

“Culture roots us in
our past and enables us
to imagine and create
our future...”

EXPRESSIVE LIVES

Edited by Samuel Jones

COLLECTION 27

DEMOS

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Contents

Acknowledgements	6
Introduction: enfranchising cultural democracy Samuel Jones	9
1 Expressive life and the public interest Bill Ivey	23
2 Rewriting the rules of expression David Lammy	35
3 Creative choices Ed Vaizey	41
4 Inspiration and empowerment Tony Hall	45
5 Expression and engagement: a creative life Sandy Nairne	51
6 Reconfiguring 'culture' John Holden	57
7 Whose rights are they anyway? Lola Young	63
8 Heritage and the struggle for cultural democracy Roshi Naidoo	69
9 Music and the expressive life Andrew Missingham	75

Contents

10	YouTube if you want to: being expressive citizens in the 'Video Republic'	
	Peter Bradwell	83
	Conclusion: enabling the expressive life	
	Samuel Jones	89
	Bibliography	93

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All errors and omissions remain my own.

Samuel Jones
July 2009

Introduction: enfranchising cultural democracy

Samuel Jones

Google and the Prado

In January 2009 the internet search engine Google announced a partnership with the Prado in Madrid.¹ Free of charge, users of Google Earth can click onto a virtual map of the galleries and home in on details of some of the most famous paintings in the world. Now, we can look at details that the naked eye could not pick up were we in the gallery itself.

This partnership spans continents and it spans areas we would usually consider separate parts of our lives. It involves one of the world's most successful IT brands making a link across the Atlantic with one of the world's most renowned arts institutions. But it is something more than an astute commercial tie-in. Both the Prado and Google have worked out that while the internet can provide unprecedented speed, access and quantity of information, we remain just as interested in culture and the arts as we always have been. We use new-found powers of access to do things we have always liked doing. New and older forms of behaviour and preferences are part of the same continuum.

The partnership blurs traditional definitions and understandings of the term 'culture', breaking down the structural barriers of the virtual and the real, and the innovative and the orthodox. It also demonstrates that we need to think afresh about cultural policy, how it is framed, what it is for and what it can and should help us do.

Technologies and the invigorated will of the public to participate, shape and personalise have changed the nature of cultural engagement. As several of the contributors to this pamphlet note, we have moved from a model of provision to one of enabling. The role of the cultural professional has changed.² Authority remains – Google could not pretend to operate in the

same artistic space as the Prado; but that authority must now be presented in different ways – that's where Google comes in.

From provision to reflection

The trends and behaviours that underlie collaborations like that between the Prado and Google give us cause to think about the relationship between culture and the state. If our cultural policy and institutions do not facilitate expression by enabling us to participate in shaping and personalising the culture of which we are a part, then they miss the point. Rather than simply communicating our culture and our heritage, our cultural and creative policy and institutions should help us to make use of them and create new values for the present and the future. Rather than *providing* culture and heritage, they should *reflect* our creativity and the culture that it generates, brokering the relationships between the public and other makers and distributors of different cultural forms.

This redefines the role of the cultural professional and expert. It also redefines their operating environment, moving to a demand-led approach of facilitating the convergence of cultural and creative forms. In the approaches that technologies and new expectations of personalisation promote, we are not abandoning knowledge and expertise. Instead, we are entering a new environment in which experts can provide us with the opportunities to connect to our various heritages and we have the chance to create new values in response. Cultural policy should support them in doing this.

It is us, the public, and not people like Sergei Brin, one of the co-founders of Google, Mark Zuckerberg, the founder of Facebook, or Bill Gates, one of the co-founders of Microsoft, who have led this change. Our will to seek out information and our innate sense of the individual have driven society to devise new ways of experiencing things and new ways in which to focus on our specific interests. The public interest, of course, comprises the multiple opinions, beliefs and attitudes that we all hold, either collectively or as individuals. In many ways, this recalls the folk culture of the past, in which art forms expressed

values and provided touchpoints for belief, a precursor to more commodified forms of culture in which a price was put on engagement and access to creative and cultural forms. The result is that when we come to bring these to bear on culture and creativity today, orthodoxy is challenged. Our individualism also creates different expectations of culture. Knowledge and expertise remain in place, but their role is to illuminate more than to improve. Together, they function to enable and communicate the expression of our different values.

Professionals working in the cultural and creative sectors have been quick to work in this way. The Royal Shakespeare Company, for example, has started working with schools and amateur dramatic groups to perform on the theatre's main stage and to enable production by the public. In his contribution to this pamphlet, Tony Hall, Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House and the Chair of the Creative and Cultural Skills Council, describes the work young people have done in producing sets for the stage of the Royal Opera House. Practice like this changes the nature of the sector itself.

The essays in this pamphlet examine the potential that such enterprise has to enable statements of value and belief within a democracy. They also examine some of the difficulties that emerge. In all their manifestations, cultural and creative forms comprise a constant conversation between people and ideas. From the foods that we eat, to the images that we see, cultural forms and the creative choices we make are expressions of what we value and how we see the world.³ Like no other, the cultural and creative sector reflects and generates the values that make up our society. Not all of those will sit comfortably alongside either each other or prevailing assumptions about what culture is and what cultural policy is for, but this is a necessary part of a functioning democracy.

This pamphlet asks what implications this has for public policy. We need to rethink the role of the state in relation to culture. What policy will support the ways in which people actually relate to culture and what new opportunities might that open up?

Time for a change of culture?

‘Culture’ is a diffuse and debated term. By breaking it down, we recognise just how inadequate many assumptions about cultural policy are in comparison to the complexity and importance of the subject. Any examination of the area must confront this from the outset. Cultural policy has tended to operate by the mentality of supply, focusing on the provision of art forms and different cultural venues. It should instead focus on demand, providing us with the opportunity by which to make our choices and live out our values. To do this, we need to shift the emphasis of thinking about cultural policy.

As Bill Ivey describes in Chapter 1, the uses of the term ‘culture’ vary between the artistic and the anthropological, and, on occasion, political orientation (in the US, the term ‘culture wars’ refers to the debate between progressive and conservative ideologies).⁴ Radically, Ivey suggests that the multivalency of the word ‘culture’ renders it ‘nearly useless in policy discourse’.

This doesn’t mean that all that currently falls under the remit of cultural policy should be ignored. It means that the assumptions that we have *about* cultural policy are invalid. Too often, it is sidelined or ignored. Policy makers in other areas have frequently missed the influence of culture on their decisions, and missed the impact on culture that those decisions might have. For example, when as chancellor in early 2007 Gordon Brown flew to India to talk about trade, he was not ready to be greeted by the international firestorm sparked by Shilpa Shetty’s experiences in the Big Brother House. In the same year, the Department for Communities and Local Government released *Our Shared Future*, a document intended to promote integration and cohesion among our communities.⁵ In some 170 pages, it mentioned heritage and cultural institutions only a handful of times and yet these are the very institutions that have issues like identity, values and beliefs at the heart of their mission. Surely this is a missed opportunity? What if, in the UK, we went beyond having a single department for culture? Maybe each government department should have specialists in culture and how it impacts on that department’s area, just as each government department currently has a ‘chief economist’.

Cross-cultural policy

The contributors to this pamphlet represent a cross-section of culture. Some represent more orthodox domains, like the visual arts, museums or music; others represent emergent domains like the practice of social networking, online musical-production and video-platforming via sites like YouTube and MySpace. There could be more – food, fashion, television, and architecture and urban space being prime among them. The point is that these are united by a common theme: they represent choices and decisions that we all make and that have value *across* different areas of policy. They cannot simply be thought of as the concern of one, small area of government. It is only by thinking of them as a continuum of our expression that we can recognise, support and enfranchise the role that they play in a democratic society. We need to recognise the impact that our cultural and creative choices have on policy right across government. We also need to support the means by which they make them.

The basic assumptions of cultural policy are flawed. First, some areas of policy dealt with in the functional terms of the economy and industry have implications that go way beyond and cut to the heart of our basic cultural rights. For instance, so deeply do we care about the content of different cultural domains that issues like intellectual property and our freedom to respond to and adapt different parts of the cultural legacy and environment around us – our heritage – are more discussions of basic rights than they are policy questions specific to certain industries. As David Lammy, Minister of State for Higher Education and Intellectual Property, puts it in Chapter 2, ‘We are now at a critical moment where the acceleration in technological change has completely rewritten the discussion about how creative content is produced and distributed.’

Second, too much of our cultural policy is focused on the provision of art forms or distinct types of culture and so we think in terms of opening or supporting new theatres, galleries or concert venues. Buildings and infrastructure are permanent; our cultural choices are not. Culture is a slippery subject because it is ever-changing, a living, breathing animal, responsive to its times and contexts. Any attempt to pin it down in terms of being *provided* can only reflect a snapshot of a given time. Think now

about VHS videotapes – it is less the form that culture takes that matters than the values that it represents. We think now of these as, at best, retro and, at worst, hopelessly outmoded, but our will to see different films and to personalise, record and retain cultural and individual experiences remains; we simply exert it using different cultural forms and media. This isn't to say that music venues, museums, theatres and other cultural institutions are irrelevant – far from it – it is simply that they should be funded more with a vision to providing spaces in which we can make cultural choices than simply doling out either more visual arts, more music or more drama.

