2006. Throughout the spring of 2012, the theatre staged concert versions of these and other homegrown musicals. Another of the successes of Open Stage has been a format for rehearsed readings of new plays called *Angelic Tales*. The latter was established via the premise that "anyone could submit their play [...] and went through a whole period of workshop and table readings that were then shown as rehearsed readings." (Handel 2012). Handel adds that the Theatre Royal launched the format pledging to further develop at least one of the most popular pieces to a professional performance level. They are now "in the process of looking at the audience feedback and talking to our volunteers [about which plays may progress]." (Handel 2012).

Although only running for six months up to the opening of the 2012 London Olympics, it would appear the Open Stage programme has offered sustainable processes through which to create future work at TRSE. It has challenged the theatre inter-departmentally, both how they work with each other and how they relate their work to the larger community. Artistically, Team Angelica, the organisation behind *Angelic Tales*, have been appointed as associate artists to create more projects within the public sphere for future development. Assessing the Arts Council's stance on Open Stage, Handel's

opinion is that they have been highly supportive. She notes that when an organisation decides to develop a programme with the public, an instinctive anxiety is always going to be: what will it be about? This proved the case with Open Stage, as the programme couldn't be known until a period of consultation between the theatre and the public had been completed. Aware of the theatre's historical precedence and;

> [...] because Theatre Royal Stratford East has a particular reputation, and it's known for involving diverse communities and diverse groups in what it does, I think they felt we were the right kind of organisation to be trying this.
>
> (Handel 2012)

This is interesting to consider in the light of the Arts Council's organising control of theatre subsidy. Considering TRSE to be the right kind of theatre, also implies there are the wrong kind of theatres in which to be supporting such initiatives. It may be argued that the maverick history of TRSE and its associations with Joan Littlewood confines the openly pluralist ambitions of programmes such as Open Stage to theatres that are 'right' and, paradoxically, sustains the status quo of other theatres. By default, the risk adverse inhibitions of the Arts Council are maintained and little meaningful collateral is relinquished to the public.

This feels like a significant point for this chapter, because a theatre ecology operating in its finest form would need to devolve discernable power to the public as much as to artists. The principles of the Open Stage programme may, for example, be extended by officially adopting a recognisable process of participatory decision-making and budgeting that, although consisting of Arts Council subsidy, operates at a local authority level.

Participatory processes first emerged out of community activism and grassroots pressure groups in Brazil in the 1980's and although relatively uncommon in the UK, primary concerns are to directly involve local people in priorities and spending decisions across local authority budgets. In

2009, the New Labour government, striving to increase public participation in this way introduced its Duty To Involve. Local authorities were required "to inform, consult and in other ways involve 'representatives of local persons'[35] in decisions that affect them." (Involve 2012).[36]

The programme applied equally to public bodies and by association to organisations such as the Arts Council. The latter's response was to commission *Participatory Budgeting in the Arts* (2009) from the organisation Involve. The executive summary of its fifty page report introduces the principles of participatory budgeting, describing it as "a process whereby citizens are given the power to decide how a (local) public budget should be allocated." (Involve 2012).[37] The document reports, as of 2009, that such processes are;

> […] a growing phenomenon in the UK [...] As a radical approach to devolved power, participatory budgeting is at the heart of the government's agenda to give communities more say in decisions that affect them...this means engaging residents and community groups representative of all parts of the community to discuss and vote on spending priorities, make spending proposals and vote on them.
>
> (Involve 2012)[38]

By relating its premise to the arts, the Involve report states that:

> The Arts Council sees participatory budgeting as having potential for its work involving the pubic and stakeholders in decision-making and in its work with local authorities.
>
> (Involve 2012)[39]

[35] See Communities and Local Government (2007) Local Government and Public Involvement in health Bill CLG: London
[36] See Page 6
[37] See Page 4
[38] See Page 4
[39] See Page 4

What is clear is that for the arts sector there are a number of benefits to be gleaned from either participatory budgeting or decision-making, or both. In particular it can provide a gateway to new funding opportunities as communities interact with new partners and become better acquainted with local resource hitherto unknown to them. Resonating with the passions of both Kaleider and Theatre Royal Stratford East, such processes can play a pivotal role in "improving relationships between artists and communities." (Involve 2012)[40]

Although it will not be to everyone's taste, in the search for the components essential to a theatre ecology, the notion of public participation appears to offer ideological gravitas. Furthermore, this study proffers that participation of the kind at Theatre Royal Stratford East might be enhanced so that decisions are made by the public not only about programming, but also about which organisations receive subsidy in the first place. Realistically, it would provide an authentic counterbalance to the governing preferences of the Arts Council. However, there are democratic issues to be considered. Participatory programmes will rarely represent an entire community, or in some cases they may be open to hijack by 'pressure groups' appropriating a public platform to push their own agenda. On the first point, David Nuttall, Service Manager for Sports and Arts in Coventry City council believes:

> You arguably could be likely to engage those most interested in and willing to give their time to articulate their views on the arts, rather than the views of the wider population...How are you going to select your decision makers? (Nuttall 2012)

Nuttall's point is a valid one. The question of decision-making suggests other complications for the public. Accepting his assertion that decision makers will naturally self select, a second concern is how to safeguard the public's individual beliefs about what constitutes art and what may best serve their community. In truth, the more the public are involved in decision-making, they

[40] See Page 4 of Involve report

may simply learn to approve or choose what they believe the mechanisms of an arts hierarchy would prefer them to choose. Additionally, there will be inevitable tensions to resolve between artists and the public. A succinct example is provided by James Yarker, artistic director of Stan's Cafe, based in Birmingham. In 2003, Stan's Cafe produced *Of All The People In All The World*. The company's website describes the production as a show that;

> [...] uses grains of rice to bring formally abstract statistics to startling and powerful life. Each grain of rice = one person and you are invited to compare the one grain that is you to the millions that are not.
>
> (Stan's Cafe 2012)

The piece unfolds over a period of days in which performers weigh out quantities of rice to represent a variety of human statistics. For example, the populations of towns and cities, the number of doctors, the number of soldiers, the number of people born each day, the number of people who die and many more. Yarker's point in relation to this production is that since being first produced it has toured the world, been a huge hit with the public and made the company more than £1,000,000. It was made possible because of an artistic hunch that saw the company spending £800 on a tonne of rice and finding a space in which to generate the embryonic ideas of the show. The premise of a keener democracy that would bring the public and the artist into a dialogue that might decide what work is created and what is not, causes Yarker to wonder about the fate *Of All The People In All The World;*