Cultural policy must proceed from the same principle. In these terms, it doesn't matter whether we save a Titian or a Poussin 'for the nation' because A.N. Other artist or gallerist says that they are 'beautiful'. What matters is that we make maximum use of them while we have them and that they are a means of accessing and enabling the expression of an entire society and not an elite. Similarly, an expert's opinion on a matter is an informed but not a unique expression of the many values a cultural form can represent: it must not be the sole determination of the culture that people can access. Cultural entitlement is not necessarily access to cultural institutions for a given number, but access to a variety of fora and stimuli for expression for everybody. Cultural policy has focused too much on form and too little on the *role* that culture plays in our lives. Rather than given to people, culture is something that is reflected in the choices we make as to what to visit, listen to or see. Policy should be framed more to enable the growth and evolution of culture, rather than rationing it through funding allocations or cuts.

As politics, the economy and society go through momentous change, we need spaces in which to renegotiate values, to express our beliefs and to encounter those of others more than ever. We need seriously to investigate the roles that culture and creativity play in our lives. Culture must be understood as the grand calculus of our decisions, choices and values past and present. Creativity is the means by which we form, shape and renegotiate it. The challenge now is how we

frame the policy and reshape the institutions by which these twin forces of civic expression can truly be enlivened. In the wake of political and economic turmoil and as we seriously question the values by which we have existed, we have the opportunity to meet that challenge.

Cultural and creative choice, expression and our daily lives

This pamphlet takes as its starting point the idea of the ‘expressive life’. Formulated by Bill Ivey, this term is used to describe our access to the culture of the past and our right to the creativity of both the present and the future.⁶ The decisions we make in what we create and the culture that we consume are expressions of what we value and how we see the world. From the exhibitions that we visit, to the videos we watch and put online, to the clothes we wear, these decisions help us find and communicate with others who share our opinions, ideas and beliefs. In this way, they help us form communities that can be both geographic and online.

Culture is at the heart of how we relate to areas that are of intense policy concern beyond what is currently thought of as cultural policy. It relates to how we get a sense of the different communities around us, and how we form a view of different countries. We are as likely to form an image of China by watching a film like *Crouching Tiger, Hidden Dragon* as we are by reading the international pages of broadsheet newspapers and current affairs magazines. Cultural forms are touchpoints in how we sense the world. It is through them – everything from film, the media, the visual and performing arts, foodstuffs to advertising – that we encounter the different beliefs, attitudes and opinions that characterise our societies.

Creative activity is the medium through which culture is created. Its economic importance is already well understood. As Tony Hall reminds us in Chapter 4, the creative industries will play a vital part in our recovery from the downturn in the economy, a sentiment echoed by Charlie Leadbeater in a recent pamphlet entitled *Attacking the Recession*.⁷ But there is also a

values-based side to creativity. Organisations that have been successful in the creative industries have been so not just because they are industries in the traditional sense of the economy and production, but because they are about the production of meaning as much as money. By seeing creativity as a core medium of expressive life, we come to recognise creative products – culture – as a conversation going on around us.

Cultural policy makers and practitioners have the responsibility both to enable this expression and reflect the values behind it as forms of citizenship. We need to think how and why we fund culture and creative enterprise. Certainly, cultural forms like the fine arts, performing arts, film, historic buildings and new media are vital parts of a good society and a good life – 61 per cent of us say that investment in the historic environment makes our localities more attractive places in which to live.⁸ Happiness is a vital part of policy today, and the more opportunities for cultural engagement we have, the happier we are. However, providing the opportunities for us to achieve and channel this happiness must be about more than the band-aid aesthetics of culture, heritage and the arts as they are currently perceived: it must be about enfranchising our choices by recognising them as the democratic statements that they are and giving them the means to access those of others.

The authors of a recent pamphlet on creativity and the credit crunch have written:

In Britain, the uniform, top-down, target-driven culture of recent years has done little to support the growth of the creative industries. A future challenge for policy is how to reach the 'flea circus' of creative enterprises, one and two person bands, and how to equip creative people with the tools, knowledge and networks to succeed in a [creative] sector that is notoriously bad at opening its doors to non-graduates, mid-career women and ethnic minorities.⁹

Cultural and creative policy must move from a model of public purpose – what is deemed useful economically and instrumentally – to one of public interest – what is necessary for us to lead productive and fulfilled civic lives. To do this, it must

support cultural and creative practice large and small in ways that reflect our choice and preferences.

In his contribution (Chapter 6), John Holden criticises the tendency to separate publicly funded practice from private enterprise in the cultural and creative sectors. This is a legacy of the mindset of cultural policy. As Google and the Prado have shown, this isn't the way that people actually participate in cultural and creative activities. You or I can enjoy a film irrespective of whether it has been funded by a Hollywood company or public subsidy. Our right to choose which culture we consume and which creative directions we take is a vital means by which we shape society, seeking out, responding to and creating new values. We need to accommodate public choice in determining the culture that receives public money. We also need to free up the strictures of public funding and allow practitioners to create the culture that provokes thought and the discussion of values, and that people want to consume.

Enfranchising cultural and creative choice

If our cultural and creative choices are democratic expression, cultural and creative opportunities must be representative and accessible to all groups of society. Lola Young argues in Chapter 7 that such opportunities should be equitable not just within individual states, but across borders as well, and should recognise 'the complexities of identity and identification in a globalised world'. Roshi Naidoo (Chapter 8) reminds us that if we have a right to the expression of the past through our heritage, then we must also ensure that the tensions that have shaped our sensibilities are as well represented as other stories that might be less troubling.

The skills and approaches necessary to recognise expression must also be spread equitably throughout the population by education and engagement in cultural institutions. Andrew Missingham (Chapter 9) points out that different musical forms can convey messages that we will miss by focusing on a given orthodoxy, and yet we have the means to access those forms more readily than ever before.

Cultural and creative expression that takes place outside the publicly funded cultural sector, both in the private practice of cultural practitioners, and on the computer screens of the young creators described by Peter Bradwell in Chapter 10, are equally integral to our expressive life. How can we make links between this and the other forms of culture available to us? Ed Vaizey (Chapter 3) sees technology as being at the heart of the debate about the future of cultural policy. Many cultural institutions have anticipated this: the British Film Institute, for instance, has launched a YouTube channel, screening clips from its archives, putting them in the same conceptual space as the millions of clips available online; it has even screened some videos produced by the public in its cinemas. But can we go further and bring our cultural heritage and creative future together? How can our cultural education and infrastructure help us interpret the creative expression that drives our society? In platforming it, screening it, showing it and broadcasting it, can we validate and enfranchise that creative and cultural expression as part of a truly democratic society?

Putting the expressive life at the heart of how we prepare for the future

Culture is a locus for meaning and creativity the means by which we shape it. The sociologist Zygmunt Baumann has described our age as one of 'liquid modernity', defined by constant change and the questioning of the conventional.¹⁰ On the one hand, new technologies have made far-flung ideas, peoples and places more accessible, and we have developed the will to explore and find out more, all of which is experienced through cultural forms. But, on the other, this has led us to question our identity, which – paradoxically – leads us to fall back on comfortable ideas like nationalism and the established icons that surround it. Meanwhile our politics and economy are in disarray. The net result is that the values around which we have shaped our society and by which we seek to understand the world have been challenged and, in many cases, proved wanting.

Technology and behaviours have combined to place greater emphasis on citizens as individuals. For instance, by travelling, we can experience distant countries from our own perspective and it is our personal decision whether we damage the environment by flying there to do so. Major issues – from climate change and terrorism to obesity – must be tackled not just by politicians, but by the public as well. This will involve asking questions like how we can provide people with the support and capacity to make the individual choices that will amount to collective change. What skills will we need and where will we get them? And what structures and spaces will we need to do it?

This pamphlet puts the expressive life at the heart of how we prepare for the future. More than traditional politics, culture has become the space in which wider confusion is most tangible and in which we encounter different values and beliefs. And yet it is also where we will find some of the solutions. Cultural policy should be seen not as strengthening individual art forms – we need them all. It should be about providing the opportunity for citizens to take an active role in shaping the culture of which they are part – the expressive life. If we live in an age of ‘liquid modernity’, we are going to need and be given the chance to learn how to swim.

Samuel Jones leads on cultural work at Demos.

Notes

- 1 Tremlett, ‘Google brings masterpieces from Prado direct to armchair art lovers’. For Google’s collaboration with the Prado, see www.google.com/intl/en/landing/prado/ (accessed 16 Jun 2009).
- 2 See Jones, ‘The new cultural professionals’.
- 3 Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man*.
- 4 See Chapter 1. Another contributor to this pamphlet, John

Holden, has also made this point in his recent pamphlet *Democratic Culture*.

- 5 Commission on Cohesion and Integration, *Our Shared Future*.
- 6 See Chapter 1 and Ivey, *Arts Inc*.
- 7 Leadbeater, *Attacking the Recession*.
- 8 *Impact of Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Funding*.
- 9 Wright et al, *After the Crunch*.
- 10 Bauman, *Liquid Modernity*.

1 Expressive life and the public interest

Bill Ivey

Reconsidering culture and democracy

The current global economic crisis coincides with a re-examination of the role of cultural institutions in society and with rising public concern about the character of the regulatory and legislative frameworks that shape the creation and distribution of art and information. In addition to already-engaged issues like fine-arts funding, intellectual property protection and telecom policy, the current economic downturn has launched a re-examination of values and an inchoate longing for a new path to happiness and a high quality of life in Western democracies. Today any discussion of art, creativity, heritage, media and the internet is inevitably merged into a broader conversation about democracy, values and public purposes.

The fine arts that have come to rely on various government subsidies or benefits for their financial health are newly challenged to justify themselves in the light of the diminished capacity of government agencies, corporations and private donors. In the US, the nonprofit arts sector is widely seen as overbuilt, and the metaphors and instrumental arguments that have validated the arts as a destination for public largess appear increasingly inadequate given shrinking resources and challenges from competing sectors like education, health care and the environment – sectors that advocate from a base of strong consensus support. Can the arts find a path to a sturdy platform from which to maintain and advance a robust public-interest argument for government support and various incarnations of private patronage?

At the same time as arts institutions face a decrease in public and quasi-public funding, critics of democratic political process have examined the architecture of the larger cultural system, expressing growing alarm that the market-defined

mechanisms of law, regulation and corporate practice in which art, heritage and information are created and consumed have drifted far from public purposes. In the US, as in many parts of the world, the consolidation of media has given excessive authority to a narrow set of voices and the mergers of arts companies – film, broadcasting and sound recording – have created daunting obstacles to entry for new artists and daunting restrictions that must be navigated by anyone who would generate new meaning by reconfiguring art from the past. Underlying these challenges is the expanding footprint of intellectual property law and the growing inequity in access to the tools of digital-era knowledge and creativity – inequities that threaten the quality of democratic discourse. Can the matrix of law, government regulation and corporate practice that shape culture and communication be taken on as a whole and realigned with the public interest?

To date these issues have been addressed piecemeal. As copyright authority James Boyle puts it, we lack ‘a perception of common interest in apparently disparate situations’.¹ Cultural institutions have advanced the arts as instruments of economic development, have asserted that engagement with arts can enhance learning in arts and sciences and have earnestly reached out to draw in non-elite audiences unaccustomed to attending the symphony or art museum. Simultaneously but separately, multiple advocacy organisations have attempted to influence government policy by crafting arguments supporting a less-restrictive copyright regime, limitations on the ownership of radio and television outlets, and the preservation of a free and open internet. These parallel efforts have neither secured the standing of arts organisations nor rolled back the de-regulatory march of market interests in art making, media or communication. The policy frame in which cultural issues have been argued has proved to be inadequate to the task of either securing a public-interest orientation toward the fine arts, or reconfiguring the context of communication and knowledge creation. This failure is especially unfortunate because the looming transformation of the world economy has already forced the leadership of Western democracies to seek strategies for

advancing quality of life beyond reducing poverty or advancing health care and education. If concerned policy makers can advance a compelling metaphor, the global downturn offers an opening through which a ‘new abstraction’ asserting the public policy value of cultural vibrancy can advance.

The inadequacy of current frames

At present the ‘idea space’ within which art, media, technology, creativity and heritage are discussed is not up to the task of sustaining a broad public interest conversation. Our most basic terms are problematic. Other Demos essayists have cited the work of critic Raymond Williams, who devoted much of his career to tracking the multiple meanings attached to the term ‘culture’. In general, Williams’ definitions divide into two categories – the artistic and the anthropological. Arrayed along a continuum, we understand ‘culture’, at one end of the spectrum, as denoting the fine arts (‘Culture’ with a capital ‘C’); positioned at the opposite extreme is our sense of culture as ‘the sum of human behaviour’. Recent political discourse in the US has elevated a third arena of meaning, namely ‘culture as values’, as in ‘Red State/Blue State’ and the ‘culture wars’, rounding out a tripartite definition close to that advanced by Lawrence E. Harrison and Samuel P. Huntington in *Culture Matters*.² Although *culture* makes an appearance at a few points in this essay, I would argue that its multiple meanings render the term nearly useless in policy discourse.

Thus the phrase ‘cultural commons’ suffers from the same plethora of definitions that drag down ‘culture’ on its own. Cultural commons usually indicates a body of material to which a group – say, the citizens of a nation – has access. But the ‘commons’ idea also feels inherently static and historical; even a bit musty in its connotations. One can easily imagine a symphony performance, square dance or even a football match as part of a cultural commons; it is a bit harder to fit in televised political debate or rules governing the ownership of radio stations. ‘Public sphere’ and ‘public domain’ exhibit a different problem; if our commons tilts toward heritage and history, the

public sphere seems to be about maintaining a special space for speech and political discourse that is free of interference from state, church or industry, while the public domain appears limited to questions of ownership and law – in short, an arena of free access to intellectual property.³

Accumulated usage has compromised ‘art’ as thoroughly as it has ‘culture’, with ‘art’, on the one hand, sometimes denoting only visual art (or even just painting) or, when capitalised as ‘Art’, referring collectively to the traditions of opera, orchestral music, ballet and modern dance, some theatre, but not hip-hop, country music or basketry. This sieve-like quality of key words attached to artistry, heritage and knowledge would be amusing were it not for the multiple misunderstandings, flawed concepts, phony hierarchies and siloed advocacy efforts this failure of language has sustained. It seems highly unlikely that public policy can resuscitate these terms or phrases simply by arguing that they actually encompass anything other than what is currently understood.

Expressive life

The universally popular biblical paraphrase that ‘there is nothing new under the sun’ accurately characterises ‘expressive life’. The phrase does not advance anything brand new, but rather takes a fresh bite at the anthropological definition of culture, combining many elements in new ways; leaving others behind. I introduced expressive life in my book, *Arts, Inc.*⁴ The phrase draws in part on my training as a folklorist and the sense of community, heritage, connectedness and history embodied in the folklorists’ sense of tradition. Thus ‘heritage’ constitutes one half of expressive life: the part that is about belonging, continuity, community and history; it is expressed through art and ideas grounded in family, neighbourhood, ethnicity, nationality and the many linkages that provide securing knowledge that we come from a specific place and are not alone.

‘Voice’, the other half of our expressive life, is quite different: a realm of individual expression where we can be autonomous, personally accomplished and cosmopolitan – a

space in which we can, at times, even challenge the conventions of community or family heritage. For folklorist Bau Graves, heritage is critical and the continuity of tradition is ‘the glue connecting the present with the past’, referencing ‘the pride of history’ while ‘providing the cues needed to make sense of the disparate data of the present’.⁵ On the other hand, for author and consultant Eric Booth, voice is most important. He cites ‘the power of the fundamental act of creation’ as a vehicle for a sense of personal expression, accomplishment and control.⁶

‘Heritage’ reminds us that we belong; ‘voice’ offers the promise of what we can become. It is, I believe, reasonable to assert that an individual life that exhibits a balance between heritage and voice can be thought of as rich and empowered and, as a corollary, of high quality and capable of happiness.

At times the two sides of expressive life are congenial, as when a traditional storyteller in a rural village adds an element of personal style to a favourite community narrative. But more often the halves contend with one another. The ritual dance at a wedding invokes ancient practices and shared meaning; an ‘outsider’ artist paints images based on religious visions or the dreams of mental illness unconnected to community or tradition. Thus, as folklorist Barre Toelken explains, art (or expressive life) exists ‘along a kind of spectrum, ranging from expressions in which community values and aesthetics impinge upon the artist to expressions in which the artist impinges upon culture’.⁷

Applied to public policy, expressive life functions as a new abstraction, a framework in which to address creativity, heritage, media, fair use, cultural industries, intellectual property and trade in cultural goods. Expressive life defines a new policy arena that enables the dismantling of barriers that have prevented key actors from engaging cultural vibrancy as a public good, enabling policy makers to draw the boundaries of discourse in a manner that answers Boyles’ call for us to find ‘common interest in apparently disparate situations’, facilitating engagement with disparate but interconnected issues. Although today neither fully realised nor completely grasped by the general public, the concept of a ‘vibrant expressive life’ can be likened to the accepted notion of a ‘healthy environment’. When

viewed as a whole, expressive life encompasses many interconnected elements critical to quality of life in the same way the confluence of air, water and wildlife gives an inclusive character to the policy regime engaging environmental protection.

Expressive life and arts organizations

Arts organisations in the US and UK face enormous challenges. Those totally dependent on government support must compete before a backdrop of budget cutting in which the arts may be easily passed over in favour of more pressing social needs.

Although US museums and performing arts organisations draw on income streams beyond government, they are also at risk; earned income, corporate giving, private patronage and foundation grants have all been reduced in the current downturn. Can the positioning of fine arts within the frame of expressive life help secure cultural organisations? I believe it can.

For more than a century, the fine arts have made the case that they are of unique value and thus entitled to various forms of subsidy. To the extent that these arguments have succeeded, the art and arts organisations constitute a classic ‘merit good’ – the hybrid commodity discovered in the late 1950s by US economist Richard Musgrave. Merit goods are products that circulate in the regular economy. You can, for example, go out and purchase a ticket to hear the symphony concert or choose to buy a pair of socks; both are private goods. But the arts are different: there exists sentiment that a product like classical music – or subsidised housing for the poor, or free public education – offer diffuse public benefits, and that it is worthwhile for government to intervene in order to increase the availability of performances, housing or schools beyond what the market, through purchases, would supply.⁸ Thus were created grants, subsidies, and – for the arts in the US – the benefits of nonprofit status. Unfortunately, the ease with which the fine arts falter as a priority in stern economic times is testimony to the truth that, although the arts are viewed as merit goods, they are not especially strong ones.

Reframing art and reforming arts organisations as components of the broad ecology of expressive life can address both problems, strengthening institutions in two ways. First, by connecting the concept of the fine arts with the concepts of the musical instrument manufacturer, the presence (or absence) of foreign films at the local multiplex, the availability of private guitar and piano lessons, ownership of radio stations, the quality of local architecture, and access to historical popular recordings and films for classroom instruction, arts institutions are harnessed to a set of cultural interests that boast broad popular support. Linking the fine arts with a network of arts learning, urban design, internet access and media ownership strengthens the public support essential to the maintenance of government subsidy – building a stronger merit good.