> Would it have got voted through? Maybe it would because it sounds like a great idea, but there's a certain professional, not a 'we know best', but it's my job to have good ideas...I can *see* the idea and I can't communicate it on paper otherwise I'd write it down instead of making a piece of theatre. That's my concern in the greater democracy argument.
>
> (Yarker 2012)

Whichever way a theatre ecology may evolve whether it be in the form of organisations like the National Theatre of Scotland, the National Theatre of

Wales, or the more intricate assimilations of organisations like Kaleider, the arts ultimately remain a question of interpretation, which may or may not always tally with that of the Arts Council's. Harold Baldry articulates the dilemma:

> [...] define 'art' and you have a touchstone by which you can test the claim of X or Y or Z to be engaged in an artistic activity[...] The (Arts) Council's Charter provides no answer [...] the original version used the phrase 'fine arts' which was replaced in the revised charter by simply 'the arts', but neither document contains any definition, description or list of the arts.
>
> (Baldry 1981:54)

Observing Hamish Glen's remarks regarding the Open Stage programme at the Theatre Royal in Stratford East, one is struck by his openness to change:

> If you could find a way to input from the audience about what they want and what they want to feel like, in particular, as opposed to [just] programming ideas, then I think that would be a healthy thing.
>
> (Glen 2012)

Although it is useful, or easier, to claim that the involvement of the public in decision-making is incompatible with the job of arts administrators and artists, Glen accepts:

> There's always been a danger of people like me [an artistic director of a building] determining, deciding what taste is going to be available to audiences. I think it would be good for us to be receptive.
>
> (Glen 2012)

In these last words, there is an implicit meaning. Established patterns of behaviour, substantiated either in buildings, or in the offices of the Arts Council, determine how subsidy is distributed and to whom and what is available to audiences. Yet, Glen's acknowledgement becomes most vital as he articulates the idea of a need to be receptive. Perhaps he could have added the word 'more'. It would be inaccurate to suggest that the Arts Council or artists do not listen to the public, but certainly, as explored in this chapter,

there are opportunities via more ecological theatre making by which they might become *more* receptive to the ideas of the public and to more flexible models for subsidy.

At this juncture, this study must begin then to imagine what a framework for finer ecological theatre making will look like. However, within any new model what has to be considered from the outset is the subsidising of organisations such as the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Equally, although not encompassed within the criteria for theatre per se, the subsidy of organisations such as the Royal Opera House cannot be ignored when determining how best to imagine an alternative model. It is not explicit, yet it is apparent that a three-tier form of subsidy exists within the NPO programme for theatre. From the national institutions, down to the building based theatre network, to independent theatre companies and other arts organisations. As explored earlier, there are key rationales for subsidy that will determine the varying levels of support these organisations receive. Considering the levels of subsidy attributed to the bigger institutions, however, one might postulate that there is some disproportion. The £1.04 billion budget for the NPO allows for an investment over three years of approximately £308.7 million in seventy nine *theatre* organisations, yet just the National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company between them receive approximately a third of that amount[41]. There are some who argue that they should not be subsidised through the Arts Council budget, or even subsidised per se. Certainly it is worth revisiting the opinions of Leila Jancovich, as expressed in Chapter Two, who believes that organisations such as the Royal Opera House could:

> [...] run as a commercially viable organisation. Without that funding it would not close, other people would step in. Politically there might be uproar, but it would not close.
>
> (Jancovich 2012)

[41] Over three years the Royal National Theatre receives £53,680,009 and the Royal Shakespeare Company (RSC) £48,177,849. Combined amount = £101,857,858

Jancovich's logic extends as she describes the prestige of organisations such as the Royal Opera House. In terms of their appeal to tourists and their landmark presence in a capital city, there is, she says, a different argument for such organisations, which suggests they are not funded by the Arts Council, but out of the government's tourism budget. (Jancovich 2012). Indeed, although believing that culturally and politically such a scenario is unrealisable, Eleonore Belfiore, associate professor in Cultural Policy at Warwick University, alternatively believes that technically and bureaucratically such a proposition is possible;

> [...] there is no pragmatic reason why it should not be possible [...] meaning that yes, the RSC [for example] might well be funded under the rubric of tourism, but I imagine that this would require a beefing up of tourism budgets. I don't think those kind of organisations could simply be absorbed within existing budgets or tourism investment.
>
> (Belfiore 2013)

With regard to subsidy of the aforementioned institutions, it is interesting at this stage to also re-consider Martin Sutherland's point of view, as expressed in the previous chapter. Assuming companies such as the National Theatre continue to work across both subsidised and commercial sectors, there may be conditions applied within a new model that ensures a portion of profits from commercial successes that were generated by public subsidy, are recycled back into the Arts Council's budget. Current Culture Minister Maria Miller is well documented, as are the Arts Council, in telling arts organisations that they need to learn to grow their economies. Correspondingly, there is no reason why the Arts Council shouldn't recoup some of its investment in its premiere organisations, in order to grow its own economy.

These can only be embryonic ideas for ways in which to cater for the difficult issues of subsidising the larger organisations. They play a critical role in the Arts Council's portfolio for theatre in England, yet as this study has explored, they absorb unwieldy amounts of resource. To fund them via other channels

would arguably render the Arts Council more financially robust and better equipped to achieve its aims and objectives.

An alternative model for subsidy of theatre in England
Test case: Coventry

It should be acknowledged at this stage that this alternative model shares some similarities to the aforementioned Creative People and Places fund (CPP). Indeed CPP, and other examples to be highlighted shortly, only serve to illustrate that the Arts Council is able to operate and think in distinct rather than traditional and generic ways. Thus, why not for the provision of theatre? The similarity ends there, however, as it is important to remember that CPP is a model for provision for the *arts*, whilst this new model is one specifically for theatre.