Second, by positioning arts institutions within the frame of expressive life, new solutions to old problems emerge. For example, through the closing decades of the last century arts leaders in the US were dismayed that fewer and fewer domestic orchestras secured contracts with American record companies. However, even as the number of recording orchestras steadily declined, complaint never converted into practice – intervention in the well-being of classical music continued to focus on providing support for performances of old and new compositions. No one ever took the logical step of exploring the nooks and crannies of the arts system to uncover the obvious truth that unwieldy and onerous union contracts were the real problem and no one engaged the influence of government to recalibrate labour agreements to serve larger artistic and public purposes. An ecological approach assessing the well-being of orchestras within the wide frame of a vibrant expressive life could have identified and addressed a problem that was not about funding. By viewing individual artistic activities as components of an ecological system – an interconnected environment made up of market forces, disparate cultures, community attitudes, government policy and corporate practices – problems can be addressed through a broader set of interventions.

The fine arts community has positioned itself as uniquely

valuable and uniquely entitled to public largess, at times by denigrating popular and amateur (unincorporated) art as inferior. Although it may be initially uncomfortable for arts organisations to redefine themselves as one part of a broad and rich ecology of expressive life, the connection with popular enthusiasm enabled by such a reconfiguration is essential if the fine arts are to retain their standing as valued merit goods.

Expressive life and government

For policy actors, the concept of expressive life offers an arena in which disparate issues shaping the cultural system can be addressed in the light of broad public purposes. By viewing individual issues through the lens of their impact on expressive life, we can begin to redress the harm produced by decades of narrow regulation and legislation targeting special interests of media and telecom companies.

In the US, the Telecom Act of 1996 substantially eliminated restrictions on the number of radio stations that could be owned by one corporation. The new law, tightly focused on the interests of broadcasting chains, failed to anticipate that consolidated ownership would generate centralized programming practices, significantly narrowing the opportunities afforded record companies to audition new music through product provided to individual stations. No one in the chain of policy making and legislative reform anticipated the collateral damage that spread laterally from newly de-regulated radio in the late 1990s, but the impact was sufficient to contribute to the decline of the US record industry. Such anecdotes are all too common. The term of copyright, internet music royalties, the price of cable television service, trade in cultural products, mergers in the entertainment industry and nonprofit funding are only a few of the other issues shaping art, information and communication that have been addressed with scant attention to the public interest, generating unintended consequences. By stepping back to assess any change in law, regulation or corporate practice in the light of its impact on expressive life, policy actors can begin to restore an appropriate balance between public purposes and the marketplace.

Over the past half-century, policy actors in Western democracies have been strikingly unable to define quality of life in anything other than material terms; we either want to act directly to reduce poverty and increase wealth, or, by intervening in education and health care, indirectly influence the capacity to accumulate or retain money. But today it is widely understood that our global economic downturn will dial back wealth and economic growth, begging the question that is only now being tiptoed around in the halls of power: ‘If the dream of a bigger car, grander house or more exotic holiday is taken off the table, how can policy leaders act to advance a high quality of life for all?’ A vibrant expressive life, offering a yin–yang balance of ‘heritage’ and ‘voice’, affords government leaders an arena of action in which quality of life can be affordably advanced through smart public policy. The application of a consistent and coordinated public-interest standard to intellectual property law, media ownership and regulation, trade in cultural goods, fine arts funding, cultural exchange and arts learning will help secure expressive life as a critical sector of government. However, to advance a vibrant expressive life – access to voice and heritage – as a public good within democracy, governments may need to create or reconfigure ministries or departments of cultural affairs to match the character of this new ecology.

Conclusion

In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, US observers lamented the near-destruction of the New Orleans Ninth Ward, a poor, mostly African-American neighbourhood that maintained rich vernacular traditions in music, cuisine and folk performance. Although it is understood that the homes and businesses of the district can be rebuilt, the subtext of most analysis of hurricane damage suggests that something more was lost – something closer to the ‘soul’ of the Ninth Ward. What was destroyed, of course, was the context of expressive life – the markers of history, place and continuity that constituted the Ninth Ward’s heritage, and the public spaces, relationships and opportunities to learn that enabled the district’s many voices. That so many understand

that something precious was lost, while at the same time so few seem capable of advancing initiatives that would address anything deeper than lost buildings and wages, is testimony to the challenges to be faced in defining expressive life as a critical arena of public policy.

As Sandy Nairne reminds us in Chapter 5, in the nineteenth century, John Ruskin and William Morris launched the global Arts and Crafts movement. Widely viewed as a response to the deadening influence of the early industrial revolution, the movement honoured nature, rural living, home-made art and cultural heritage. Although it helped define the DNA of American Progressivism, today heritage and creativity have mostly been excised from the dreams of US political reformers. Perhaps the consequences of market excess and the linked-but-lonely isolation of our digital, online age will encourage a fresh look at expressive life – at the humane interventions that inspired Arts and Crafts leaders long ago?

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Notes

- 1 Boyle, *The Public Domain*.
- 2 Harrison and Huntington, *Culture Matters*.
- 3 For a useful discussion of the public domain and cultural commons, see Boyle, *The Public Domain*. Lewis Hyde offers a succinct definition of the public sphere in ‘Frames from the framers’.
- 4 Ivey, *Arts, Inc.*
- 5 Graves, *Cultural Democracy*.
- 6 Booth, ‘Finding the smallest unifying particle in the universe’.

- 7 Toelken, 'Heritage arts imperative'.
- 8 Musgrave's notion of 'merit goods' is little used in present-day economics, but the concept sheds light on issues related to subsidized arts. It is defined in Richard Musgrave's volume, *The Theory of Public Finance*.

2 **Rewriting the rules of expression**

David Lammy

On 7 July 2005, Londoners found themselves exposed to a new form of terrorism with a global reach. I was one of millions caught up in the chaos of that day, scrabbling to contact loved ones in the hours afterwards. It was only later that day that I discovered that James Adams, an old school friend of mine, was one of the 52 who died.

One of the first responses to the bombs was expressive: the ‘We’re Not Afraid’ website. In a matter of days, thousands of people from around the world sent images to the site, expressing their solidarity with Londoners and a determination not to be cowed by terrorism. The website resonated with me and millions of others precisely because it provided a platform for people to express themselves, to make a statement about how they felt through photography, graphic art and the written word. By bringing together thousands of contributors and millions of visitors, it created an impact far greater than the sum of its parts.

Culture has always had a resonance beyond the purely aesthetic, enriching our civic and political life, and serving as a vehicle of democratic debate and protest. Caricaturists used cartoons to poke fun at the eighteenth-century political class: in a pre-democratic age, satirical art and literature provided a crucial means of expressing political discontent. In 1960s America, music became one of the principal mediums of protest against the involvement of the US in Vietnam, and a key element of the counter-culture movement.

So culture is a vital ingredient of a vibrant democracy, but its meaning is more than symbolic. One of the iconic images of 2008 was Shepard Fairey’s red, white and blue illustration of Barack Obama. Emblazoned with the word ‘Hope’, it became the unofficial poster of Obama’s bid for the presidency. The simplicity of Fairey’s work, coupled with the potency of Obama’s

message of 'change', made the image easily copied, transposed and transformed. It was reproduced widely on posters, T-shirts, mugs and websites. Graffiti artists created their own versions in cities across the world. Pastiche included an illustration of George W. Bush with the moniker 'Dope', and a version produced by Fairey himself for animal charity Adopt A Pet, with the message 'Adopt' below a picture of a forlorn-looking dog.

Now, as the adaptation of Fairey's work has demonstrated, the tools of cultural expression have been democratised and the means of production and distribution dispersed. This will have far reaching consequences for our cultural and political expression. Already we have seen entire cultural sectors transformed.

For decades, the music industry was founded on a method of production and distribution that required huge upfront capital investment behind a handful of artists chosen and promoted by a small number of large record labels. Any aspiring musician who wanted to make a living from their craft first had to attract the attention of an elite coterie of A&R (Artist & Repertoire) representatives. They then had to convince them not only of their talent, but also of the potential for that to be packaged, marketed and sold to a mass audience. Only the multinationals of the music industry had the resources and networks to provide the required global reach.

A revolution in technology now means that artists can write, record and distribute music from their bedroom using equipment costing a few hundred pounds. The internet provides access to the marketplace at virtually no cost, replacing the need for multimillion dollar advertising budgets.

These changes have huge practical implications for artists, cultural industries and policy makers. We are now at a critical moment where the acceleration in technological change has completely rewritten the discussion about how creative content is produced and distributed. That is why, as Minister of State for Intellectual Property, I am working with media companies, consumers and artists to establish a new consensus on copyright that will provide firm foundations for our creative and economic future.

That is just one of the challenges faced by policy makers. The diffusion of the tools of production and distribution mean that encouraging creativity – as a form of civic as well as personal expression – is more important than ever.

In our schools, we must continue to nurture a spirit of creativity and adventure. Our children will need mathematical and scientific knowledge to help them navigate the world of work. But the rapid pace of economic change will put an even greater premium on the ability to think creatively and imaginatively. As Paul Collard, the National Director of Creative Partnerships, has pointed out, 60 per cent of all the jobs young people in school today will do have not yet been invented.¹

We will need more than technical know-how to face the big challenges of the twenty-first century. Our response to climate change will have to be multidisciplinary. Yes, we will need physicists and chemists to provide technological innovation, but an effective response to the threat of climate change and its consequences will need to be cultural and behavioural as well as scientific. That will require designers, architects, social scientists – and artists too.

Already, the democratising affect of the internet is making new forms of production possible and economically viable. The Credit Crunch has called time on an era of consumerism associated with the Baby Boomer generation, which reached adulthood in the 1960s and 1970s. In its place, we are seeing a return to the values of our grandparents – of ‘make do and mend’ and small-scale local production – but powered by the many-to-many exchange that the internet makes possible.

Websites such as Big Cartel enable hundreds of thousands of small independent record labels, clothing designers and artists to reach a global marketplace of buyers.² Etsy has made handmade craft a viable form of production by creating a worldwide community network for tens of thousands of crafters.³

The same forces are at work in literature. Self-publishing is not a new phenomenon. Historically, those writers who presented the greatest challenge to the establishment had no alternative but to self-publish. William Blake, Oscar Wilde and Virginia Woolf all turned to self-publishing in order to distribute

their most challenging writings. Now technological innovations have significantly lowered the barriers to entry so that anyone can publish a book at the cost of a few hundred pounds using websites such as lulu.com.

We are at a critical juncture. Technological and social changes are making the 'expressive life' a possibility for millions of people, enabling them to create, to express themselves and to share their art in ways that would have been unimaginable even 15 years ago. That opens up a whole new set of possibilities that have the potential to enrich our civic and political life as well as the personal experiences of the individuals who create and enjoy art. And it offers the prospect of reconnecting us with the values of community, self-reliance and local exchange that can help us to build the good society.

David Lammy is MP for Tottenham and Minister of State for Higher Education and Intellectual Property.

Notes

- 1 Speaking in 2006 at the Core Cities Theology Network's conference *Cities of Culture: Whose Vision? Whose Agenda?*, www.cctn.org.uk/reports.php (accessed 22 Jun 2009).
- 2 See <http://bigcartel.com/> (accessed 16 Jun 2009).
- 3 See www.etsy.com/ (accessed 16 Jun 2009).

3 Creative choices

Ed Vaizey

At the heart of the debate about the future of cultural policy lies the role of technology. We are not in the midst of a technological revolution; we are just at the very beginning. It will affect every sphere of public activity, from business, to healthcare and education and beyond.

The essential unifying theme will be personalisation. Why take an exam in the summer, when an exam board can create an exam for you, have you sit it and return it marked in just 24 hours at any point in the year? Why wait for test results when they can be studied by a doctor in Australia and returned to you electronically the next day? And when it comes to culture, why sit back and take what you are given, when culture of every kind and of every origin can be accessed at any point by technology?

Of course, there is no substitute for studying a genuine artefact or sensational painting close up. Nor can the sublime experience of a live performance be replicated outside the auditorium. But the Royal Opera House is now routinely simulcasting its performances in cinemas across the UK. This kind of technology opens up a huge range of possibilities and opportunities. The great West End hit could be viewed live in the Outer Hebrides. Independent cinemas, gradually dying off, could have a new lease of life to show a huge range of different programming from a far wider range of sources, catering to many more interests. Civic centres in any small town or village could offer the same kind of repertoire that is currently available only to enthusiasts living in or near central London.

Arts organisations need to embrace technology to give effect to this revolution. A recently opened attraction, the British Music Experience at the Dome, allows ticket holders to personalise their exhibition. By touching various electronic pads with their unique, barcoded ticket, they can create an online

exhibition of their favourite exhibits to view at home. Similarly, a ticket to any exhibition should now include the opportunity to download an audio guide, or to view the exhibition online beforehand in order to download further details of attractions that catch the eye. Theatrical and orchestral performances could be similarly enhanced if ticket holders were contacted beforehand with informal briefings and programme notes.

Although it is impossible to predict how technology will change the way arts organisations will interact with live and remote audiences, a central concern will be financing this revolution and adapting copyright. Technology doesn't save money – it costs money. Performances have to be reconfigured, equipment needs to be bought, deals need to be done, training has to be undertaken. As the volume of work that can be put out to wider audiences is virtually limitless, arts organisations might have to expand their repertoire to meet demand.

Technologies of personalisation have played an important part in another phenomenon. Cultural hierarchies are no longer so valid. In a multicultural society it is no longer enough to rest on the classical hierarchy. Orchestras like the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra already provide a wide range of Asian music for the diverse city they represent. Yet no such eclecticism seems to exist in London orchestras. There is no reason why this should be the case. Just as the repertoire of these orchestras should be adapted for communities that have settled in Britain, so it could also be exported to people across the globe using the technologies available. By the same measure, we now have the means to bring more diverse cultural forms from around the world to the museums, stages and screens of the UK.

How can all this be paid for? No one is sure how to make money from content on the internet. The technology revolution has thrown the spotlight on copyright law. The possibility of having access to free content is now so pervasive that the creative industries are urging governments to expand and enforce copyright law wherever possible. There is certainly the possibility that deals can be done with ISPs to ensure some protection for copyright holders. When the providers and

distributors of content become de-coupled, a new and imaginative solution is needed.

But at the same time, the traditional distributors cannot simply assume that they can squeeze the quart of their new business model into the pint pot of technology. Too many publishers, record companies and film companies assume that the barbarians can be stopped at the gate. This is not the case. Entirely new business models need to be thought through, with consumers paying reasonable prices for virtual content, and artists gaining their fair share of the dividends.

Governments cannot – and indeed should not – create culture. In Britain, we have the virtue of a mixed economy, where key arts organisations exist on a mix of public subsidy, commercial endeavour and private philanthropy. Broadcasters receive benefits in kind but that model is breaking down. Far from government seeking to put in place a new compact for the digital age, it is incumbent on government to set arts organisations free from regulation and bureaucracy, while maintaining a firm financial commitment to the best that the country has to offer.

Ed Vaizey is MP for Wantage and Shadow Minister for the Arts and Culture.

4 Inspiration and empowerment

Tony Hall

It is a strange aspect of life in Britain that you are always having to battle to justify the arts. Everybody, in politics and in the world outside, gets the importance of sport: but culture? Within a nanosecond the words 'elite' or 'minority' pop up. Yet the importance to the general public of the arts and culture, if you look at what they are spending their time doing, is enormous. From television, to the performing arts to the books we read, we all choose to take part in a cultural life.

What I find interesting about the concept of the 'expressive life' is that it looks at what we do from the point of view of the audience spender or participant. We all need a sense of heritage, where we have come from, both individually and as organisations. Our tussle within the Royal Opera House each year as the season is planned is to ensure we are properly cherishing our core repertory. Yet the other part of our role is to find new voices for opera and ballet, allowing new artists to create, to speak, to be given the chance to succeed, or (just as importantly) to fail. As it is for an organisation, so it is for individuals. Let me illustrate what I think the expressive life means using an example from the Royal Opera House.

We are about to lay the foundations of what has now snowballed into the rather grandly titled 'Royal Opera House Production Park'. A coalition of two development agencies – the East of England Development Agency and Thurrock Thames Gateway Development Agency, – Thurrock Council, Arts Council East, The Learning and Skills Council, and the Department of Communities and Local Government have worked at incredible speed and purpose to deliver a small revolution. A derelict site is soon to be home, first to brand new workshops for the Royal Opera House, and shortly thereafter to another building, which will house the Skills Academy to raise

the level of backstage skills in the performing arts and music. More buildings will have a range of small and medium size businesses, which will provide the materials necessary to build sets. We are also renovating and refurbishing Grade II listed buildings for our use and the use of the community. 'It's like John Lewis coming,' said one local councillor to me.

The Guggenheim Bilbao it is not, but this scheme should go to prove that what goes on backstage can make as big a splash in the community, raise the level of skills and lead to the regeneration of an area as what goes on stage. It will also point to the importance of the creative industries in this country beyond this recession and the importance of building the skills to make sure they thrive. It led, a couple of months ago, to the first ever production on the main stage at the Royal Opera House with sets and costumes completely produced by the young people of Thurrock, and the performers – 300 children, parents and teachers – from just over the river in Kent.

On a grey, wet day down the A13, I found students at Thurrock and Basildon College working in an old motor vehicle shop, making costumes for the production. Some were very fancy, like 12 fantasy creatures, an enormous colourful chicken and a peacock man with all the colours of an Aztec king. Pupils from primary and secondary schools in the area collaborated on the designs. The process was as productive as it was fulfilling: 'There is so much talent that just goes to waste,' said the teacher who is leading this project, 'but this is so practical. It has brought the whole college together. It's a bridge to realise dreams.'

Just down the corridor others were thumping away on sewing machines – 200 pyjama bottoms with lots of different, specially designed patterns. 'We are learning so much,' said one of the students 'and this is part of our curriculum – it's contributing towards the grades we will get at the end.' And in a screen printing room, the raw material for all the sewing was being made. A tall, very composed young student told me, 'I didn't know what I wanted to do until I met a designer at the Royal Opera House. Now I know. And I know you need passion to succeed. And that's what I've now got.' Another young girl was attaching sequins and beading to another, highly intricate

costume that she had designed. Her eyes lit up when she told me she loved ballet: ‘I want to work in costumes,’ she said, ‘as long as it sparkles!’ The teacher said that the students were doing vital tasks for their careers. They were not just envisioning a project that would look good in their portfolio, but never get made. Instead they were doing things, and learning so much from that: ‘We have always made things in Thurrock but there is not much here that’s really creative – this is different.’