The existing NPO programme wasn't conceived on geographical need, rather more on the idea of supporting talent and innovation based on a national selection criteria. This outline for an alternative model advocates a shift in the opposite direction to the NPO. Removing the notion of theatre organisations as isolated competing bodies, the model unifies them into a constellation of theatre provision for cities/and or regions. Grown grassroots upwards from within their relevant locales, the subsidy invests in the creative energies of the *populace*, and channels subsidy into artistic activities and not buildings. There are five elements to consider:

- governance
- finance
- allocation
- rationale
- reach

Governance of the new model

A constellation of provision focused either citywide or regionally, provokes immediate questions about how the administration of subsidy differs from existing structures. The foundations of this new model, therefore, are built on the forming of a localised steering group that is responsible for the overview of theatre activities in the city/region, and of the allocation of subsidy to the theatre organisations within its area. It is legally constituted, subject to a set of guidelines, and to terms of both reference and engagement, all agreed by the group itself. Akin to a board of trustees or members of parliament, representatives will sit for a specified amount of time before standing down or seeking re-election. The steering group is comprised of eight members: one from the Arts Council, one from the Local Authority, three artists, and three members of the public. If one was to be critical of this idea, it might be said that an Arts Council presence on the steering group makes it vulnerable to being influenced by the same pre-occupations that currently dominate the NPO programme for subsidy. Echoing this, Laura Elliott, Director of Arts Space and Coventry City Council's Arts Development Service, has concerns about the presence of the 'investors' in the steering group, and that the right people are seen to be taking part:

> You'd need to be sure you don't have investors showing for 1 meeting in 4, or that the Local Authority tries to implement its own values.
>
> (Elliott 2013)

To ensure that the steering group remains representative, and in particular the public's voice is heard and valued, the group is correspondingly weighted in favour of electing a larger public presence, i.e. three members of the public against only one Local Authority or one Arts Council member. It should be stressed that the public are essential to a thorough re-working of the existing model, the aspiration being that they have previously experienced little engagement with the arts. The processes of the steering group therefore, besides the administration of subsidy, are as much about public participation,

and access, and in real terms about placing the public at the heart of decision making.

Subsidy for this model relies on retaining current funding streams, namely those of Arts Council, England and the local authority. It has been acknowledged that in the current financial climate some authorities across England are withdrawing, or reducing their allocation for the arts and theatre. However, in Coventry, despite a 25% cut over three years to the Belgrade Theatre, the local authority has to date largely maintained its support for subsidy. Within this new model, these combined subsidies no longer go directly to theatre organisations, but are placed as a sum amount into the trust of the city's steering group for the purposes of enabling an artistic vision that best represents, for example in this test case, Coventry's community and locale.

The governing autonomy of this steering group is one of the most valuable factors to consider, and is not dissimilar to structures already approved by the Arts Council in other disciplines across the arts. Of particular interest are its music education hubs. As outlined on its website, on behalf of the Department of Education, the Arts Council has invested £171 million of funding until 2015. Existing hubs were identified through an open application process in 2011. As the Arts Council website describes;

> Hubs will be expected to form strong partnerships with local authorities, music organisations, practitioners and communities to provide quality music education...while delivering better value for money and greater accountability.
>
> (Arts Council 2012)

Additionally, at a local authority level Coventry's Performing Arts Service (PAS) is a provider of performing arts activities in schools and across the community. As an independent organisation administrating its own budget, PAS is described as;

> [...] a non-profit organisation...With over 75 staff, we seek to provide quality in all aspects of our operations. Our Business Support Team provides efficient and effective support for staff and for our school and community customers....We aim to provide provision for a broad range of artistic styles at all levels, to reflect the needs of a modern cosmopolitan city that values its history.
>
> Coventry City Council (2012)

Much in the way the Arts Council is steered by its Royal Charter, the steering group is guided by a charter of priorities for its own city or region. Drawn up via consultation across the boundaries of artists, the public and the local authority, a charter of priorities will be hugely different depending on area and location, yet will offer specific and focused provision. Crucially, a scenario such as this relates to the varying rationales of subsidy as examined earlier, in this instance ensuring that the rationale for public subsidy is as much about cohesion, access, and empowerment, as about art, prestige and performance.

In addition to Elliott's concerns, as David Nuttall remarked earlier in this chapter, there are issues of selection with regard to the public and decision making. In this new model, how does the public presence on the steering group actually evolve? Will it be naturally self selecting and attract those who are already engaged with the arts, but fail to include those who are not? The answers to these questions would need to be addressed through an agreed approach. In particular, the National Theatre of Wales offers a pathway via its TEAM initiative, as described earlier in this chapter, and as explored within the upcoming section 'Reach'.

Finance

As reviewed in Chapter 2, subsidy both for Warwick Arts Centre and Imagineer Productions is allocated by the Arts Council across Combined Arts. For the purposes of this model therefore, which concerns the provision of *theatre* subsidy per se, these organisations are not included in any re-imaginings for an alternative model. Therefore, the current Arts Council NPO spend for theatre in Coventry, from 2012-2015 is £3,080,096. Over the three

years, it will award the Belgrade Theatre £2,874,721, and Talking Birds £205,375. The Belgrade Theatre has featured earlier in this study; their prominence in the city as a provider and producer has been highlighted. Talking Birds, with a core staff of three, has a twenty year history of touring work across the UK and internationally. The rationale of awarding the company just over £200,000 from the NPO over three years is difficult to comprehend, as it places restrictions on the type of work they are able to do, and hinders their ability to pay company salaries, core overheads and effectively resource their artistic programme. It is a decision that arguably derives its logic from the historical preoccupations of the Arts Council, and assumptions of hierarchy.

However, this alternative model now assumes a clean slate, but is informed by Coventry's combined allocation of theatre subsidy from Arts Council England, as described above.

The contribution of Coventry city council to the model can be estimated via its ongoing agreements with the Belgrade Theatre, to whom it contributes £1,063,951 gross per year. Calculated over three years, the city council subsidises the organisation £3,191,853. Re-routing this money, and adding it to the entire Arts Council theatre subsidy of £3,080,096 over three years for Coventry, the steering group as described above assumes responsibility for £6,271,949 in subsidy for city wide theatre organisations, theatre artists, and activities.

At the time of writing, in addition to the Belgrade Theatre and Talking Birds, there are three theatre organisations in the city, all of which are defined by being professional fully constituted theatre organisations, both financially and legally. They are: Theatre Absolute, Ego Performance, and Highly Sprung

For the purposes of this test case, five companies therefore form the template over which subsidy is distributed. In addition to subsidising theatre

organisations, this particular model will also have an external programme of subsidy that prioritises three other elements that are key to determining a finer theatre ecology: theatre producer bursaries, emerging theatre companies, and a public fund. Varying administration costs will also be met via this fund.