At Palmers College, an imposing building across the way from Thurrock and Basildon College, a group of students was making the floor cloths for their production for the Royal Opera House. These were performing arts students. The energy was high and there was lots of laughter and banter. They had just been to the Royal Opera House. One said, ‘It’s mad!’ I think (and hope) that’s a term of approval. I asked how many of them had thought of a career in theatre backstage before they visited the Opera House. No hands went up. And after? About a third. The floor cloths meanwhile were in the early stages of work, delayed by the snow, and everyone was getting a bit tense about the deadline. Two weeks later and the floor was being worked on by six students of the newly opened Thurrock Learning Campus on their half term break, wearing old clothes covered in paint. ‘We are only doing it for the fashion,’ said one. In truth, it is brilliant for their CVs, it is hands-on, practical experience.

What these young people are learning and how is what fires the employers on the Skills Council for the Creative and Cultural Industries. Talk of skills and the need to improve them is not a subject that prompts much excitement among most people. But in reality, it is all about finding ways of giving inspiration to young people and then giving them the means to do something about it.

According to the Skills Council, the music and performing arts sector will need 30,000 skilled technicians by 2017; this will require that more training be provided than is currently the case.¹ They argue that employers want people who have qualifications that are related to the sort of skills they need, and that of course is exactly what is starting to happen in Thurrock. When the Skills Academy eventually opens with a network around the

country, the opportunities for apprenticeships and training of a high order linked into what employers' need will be enormous.

Why does this matter even more now? A report by NESTA earlier this year predicted that the creative industries will grow by 2013 at twice the rate of the rest of the British economy. Employment will rise to 1.3 million and overtake those employed in financial services. The creative industries will be 'a key driver for the UK's recovery from recession'.² Everybody I speak to in the creative industries agrees that skills matter and they have got to be improved, and last month Ofsted reported concern that not enough work-based learning and apprenticeships were being offered to young people.³ If we are a creative nation – and I profoundly believe we are – then the seeds have to be sown now for the growth which can and will occur in the next decade.

Everyone I talk to at Thurrock was excited about seeing their sets and costumes on the stage at Covent Garden. Excitement mixed with pride and a sense of recognition. When on 14 March 2009 the curtain went up for 'On the Rim of the World' and the first bars of Orlando Gough's music were played by the Orchestra of the Royal Opera House, all thoughts were about the joy and inspiration that creating a new work can bring. But as the sets were cleared away and the artists returned to their homes, the legacy could say something even deeper about Britain's future.

I have told this story because I think the concept of the expressive life could add richness to the language in which our cultural policy is discussed and developed. It grounds the wider social and economic arguments by getting closer to why the arts produce the impact they do.

For me, this is the most exciting contribution that Bill Ivey makes to the cultural discussion. He reminds us that there is an alternative paradigm in which arts and culture can be framed: not the economic paradigm where well-being is measured in material terms but one in which it is measured by the vibrancy of one's expressive life.

Tony Hall is the Chief Executive of the Royal Opera House and the Chair of the Cultural and Creative Skills Council.

Notes

- 1 Creative & Cultural Skills, *Workforce Projections for Theatre and Live Music*.
- 2 These figures are available at www.nesta.org.uk/uk-creative-industry-to-drive-significant-growth-in-uk-economy/ (accessed 8 Jun 2009).
- 3 Ofsted, *Making More of Music*.

5 Expression and engagement: a creative life

Sandy Nairne

As to that leisure, as I should in no case do any harm to anyone with it, so I should often do some direct good to the community with it, by practising arts or occupations for my hands or brain which would give pleasure to many of the citizens; in other words, a great deal of the best work done would be done in leisure time of men relieved from any anxiety as to their livelihood, and eager to exercise their special talent, as all men, nay, all animals are.

William Morris, 'How we live and how we might live', 1888

Morris saw work at the centre of his new vision for life and, whether paid or unpaid, it would be (after the political and economic revolution he sought) purposeful for all. When questioned about the many people, women and men, condemned to menial repetitive jobs, he proposed that all work should be given some elaboration, with appropriate adornment and decoration. The creative and the productive combined together. Morris's utopian vision included an expressive life as part of everyone's common rights, along with health, housing and education. And Morris insisted that everyone had a special talent of some kind – everyone could be creative.

Morris had little time for the 'fine art' end of the art market, recognising that commercial pressures worked to limit the distribution and enjoyment of art to the few rather than encouraging participation by the many. Although Morris was part of a revolution in ideas before state socialism emerged, his inspiring role in the Arts and Crafts movement remains relevant to how definitions of the cultural field can be expanded and made more inclusive today.

After many years of repetitive debates in Britain around access vs excellence in the arts, renewed thinking is certainly needed, not least to dismantle the assumption that institutions

are either stuck in a narrow elitist model or dedicated only to the local and amateur. Brian McMaster's report of 2007 for the Department for Culture, Media and Sport tried to shift thinking by proposing a new drive to excellence, which would include learning, outreach work and engagement with contemporary issues.¹ But this has led to little new government policy, and for the visual arts – in museums and galleries – there are significant cultural forces already operating and marking significant change.

For art galleries, Joseph Beuys was an artist of enormous importance in shifting debate away from the stylistic division between the figurative and the abstract. But he became equally influential in his ideas of 'social sculpture', demonstrated in the Free International University presented at *Documenta 7* in 1982. Beuys questioned the very idea of singular, unitary works of art seen as objects for appreciation separated from their political meanings and removed from wider social participation. Performance (including his self-styled lectures and debates) was central to his public engagement. His emphasis on myth and narrative was not about looking back but about seeking a more intense experience of life now. And his spirit lives on.

In Britain, the visual arts world in the 1970s was challenged by the growing community arts and public art movements seeking recognition (and funding) while championing the place of participative practice. And feminist artists and thinkers also criticised not just a male-dominated art world, but a narrow and competitive view of what art had become. By the 1980s feminist artists were joined by black and Asian artists pressing strong claims for recognition and organising their own exhibitions and events.

Over the past 25 years a plethora of artists working in unconventional media – including performance, environmental and digital work – have deconstructed and extended the public art gallery, often turning it inside out. Many smaller organisations such as Artangel in London or FACT in Liverpool have emerged to become influential. They have proved essential for the refreshment of the visual arts as a whole. The contemporary art world has both contributed to an expanded art

market (until the recession) while also shifting practices of presentation within and beyond art institutions.

In the realm of museums – from science to history and the decorative arts – the biggest shift has seen education departments steadily advancing from the periphery to a more central position. In part, this was a re-engagement with the Victorian legacy of educational access and opportunity for all. In part, museums and science centres were determined to find new processes within museum displays that engaged visitors without simply ‘dumbing down’. This momentum gathered pace in the 1990s in a larger shift from education programmes to a broader concept of engagement and interpretation, exemplified in the Dana Centre at the Science Museum, or the approaches of Tate Modern, the work of regional galleries and museums in Manchester, Liverpool, Newcastle and Glasgow, and equally in annual events such as The Big Draw, now in its tenth year and organised by the Campaign for Drawing, which uses museums, galleries and public spaces to offer everyone the chance to make art.

Such change in the work of museums has not just encouraged participation but also affected governance, encouraging greater transparency and accountability. As different communities and cultural groups have staked claims and made links to the content and design of displays, as cultural diversity has become an increasingly central concept for western museums in their thinking about collections and audiences, and with a broader shift, encouraged by Unesco, to recognize intangible heritage, such as dance, music and ritual, as well as the tangible, so the understanding of who the museum serves as an institution, and how it serves them, has become more critical. The continued growth in museum visits over the past decade and higher visitor satisfaction rates demonstrate some success, but there is much to do. And there is a vital balance to be struck between immaculate presentation and an interpretative approach.

An important new report, *Learning to Live*, a collection of essays commissioned by the National Museum Directors’ Conference and the Institute for Public Policy Research, gives

strong emphasis on engagement for visitors and a shift from passive to active learning.² It is complemented by a broader report across all the arts, *Get It*, by Rick Rogers for the Culture and Learning Consortium, led by the Clore Duffield Foundation.³ Although both reports are focused on linking young people to arts institutions, both in or out of school, the policy implications go wider in arguing for life-long participation and the use of museums and galleries as community resources of a special kind.

Libraries are increasingly places where books, journals and newspapers sit with online digital resources, and crucially readers are offered knowledgeable and well-trained guidance. Archives are being opened up, whether for those tracing family connections or those with passionate personal interests, from history to ornithology, gardening, poetry or clothes-making. What matters is combining local with online provision to increase the spread of users, including more distant rural areas or those in hospital or prison. The National Portrait Gallery is not untypical in now offering some 60,000 images online – at low resolution to be downloaded free to the user – and now receiving some 14 million digital visits each year.

The ‘The Right to Art Campaign’, promoted by the Visual Arts and Galleries Association in Britain in 2004, with a proposition paper by John Holden and Robert Hewison published by Demos, reinforced cultural entitlement as a shift away from something ‘offered’ to something desired or expected.⁴ Perhaps the visual arts can provide a particular encouragement both to creative making and to critical reflection – as a challenge to mass TV and the communications industry.

The government’s ‘Renaissance in the Regions’ programme has done much to revitalise local and regional museum and gallery services, but it is not certain that central or local government will be able to continue to extend this much-needed investment. Widespread and high-quality museum and gallery provision will therefore need to link new ways of engaging visitors with creating new models of sustainability. Support from tax payers and corporate sponsorship will have some place, but longer-term private and public sector partnership will require

higher-level individual contributions. Payment at the door is deeply discouraging to making open, participative institutions, but a combination of ticketed elements, paid courses, and more extensive members' and subscription schemes is likely. With public value objectives clearly expressed, a central part of the creative economy should include museums and galleries in their most dynamic form. This is where William Morris's ideas of creative work come round again and a shared vision can reinforce the claims for more local or state funding.