Within this allocation, the physical and financial domination of the Belgrade Theatre has to be addressed. Although the company's annual report for 2011-2012 indicates that in the last four years the income The Belgrade *earns* has risen from 30% to 51%, equally it is reliant on 49% of subsidy from the local authority and the Arts Council. Within this new model, based on the steering group's allocation of £6,271,949 as quoted above, meeting *current* Belgrade subsidy of £6,066,574 over three years (drawn from both the latter's Arts Council and local authority agreements) would leave the steering group with £205,375 to subsidise the four remaining companies and the steering group's external programme. In this respect, the prevailing theatre offer in the city would not have substantially changed.

The new model therefore sees the co-opting of the Belgrade Theatre building as a multi-user civic theatre space, and entails the disbanding of the Belgrade Theatre Company as a producing organisation and sole artistic arbiters of the space. In lieu of this arrangement, the investment of both the Arts Council and the local authority into the Belgrade Theatre building is able to be re-distributed across the diverse range of the city's theatre organisations.

To be clear, a change in operation such as this would not mean that the Belgrade as a building is closed. It is recognised that it may still be viewed as the largest and physically most dominating theatre space in the city, but that does not correspond in terms of the amount of subsidy it receives from the steering group. As will be explained in the section 'Allocation', in this new model a cap is incurred on subsidy, which guards against one organisation absorbing larger amounts at the expense of other organisations. As a civic theatre space, The Belgrade *building* will receive touring productions of both

commercial and subsidised theatre. Although the building as a civic theatre space is eligible to apply for subsidy from the steering group's allocation, being the largest venue it is also well placed to finance itself via income generation from the aforementioned touring shows. In addition to receiving work, it becomes a space in which the other local theatre organisations might choose to place productions, the costs of which would be incurred by those organisations from their own subsidy, and thus a percentage of box office takings would go back into the Belgrade/theatre events space.

Many of the staffing structures of the current Belgrade Theatre, that consume £1.2 million a year, would be removed. However, the building as a civic theatre space would still incur some staff costs. At a bare minimum, it would require: an events manager, and core technical and operations staff. There are obvious disadvantages to consider, in particular the loss of employment. The Belgrade Theatre employs 61 people. Correspondingly, the skills base within the set building and paint shops for example, would be lost, although such skills could alternatively be traded independently, as the Belgrade has already demonstrated through building sets for commercial productions, or bought via tender from the city's network of other theatre organisations. What is clear, is that the financial pressures of running the Belgrade, as described in Chapter Two, are removed, and the allocation of citywide subsidy immediately open to a less hierarchical and more pluralistic approach. Most significantly, the Belgrade in its new incarnation will take its place in a network of citywide theatre venues, thus developing the idea of a finer theatre ecology, and the equal reliance of all parts on one another. For example, the Belgrade is no longer marketed in the traditional manner as the major theatre offer in the city, and its income generation is as reliant on interaction with local organisations as it is with receiving wider touring work.

An additional consideration, both to enhance the financial resilience of the city's subsidy, but also to deepen ecological ties would be for the steering

group to work closely with Coventry's Community Foundation[42]. First formed in the early 20th Century in the USA, community foundations play an active role in helping communities to thrive. There are a variety of goals outlined on the Community Foundation UK website, some of which pledge to its commitment to;

> Building financial and physical resources for our local communities: developing funds to invest in projects with lasting impact that either meet basic social needs, or enhance the overall quality of community life.
>
> (UK Community Foundations 2013)

In Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, in response to proposed budget cuts across the arts, the Local Authority, the Arts Council and the city's Community Foundation came together to draw up plans to oversee "the development of a new revenue fund for culture" (Guardian 2013). What is interesting about this idea in terms of ecology, is the notion that Coventry's community foundation would focus on creating ways in which to build relationships between the business community and the steering group, both unified in serving the city's identity and vision for theatre and the community. Natural outcomes of such collaboration suggest a potential for increased inward and outward investment in the city. Indeed, in such a scenario the dynamics of a theatre ecology as an entity begins to contribute to the larger and wider ecology of the city per se.

Allocation

The ways in which the steering group within the new model both applies for and distributes subsidy, is informed by the priorities within its charter. Cognisant of what it believes will sufficiently subsidise an appropriate culture and theatre offer for the city, the steering group, much in the same way the CPP fund currently operates, submits its bid to the Arts Council for subsidy over a three year period. Following this first tier of allocation, a second tier

[42] http://www.heartofenglandcf.co.uk/index.php/home/

begins with the allocation of the subsidy by the steering group to theatre artists and organisations within their locale.

Issuing an open call, the steering group will invite applications from theatre organisations such as those listed above. It will allow awards from £10,000 up to a maximum of 15% of the steering group's total subsidy over three years, the top amount of which would be £940,792. Within this new model, capping subsidy at 15% means that one company cannot dominate terms financially, and refutes any notion of hierarchy. The amounts applied for should depend realistically on company sizes and the scale of work they envision, but an interesting scenario presents itself if one were to imagine all five theatre organisations receiving the top limit calculated at 15% of the total subsidy. Broken down over three years, £940,792 means companies being in receipt of £313,597 per year. That amount alone signals a substantial uplift to Talking Birds who under their current Arts Council NPO allocation receive £205,375 over three years. Examining this scenario further, receiving the maximum allocation means that the five companies absorb £4,703,961 of the steering group's £6,271,949, leaving £1,567,987 to meet the other demands of subsidising producer bursaries, emerging companies and a public fund. In realistic terms, not every company will need a 15% allocation, but the benefits are tangible. Although it may be argued that a figure in the region of £6 million is not enough for a city the size of Coventry, this more equal distribution of public subsidy sees a wider range of the city's theatre organisations presented with a real chance of expanding and growing their professional, commercial and artistic capabilities.

General and artistic rationale

Considering the allocation of subsidy as outlined above one might consider that money has simply been moved around, but that refocusing is informed by a rationale for subsidy that promotes cohesion, access and experience of the arts. As this study has asserted, the imperatives of prestige, economics, and

heritage have disadvantages for subsidy in that they compromise the nation's cultural offer, and the Arts Council's aims and objectives. One is reminded of Leila Jancovic's earlier comment, asking if the Arts Council exists to preserve traditional British culture, support challenging new culture, or to serve the audience.

Thus, the artistic rationale for this model strips away the historical reliance on theatre as 'building' and pursues the potential of theatre as 'form'. Influenced by the examples of both the National Theatre of Scotland (NTS) and the National Theatre of Wales (NTW), this new model relies on a peripatetic citywide distribution of theatre taking place in established performance venues, open air spaces, community venues and buildings, or re-animated spaces, both centrally and locally. There are no dominating buildings that consume subsidy at the expense of other organisations, and ecology is grown vitally in this way, as theatre companies and artists cut across and through the various venues. Through a simple maths, a broader allocation of subsidy and a recognition by the steering group that theatre organisations across the city are of equal importance, results in a critical mass of provision that means more theatre organisations and artists are working, more employment opportunities are created, and that there is more participation and direct engagement with the arts in more areas than ever before.

The outcomes of such an approach promise also to widen the scope of the Arts Council's aims and objectives of access and innovation, and that more people experience the arts. Rebecca Robinson's thesis mentioned earlier in this chapter is worth recalling. Referring to Habermas and the public sphere, she suggests that the nature of the peripatetic way in which the NTS operates enriches the idea of the public sphere. Equally, this would be the case across a city; artists and theatre organisations working in a varying range of performance spaces in a multitude of areas across the city by default develops greater opportunities for a democratically diverse conversation, and an intensified connection between investors, artists, and the community. The

outcomes of such an approach contribute also to the changing energy of the city, allowing it to play a vital part in place making. For example, the vibrancy of a city's arts scene can be influential in retaining students, encouraging people to move into the city, or at the very least to persuade them to stay longer at the end of a working day, or to plan their leisure time in response to the city's cultural offer.

Artistically, a finer ecology also begins to emerge as companies in Coventry work amongst and around each other. The economic principle the model operates under suggests co-production and collaboration are more likely to thrive. Large scale homegrown productions in a space such as the Belgrade Theatre building are still available to the city, but realised through a cross pollination of companies, each breathing life into each other, rather than the current singular interpretation of the building and its spaces. In a finer theatre ecology such as this, the artistic language of the city becomes multilingual. Regular opportunities arise for companies to create one production for a disused shop, its next for an 800 seater main house, its next for a car park, or a school hall.

In tandem to this network of theatre making, there is an equal priority for development. The influence of Theatre Bristol becomes prominent and highly instructive. Within the external programme of funds are theatre producer bursaries. Ensuring that the artistic flow of the city remains vibrant, producers embedded in communities will work to discover both emerging artists and companies. This work would be in addition to, and beyond, the existing participatory work of the theatre companies. It also indentifies ways in which to link emerging and beginning artists to existing organisations in order to ensure active placements and commissioning opportunities within those organisations.

Reach

Adopting the model as so far described presents some challenges for dissemination. Typically, a city or a region's theatre offer is most likely to be channelled through a building based theatre. As David Nuttall, Service Manager Sports and Arts City Services, for Coventry City council comments

> If you have a vibrant cultural facility [like the Belgrade Theatre], it's something that then drives the economy around restaurants, around the evening economy, as well as the profile of the city...
>
> (Nuttall 2012)

Theatre provision concentrated via something more pluralistic must have effective ways by which to market itself, and engage audiences and participants. Nuttall considers the job of a local authority to be as much about place making as facilitation. Commenting on the notion of ecology he remarks:

> I think it's a valid challenge...[Although] I think the building based offer has a certain identity...The anchor points are easier to market and easier to identify...I think it's harder to achieve with a very fluid arts scene...It may be do-able. But it's challenging.
>
> (Nuttall 2012)

An emphasis on personalisation becomes key therefore to information and interaction. Traditional approaches to marketing and engagement become more personalised as a critical mass of provision ultimately means more transference of information by artists, to the public and participants across the city. Rather than 'place making' from the block status of one building, a fluid arts scene and the sheer mass of activity creates a transference that is denser and broader. This soft impact, is allied to a harder impact that is derived from a co-ordinated use of social media and a bespoke online citywide presence. Administrated via subsidy from the steering group's external programme fund, it offers a constituted overview of the city's theatre community. Open to audiences, organisations and participants, the online

presence is at the centre of marketing the city's theatre offer, as well as providing links to opportunities and development programmes connected to the funded organisations.

As John Knell remarks earlier in this chapter, personalisation is equally about the consumer having the ability to tailor and personalise the service they experience. Supported by TEAM like structures as utilised by the National Theatre of Wales (NTW), in this new model volunteers will be recruited by each company from within the city to act as advocates. As John McGrath and Charlotte Handel testify, infrastructural advocacy is a highly effective tool with which to communicate the work of theatre organisations to the community and the public. Importantly, it works the other way ensuring that those who advocate return the needs and insights of the community back to the relevant organisations. It is through this type of advocacy that measures can be taken to ensure also that those members of the public on the steering group are not naturally self-selecting.

With public representation present and influential both on the steering group and via TEAM like interventions across the community, the artistic vision for the city becomes increasingly pluralistic. It is worth remembering that those members of the public sitting on the steering group are at the heart of decision-making and, via consensus and ongoing evaluation, retain equal input as the theatre vision for the city is moulded. Indeed, the active role of the public is central to the very idea of reach, and in this model responds to the needs of a 21st Century society.

Knell's appraisal of personalisation is extended by utilising the Public Fund, which is sourced from within the city's allocation of subsidy. In essence its utility is to offer ways through which the city's theatre offer can remain liquid, and open to creative interpretations that may arise as a result of the ecology, as paths continue to cross and new relationships are formed. Its criteria are open, and via an application process will fund amongst other things:

commissions, sharings and interventions, or supplement on-going work. Most significantly the public can make an application, for example, to initiate collaboration or mentoring time with artists/organisations in the city that they have seen or met. Equally, artists and theatre organisations can apply to begin or continue or finish work that includes the public.