Sandy Nairne is the Director of the National Portrait Gallery.

Notes

- 1 McMaster, *Supporting Excellence in the Arts*.
- 2 Bellamy and Oppenheim, *Learning to Live*.
- 3 Rogers, *Get It*.
- 4 Holden and Hewison, *The Right to Art*.

6 Reconfiguring ‘culture’

John Holden

The proposition of ‘the expressive life’ (see Chapter 1) has two great virtues, both of which overturn the traditional order of cultural policy. The first is that Ivey puts you, me, and each of us individually at the centre of his thesis. The second is that by recognising the breadth of what culture means he releases policy from its narrow ‘high art’ confines.

Ivey describes a system where the rights of individuals to a rich and varied cultural and expressive life determine how cultural policy is configured and how cultural organisations act.

Looking back over the history of British cultural policy it is surprising how little notice has been taken of the views of people who actually visit galleries, listen to music, or watch films – or of those who decide they don’t want to do any of those things. The emphasis has always been on producers, organisations and funders. Only in the last five years have we set about asking people with any seriousness what they think about the arts and heritage.

This lack of interest in people as consumers should not surprise – it is a common failure across business and public services. As the historian Joyce Appleby asks ‘Why is it that consumption, which is the linchpin of our modern system, has never been the linchpin of our theories explaining modernity?’¹

But in business and public services things are changing. There is a growing recognition that people’s needs and attitudes have shifted, and that the population is now made up of ‘new individuals [who] seek true voice, direct participation, unmediated influence and identity-based community because they are comfortable using their own experience as the basis for making judgements’.²

So too in the cultural world there will be a move away from seeing people as either ‘audiences’ or ‘non-attenders’, or talking

about them as an inert mass to whom culture is 'delivered' and for which 'we' make 'provision'.

But there is a potential downside to a rights-based approach that places such emphasis on the individual, because it can fail to explain the role of the arts and culture in community life, and their part in building common identity. This brings us to the second virtue of Ivey's argument and the idea of the expressive life, which overcomes the isolation of individuals by placing them within a broader system. The breadth of approach is evident both in Ivey's idea of what 'culture' means, and in his concern for the health of the entire cultural ecology, not just the 'high arts'.

'Culture' is often thought of as the preserve of the 'not-for-profit' sector in the US, and of the publicly funded sector in the UK. I have argued in the Demos pamphlet *Democratic Culture* that we need to think of contemporary culture as an interweaving of three spheres: the publicly funded, the commercial and the home-made.³ From the point of view of individual people this makes perfect sense. When I listen to an orchestra on TV it doesn't much matter to me that the orchestra gets state funding whereas the medium through which I am hearing it is commercial. Similarly, I can derive as much pleasure from visiting a privately owned heritage building as I can from visiting one that is publicly owned. And I can be as impressed by a cartoon that I watch on YouTube as by one that I see in a cinema.

Seeing culture in these broad terms provides the key to the second virtue of Ivey's argument: cultural policy is released from the narrow confines of the publicly funded arts. Instead of the arts being a minor budget line and a peripheral concern for politics, the arts become embedded as an essential part of a much wider system, one in which we are all constantly engaged through what we watch, listen to, wear and read – not to mention when we dance, sing, make films or play an instrument.

And because of that, the whole system through which culture is created, disseminated, stored, preserved and owned becomes a matter of interest to policy across a wide range of areas. Things like the way that intellectual property is commercially controlled, the censorship exercised by websites,

the archives of record companies – all these affect the democratic rights of people in relation to their culture.

Culture is important to the vitality of democracy because it is through cultural choices that we show our values and commitments, and through which we produce our communal life. Placing funded, commercial and home-made culture together changes them from being in their individual components respectively marginal, entertaining and amateur, into a combined potent force of democratic expression.

Just as policy becomes broader – extending into economic and business policy, foreign relations, education and so on – so too do the interests of publicly funded cultural organizations, which now have to connect with the home-made and commercial spheres. This dynamic is well under way (to take just one example, the British Film Institute regularly screens the YouTube creations of members of the public), but will gather strength as our arts companies recognise their role as enablers of the expressive life.

Rethinking ‘culture’ so that it includes the wide span of funded, commercial and home-made consumption and production, and so that it recognises and caters for individual needs and desires, demands a radical institutional response.

For example, concert halls will see themselves not only as places where music is heard and where music education takes place, but as social spaces, as hubs for interest groups to get together, as learning centres where private music teachers can be linked to pupils, as purveyors of commercial material and as experimental laboratories for artists and public alike.

This offers a profound challenge to a system that is currently configured around production. To take the example of a concert hall again, agents offer shows by selected artists to a venue, which then decides whether or not to put the act on stage. The venue determines the date and time when the show will happen, and how much it will cost. The only choice the consumer has is whether to buy a ticket. This model is increasingly at variance with the type of bespoke-product, on-demand services that businesses and public services strive to achieve.

It is time for cultural policy to catch up with the reality of the breadth of what culture means, and for funded organisations to take on a more ambitious role as enablers of the expressive life of the people and communities they serve.

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Notes

- 1 Appleby, 'Consumption in early modern social thought'.
- 2 Zuboff and Maxmin, *The Support Economy*.
- 3 Holden, *Democratic Culture*.

7 Whose rights are they anyway?

Lola Young

The right to participate in and to enjoy, in the broadest sense, a wide range of cultural and creative practices is one of those notions against which it is hard to argue. Why shouldn't the great mass of people be entitled to engage with arts and culture? However, it is not that simple. We need to focus on the central notion of cultural rights and the desire for an expressive life within a different, broader framework.

In theory at least, here in the UK, we have had a period of relatively strong political support for the arts. The recognition of the benefits that can accrue from them has resulted in substantial public investment in the creative and cultural sector. In particular, we have seen hundreds of thousands of pounds, spent on programmes large and small in education and community engagement, participation, and training and professional development programmes for members of targeted communities. Grants have been given in local, regional and national contexts; to performing and visual arts; and to historical and contemporary work. The problem is that although progress has been made, in terms of class representation and a more developed sense of the transnational identities, our arts organisations are still frequently run by cultural elites tethered to old-fashioned notions of cultural and class identities.

I see a natural connection between human rights, cultural rights, social equality and development that is beginning to be explored more extensively and gaining some political clout outside Western contexts. In the UK and beyond, we need to explore the idea of the expressive life in relation to a transnational, diaspora context that takes account of human rights and development needs.

Cultural rights are frequently seen as a subset of human rights.¹ Further examination reveals a closer and more practical

connection. Historically and in the present, in anti-racist struggles, in the struggles for human rights, democracy and freedom, culture and creativity have made significant contributions to liberationist struggles of one kind or another. We need only to think of enslaved Africans' resistance through dance, literature and music, or the Harlem Renaissance, or the cultural wings of the Black Panthers and the anti-apartheid movements to see how important, how integral the creative impulse has been in what my friend and colleague, the author Nima Poovaya Smith eloquently refers to as 'the emancipation of the human spirit'.² It is evident too that the cultural practitioners of African and Asian heritage with whom Nima and I have worked across the years, while seeing themselves to a greater or lesser extent as 'British', feel very real connections elsewhere in often complex ways, a theme that Roshi Naidoo explores in this pamphlet in relation to heritage (see Chapter 8).

Having worked collaboratively on two major projects recently, Nima and I have seen how the arts matter in the context of struggles for, and debates about, equality and liberation. In 2007 we curated a national programme to commemorate the bicentenary of the abolition of the slave trade on British ships, comprising a wide range of artistic commissions, events and activities working in partnership with other arts organisations in England. During 2007 intensive research sparked by the commemorative activities revealed a wealth of fresh insights into the cultural strategies that enslaved Africans devised in order to survive the brutal experiences. More recently, we have delivered a programme of mentoring and professional development for mid-career cultural leaders of African and Asian heritage. The programme aims to create 'Cultural leaders for a diverse society in a globalised world'. Working with the group, all of whom are committed to working in the arts sector, has shown us that racial and social equality and the creative sphere are closely intertwined. Without wanting to project my own feelings onto them, I sense that the intensity of this set of concerns is heightened because they are from a generation of daughters and sons, granddaughters and grandsons of migrants from former colonies.

In terms of culture, we have become accustomed to Western journalists' mediation of Africa and Africans in ways that provoke complex reactions from us – the constant reinforcement of Africa as a collection of 'failed states' riven by conflict, disease and corruption does not accord with personal experiences and familial reflections. While not denying that there are huge problems to be dealt with, we know there is also much more to Africa than the media would have us all believe. In this context, thinking of oneself as being part of a 'diaspora' can be difficult in the contemporary creative sector, where the categories of acceptable otherness are often rigidly applied and heavily policed.

Western cultural elites have appropriated terms such as 'high and popular culture', 'widening access and participation' and even 'classical music'. Sadly, we are all apt to be sucked into using these expressions in similar ways, never mind the fact that the boundaries between 'high' and 'popular' and audience and creator can be quite fluid in other cultural traditions and that there are many other musical traditions that are 'classical', such as those from African and Indian countries, to name but two. We, as diaspora people, constantly have to negotiate different and sometimes contradictory cultural and social spaces and we have of necessity to be multilingual – sometimes literally, often metaphorically. For example, many of us are still working through how to contribute to Africa's current and future development in ways that have a demonstrable, positive impact on the continent while claiming a British and/or hybrid identity.