In some ways, the Public Fund mimics some of the ideas of crowd sourcing, in that it allows the public to actively invest subsidy into projects informed by their own personal choices

A summary of the alternative model

The ideas described above are not formulaic or set in stone. Each model of this kind will look different to another. John McGrath of NTW certainly considers the model possible, although, aware of the differences between NTW and NTS, he remarks:

> [...] There's no reason why it shouldn't work in cities, but you'd have to find the different solutions that are about that place.
>
> (McGrath 2012)

Considering such a premise for Coventry and the Belgrade Theatre, Hamish Glen is of the opinion that:

> It could be much more efficient to invest in those [models], that don't have the problem of buildings or expenditure, but focus on delivering work.
>
> (Glen, 2012)

Asked if a model such as that adapted by Kaleider might offer a template for the Arts Council themselves to imagine new models for subsidy, Ros Robins believes any alternatives or ecologies;

> [...] should be defined by the conversations that happen in different areas and shape funding, rather than funding be designed for ecologies.
>
> (Robins 2012)

As explored earlier in this chapter, there are some cities and regions with building based theatres that are well placed and are relevant exemplars of buildings at the cultural heart of communities. Yet as the on-going campaign led by Sir Nicholas Hytner and artists from English regional theatres illustrates, there are other buildings that either through a lack of support from local authorities, or issues of financial or artistic programming, currently are, or will, endure an on-going struggle to prove themselves sustainable.

What this model of a finer ecology offers to communities, is a structure through which the decisions for subsidy can be re-thought. Some variations on it may retain the presence of a producing building based theatre, but still benefit from an autonomous body such as a steering group or hub that is representative of the needs of the community and helps the artistic infrastructure to develop and grow. One would accept that the model is strongly affiliated to a rationale for subsidy that pursues pluralism, access and participation and seeks to dissipate the Arts Council's controlling view of theatre and culture. Although this may be so, an obvious disadvantage may present itself in that the presence of the Arts Council or the Local Authority on the steering group might allow their view to dominate. However, the presence of a greater number of public members on the steering group is designed to alleviate the possibilities of this.

As this study has illustrated, decisions for subsidy in many cases are as much about prestige and economy, as about art. Certainly this model is not predicated on justifying Arts Council investment via 'bums on seats', as Hamish Glen views the Belgrade's current predicament. It is, however, about the economics of experience. Both large and small audiences and traditional and non-traditional theatre spaces have an equal value, because the

experience of a diverse and thriving model such as this responds to another Arts Council imperative: heritage. This model reminds us that ACE must be equally focused on the heritage that is *yet* to be created, and that belongs to the future.

To some this new model may read as a science fiction, it may be unrealistic, yet in the spirit of artists like Seth Honnor, change, ultimately, has to be imagined via the most natural of human interactions: behaviour.

Conclusion

As this study has outlined, there are various complexities attached to the programme of subsidy for theatre in England, as currently administrated through Arts Council England's National Portfolio (NPO). On the one hand, they appear to be surmountable; they are complexities only because of historical and cultural precedencies. Furthermore, they are complexities that, most vitally, might be addressed through challenging established patterns of behaviour. However, it is because of these very precedencies that the system, through which theatre subsidy in England is distributed, has remained largely unchanged since the formation of the Arts Council in 1945.

Chapter One describes a journey that saw state subsidy of the arts emerge from out of a historical reluctance, but which quickly gathered pace, particularly in response to the depth of feeling that was engendered for the arts during the conflict of the Second World War. The subsequent role the state played in the initial subsidising of the Council for the Encouragement of Music and the Arts, was pivotal in the eventual formation of The Arts Council of Great Britain. Yet, although created in an age of continuing social change, the Arts Council's early philosophy, defined by it pledges to accessibility and dispersal, were swiftly undermined by the patrician sensibilities of its first chairman John Maynard Keynes. Although Keynes was to live for only a short time after its formation, this study has attempted to illustrate how over half a century later, the modern day Arts Council, driven by some of the key rationales of heritage and prestige, is arguably still influenced by his belief that it is better to fund the 'best', rather than the most. Participating in an online debate in The Economist in August 2012, Alan Davey chooses to defend state subsidy of the arts, not via its delivery of grassroots arts provision, or a democratic relationship to the public, but by asserting:

> Those who run our great cultural organisations are leaders, impresarios, entrepreneurs...they make this country a better place to be for its citizens. (The Economist 2013)

It is true that state subsidy for the arts benefitted from the changing attitudes of the 1960s and the 1970s, manifest in both Jennie Lee's White Paper *A Policy for the Arts* (1965) and the alternative theatre movement. However, what has continued to dominate the Arts Council's priorities for subsidy are the national institutions of organisations such as the National Theatre, the Royal Shakespeare Company and the Royal Opera House. Such preferences leave the Arts Council open to accusations of elitism and of perpetuating a London bias. Correspondingly, such priorities have also left the organisation beholden to financial commitments that in turn place a huge strain on its resources.

In its second chapter, the study describes an Arts Council whose present day health may be considered perilous. Enduring 50% organisational cuts forced upon it by the current government's public spending review, a crisis in theatre subsidy is emerging. Yet, through exploring the modern day Arts Council, what has been evident in this study is the inflexibility of the way in which the organisation operates. Its support both for arts organisations such as those described above, and for the nation's regional theatre network appears intractable. Whilst these two entities exist, they will remain the priority for Arts Council subsidy, However, the arts has to remain both relevant and accessible and by prioritising its subsidy in such a way its notions of accessibility, as first expressed in the Royal Charter of 1946 and which are now enshrined in the Arts Council's document *Achieving Great Art For Everyone*, can appear compromised.

The duality of the Arts Council is an important consideration for this study; as an organisation it serves not only artists, but the public. It is no profundity that, indirectly, the latter pay the wages of the Arts Council thus providing the subsidy, which is under debate. Yet, as this study has sought to illustrate, throughout its history the Arts Council has not managed to affirm with the public, via any progressive dialogue, *what* art they should be subsidising. It has commissioned and undertaken a variety of surveys and reports, but what

has not changed is the process of decision making and the Arts Council's controlling view of theatre and the arts. In this instance it is worth recalling Owen Kelly's words as expressed in Chapter Two: "when we hear the phrase 'arts for all', we want to know just what arts are being referred to and why." (Kelly 1985).

In his paper, *In Search of Cultural Democracy* (1985), Kelly asserts that enabling art for all is about creating the right conditions for engagement. A modern day corollary of this may be the Arts Council's *Creative people and places fund.* Currently an action research programme, it will be interesting to monitor its progress and the impact it has on the public's relationship to theatre, the arts and to the Arts Council.

In addition to the above, Chapter Two also considers the Arts Council's relationship to building based theatres, to audiences and to falling audience figures. The Belgrade Theatre's Joanna Reid contests that audience numbers in theatres will fall because there are less things to see, yet the evidence presented in Robert Hewison's paper *Taking Part Apart* (2012), is equally compelling, particularly in its relation to the social and economic demographic of theatre audiences.

It is through its on-going support of building based theatres and the nation's regional theatre network, that the issue of Arts Council subsidy appears most complex. In the first instance, building based theatres claim they do not receive enough subsidy from the Arts Council, yet what the Arts Council *does* allocate to them takes away from others and denies a wider range of access for the public and theatre makers. The government's stance, as articulated via the Arts Council, is that such issues for building based theatres must be resolved via a keener interaction with the private sector. Counterpointing this argument, Nicholas Hytner has outlined in the Guardian that not all theatres and the environments in which they sit have the right conditions through which they can successfully explore philanthropy and, or, private giving. (Guardian

2012). Correspondingly, as illustrated through the regional perspective of a theatre such as the Belgrade in Coventry, an Arts Council desire to drive up audiences in theatres runs the risk of enforcing artistic compromise. This is illustrated by the Belgrade's decision to work in collaboration with commercial producers to host and stage the premiere of *20th Century Boy* on its main stage. The study doesn't seek at this juncture to comment on the qualities of such a production, more that it bears little relationship to the theatre's *desired* artistic programme.

As outlined in Chapter Three, one can observe that there is a stratum for the subsidy of theatre in England: the national institutions, building based theatres, independent theatre makers (and others). The demand for resources at each of these levels imposes a negative domino effect on the resources of those below. This third chapter therefore has explored what alternative models may exist for theatre subsidy, in England. A particular area of focus has been the concept of ecology in theatre; it is a word often used by arts practitioners, arts commentators, and by the Arts Council. Yet what is meant by ecology? For some, there is a belief, for example, that the work of building based theatres are somehow part of an ecology because of their ability to act as hubs through which to develop and nurture other artists.

However, as this study asserts an ecology, in a definable biological sense, functions through a set of inter-dependent relationships and determines that there are no hierarchies of structure. These are the principles for a theatre ecology that are explored in Chapter Three. In examining the National Theatres of Scotland and Wales, it contemplates the creation of their work as building free organisations. By choosing Kaleider in Exeter as a test case, the study also explores the possibilities for a holistic type of theatre making within the federal parameters of cities and regions. Additionally, adopting Coventry as a test case, and using the city's current allocation of local authority and NPO subsidy 2012-2015, it outlines an alternative model that establishes a

finer ecology of theatre making augmented by a matrix of provision, and that ultimately refutes hierarchy in subsidy.

Of course, a study regarding public subsidy of the arts should ideally be underpinned by a generic understanding that any budget for the arts rises with inflation, or at the very least sustains itself. This is a reasonable assumption particularly in a reasonable financial climate. Yet the ongoing fiscal crisis that first emerged circa 2008, has created an extraordinary social and economic landscape. As a public organisation, the Arts Council would have known it would not be immune to public spending cuts. One might wonder, therefore, why, when formulating ideas for what was to become the National Portfolio, a more financially robust and artistically flexible programme was not imagined.

Clearly, conjecture regarding any programme for subsidy is not provable by a scientific study. It is mostly, perhaps, a matter of opinion; one person's agenda or rationale for theatre subsidy in England will differ from the next person's. Accepting the extending of austerity measures to 2016 and a new settlement to come from the Treasury in 2015, one might worry for the sanctity of public subsidy for the arts in England. Having endured 50% operational cuts and almost 30% cuts to its artistic budget, the Arts Council may be forced to consider other options for subsidy, or to cull the number of organisations it supports. Certainly it will have to continue to defend the £179 million it allocated over three years to three of the country's national institutions.

Asked in interview if he thought that the Kaleider project could have any influence on a new model for subsidy and if he had any sense that the Arts Council were watching events unfolding in Exeter, Seth Honnor, considers:

> Possibly. If we can be successful as an organisation, if we can make some shows that people like, if we can hold some conversations to empower other people to make shows, then yeah I guess some

> people will turn around and look. I suspect they're not looking right now.
>
> (Honnor 2012)

Whatever the future holds for organisations like Kaleider and alternative models for subsidy, will indeed be reliant in many ways on their success. Success with audiences and with artists, and of course success with the Arts Council. Yet how the latter judges success is vital. If success is judged within the parameters of the Arts Council's organising view of theatre and culture, it will potentially become a reductive exercise. What is necessary, both for the safeguarding of theatre, the arts and arts subsidy in England, is leadership and vision. Examples of the latter have been explored within this study. It is leadership that will enable the Arts Council to become an organisation that is both representative of, and receptive to, modern day theatre making.

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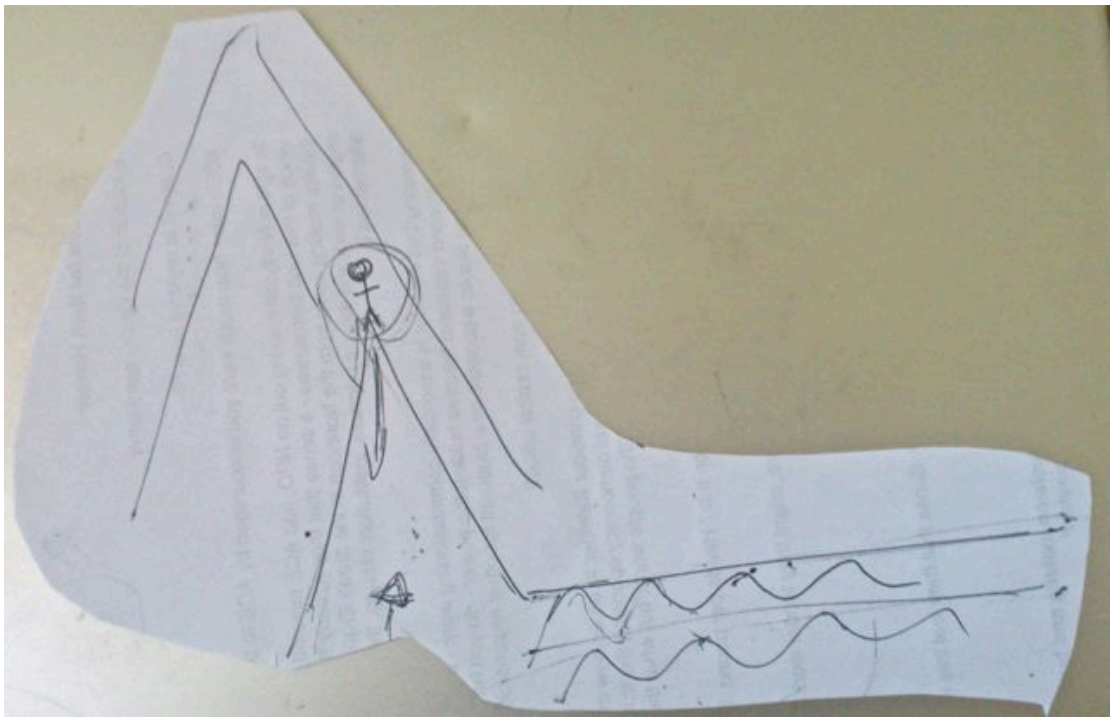
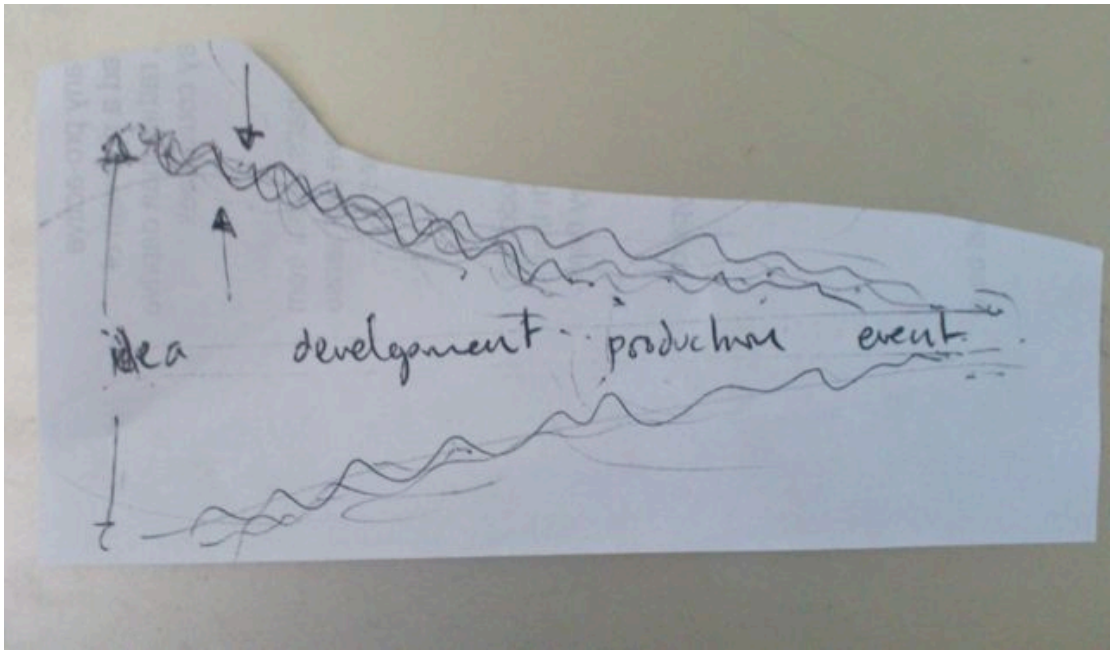
Appendix 1

Figure1

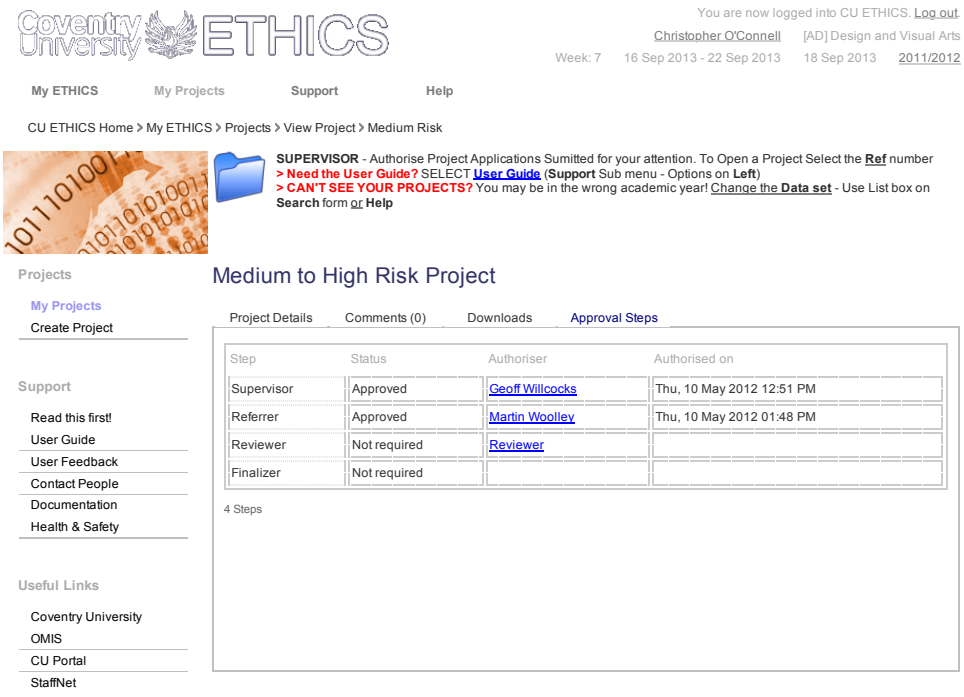


Appendix 2

Figure 2



Appendix 3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Christopher O'Connell [AD] Design and Visual Arts
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SUPERVISOR - Authorise Project Applications Sumitted for your attention. To Open a Project Select the Ref number
> Need the User Guide? SELECT User Guide (Support Sub menu - Options on Left)
> CAN'T SEE YOUR PROJECTS? You may be in the wrong academic year! Change the Data set - Use List box on Search form or Help
Projects
My Projects
Create Project
Support
Read this first!
User Guide
User Feedback
Contact People
Documentation
Health & Safety
Useful Links
Coventry University
OMIS
CU Portal
StaffNet
Medium to High Risk Project
Project Details Comments (0) Downloads Approval Steps
Step Status Authoriser Authorised on
Supervisor Approved Geoff Willcocks Thu, 10 May 2012 12:51 PM
Referrer Approved Martin Woolley Thu, 10 May 2012 01:48 PM
Reviewer Not required Reviewer
Finalizer Not required
4 Steps