In this context a set of cultural rights needs to take account of the myriad transnational sensibilities that inform our sense of ourselves, past and present. These rights also need to be underpinned by the understanding of the inequalities within and between nations. Unesco has attempted to do this with varying degrees of success.³ However, there seems little structural and conceptual interplay between cultural and human rights at that supra-national level.

Notwithstanding these barriers, many Africans at home and abroad are energetic in their efforts to unlock the creative and economic potential of the continent. For me, in thinking about

what Africa needs to make further progress and achieve a greater economic self-sufficiency, cultural and human rights are inextricably linked: this connects directly to how I see my role as a champion of cultural diversity and intercultural understanding in the creative sector. The promise of the continent that gave birth to humanity will, I'm sure, be fulfilled sooner than might generally be expected and may well be driven by creative and cultural enterprise; the signs are already there in the huge increase in markets and productivity for African film, fashion, literature and music. The growth of Nollywood, the inclusion of home-grown African fashion at New York's Fashion Week this year, the recognition of the literature of Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe, the success of Baba Maal, all point to the potential of African nations to dominate the international cultural and creative stage.

Of course, we are living in difficult times, to say the least; the questions raised by the failure of so many economic systems can induce an air of caution about the potential effectiveness of such strategies. Nonetheless, more individuals and organisations are seeing the potential of moving culture and creativity up the political agenda in the developing nations. For example, the International Conference on African Culture and Development (ICACD 2009) and the newly formed Commonwealth Group on Culture and Development (which I chair) have developed from similar perspectives. Backed by extensive research and several consultation exercises, the aim is to convince politicians to explore more systematically the economic, social and cultural benefits of developing and resourcing creative and cultural initiatives.

I am acutely aware that just as the notion of a celebration of diversity is vacuous without a strategy for promoting social equality, so is the idea of cultural rights without a programme for fully realised human rights. An expressive life is one where curiosity and adventure are the order of the day. That inquisitiveness is at its most expressive when it is able to work across disciplinary and national boundaries and recognises the complexities of identity and identification in a globalised world where mass migration is the norm. We need to ensure that the

opportunities are there for all to share in that expression and that the culture mavens from the West fully understand the transformations that are taking place around them.

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Notes

- 1 See, for example, Ivey, *Arts Inc.*
- 2 Private correspondence with the author.
- 3 See, for example, the 2007 Convention on the Protection and Promotion of Cultural Diversity of Cultural Expressions.

8 Heritage and the struggle for cultural democracy

Roshi Naidoo

Bill Ivey's *Arts, Inc.* is a timely reminder that cultural democracy is something struggled for and not an inevitable consequence of an ever-expanding media universe.¹ The proliferation of opportunities in the West to consume culture of all kinds, on our own timetables, has not necessarily led to a democratisation of the process of making art or accessing our heritage. Rather, the power over who gets to consume what is concentrated in the hands of fewer and fewer gatekeepers. We need to look behind the ideological smoke screen of 'freedom', to ask more pertinent questions, such as why culture and heritage should be relegated to the 'soft' side of life, divorced from the 'hard' world of politics and policy.

When cultural heritage, politics and policy *have* come together in public life in Britain, the focus has been on instrumentalist initiatives. This places a disproportionate burden on the cultural sector to help solve the problems of social exclusion, poor educational attainment, economic deprivation and, more recently, extremism. Historically, the institutional heritage sector has been much less interested in work and debates that apply a nuanced approach to heritage to broader issues of cultural democracy and representation.

Such debates take us beyond 'including' the excluded. Instead they propose a radical rethink of the role cultural heritage can play in reshaping democratic life. These more progressive voices have addressed a range of issues, such as applying a considered cultural history to conflict resolution, to giving voice to those cast outside the polity, to understanding national myth-making, to critiquing citizenship testing and to using heritage to add depth and complexity to ideas about

‘diversity’. These are not marginal preoccupations, but cut to the heart of national and transnational politics, and ideas about ethics and equity in society as a whole.

So how can an engagement with heritage enable the ‘expressive life’? Should policy in Britain look to extend its raft of initiatives on cultural diversity, social inclusion and cohesive communities, or look instead to those debates that have asked where our current conceptions of ‘heritage’ have taken us? If heritage is to be therapeutic, we have to start with as, Jo Littler – my co-editor on *The Politics of Heritage* – says, ‘the heritage of “heritage”’, when she reminds us that ‘[w]hat is circumscribed as “heritage” is historically specific, culturally contingent and philosophically debatable’.²

For Ivey, ‘our expressive life is made up of two equally important components: the history, community connections, and shared knowledge that give us a sense of belonging, permanence, and place – our cultural heritage – and the counterbalancing arena of accomplishment, autonomy, and influence: our individual voice’.³ This notion of heritage as incorporating a ‘sense of belonging, permanence and place’ is certainly implicit in cultural policy in Britain, especially in relation to shaping the nation through public heritage narratives.

In our institutions heritage and national identity go together like the proverbial horse and carriage. Attempts to widen the constituencies of people who get represented within them have largely ignored the question of whether or not ‘heritages sealed in national packages’, as the journalist Maya Jaggi put it, is a good idea in the first place.⁴

My concern is that if cultural heritage is to play a role in articulating our expressive lives it needs to give voice to the contestations, conflicts and intercultural interactions which have made those art forms and shaped our sensibilities. This is at odds with many of the uses to which heritage is put, be it in tourist marketing, shaping the national curriculum, selling Britain through the Olympics, or asking migrants and asylum seekers to assimilate.

Heritage needs to be decoupled from its associations with nationhood, transcendent belonging, permanence, place and

origin myths, and instead be open to difference, complexity, ambiguity, plurality, global movement and an awareness of cultural myth making. Our right to claim our cultural heritage should also be our right to challenge how that heritage is packaged, and what political ends it is put to. As Doudou Diène, the UN Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of racism, has said, heritage is used to legitimise national identity, but it more clearly reflects multiculturalism and the global cultural interactions between us.⁵

Understanding heritage in these terms could help address one of the themes developed in *Arts Inc.* differently, namely his concern with what account of itself America gives the world through the culture it exports – or, as he puts it, ‘the right to be represented to the rest of the world by art that fairly and honestly communicates America’s democratic values and ideals’.⁶ He lays out the problem of ‘non-elite’ populations around the world consuming American popular culture of the least edifying kind, the example being the TV show *Baywatch*. Do they watch this anthropologically and form the opinion that American values are shallow and secular, and does this contribute to anti-American sentiment, and by extension, terror activities?

Ivey’s formulation of the relationship between popular culture and national heritage is problematic. First, the wonderful thing about culture is that you can’t accurately judge its reception and the uses that it may be put to. A programme such as *Baywatch* may well chime with forms of the ‘non-elite’s’ own cultural performances that may also be ‘over-the-top’ or stylised in similar ways. Second, Western audiences regularly view ‘other’ cultures anthropologically, partly because they often don’t have knowledge to situate art forms into wider contexts. But the global consumption of American culture means that those ‘non-elite’ audiences, often raised on diets of Hollywood films and Western pop, are more conversant with the ins and outs of American culture than this gives them credit for.

The third and most important point is this. Those who set themselves the task of defining national culture through heritage policy need to consider whether they are addressing a country’s multiple heritages and confronting issues of inequality, both

within and outside its borders. To continue with the example of the US, could it be that global audiences are looking for political and cultural narratives that honestly recognise that America's path to democracy was, and is, tricky and ongoing, and one that could not have happened without the entanglements around migration, class, 'race', gender, sexuality and other issues of difference? This may be a far more urgent matter than considering the potentially corrosive effects of 'shallow' American TV on a global media audience.

Civic culture emerges from these contestations, not in spite of them. In this analysis jazz would be less of an example of core American democratic values expressed through music, but more of an example of how one can only understand the US as a whole by engaging with 'race' and African-American culture, politics and history, and the struggle for equality. Similarly the expressive life should include, as Ivey says, 'American Indian painting, sculpture, dance, woodcraft, and storytelling', but he makes no explicit mention of the cultural heritage they offer through their struggles for self-determination and land rights.⁷ Without that, artistic engagement with indigenous cultures runs the risk of slipping into a dangerous primitivism, something that can limit rather than extend cultural democracy.

Heritage can take us beyond prescriptive ideas about building a cohesive national culture, to a place where it is possible to articulate a plural, globalised world, a place where discourses of common humanity need not obscure and stifle difference, and which may be essential to our ecological survival. It can be employed to critique the idea that cultures are homogeneous, discrete or bounded by nationality, exposing the perniciousness of using heritage to determine citizenship through crude patriotism. It can help resist the idea that the asylum seeker or migrant is an interloper and threat to largely static national cultural identities. It can also do exactly the opposite.

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Notes

- 1 Ivey, *Arts, Inc.*
- 2 Littler, 'Introduction – British heritage and the legacies of "race"'.
- 3 Ivey, *Arts, Inc.*
- 4 Jaggi, 'Whose heritage?'.
- 5 Diène, 'Heritage and identity'.
- 6 Ivey, *Arts, Inc.*
- 7 Ibid.

9 Music and the expressive life

Andrew Missingham

Music is often the most immediate and accessible manifestation of an 'expressive life', but many believe that access to both making and listening to music is under threat. Curiously, these threats often predict the same outcome with quite different causes. Some see the music (particularly recording) industry's push for extension of copyright as a threat to the amount of music that the public has access to because of copyright holders' ability to control its supply. Others see the ability to access music without the consent of 'rights holders', caused by the revolution in online and mobile access to music, as a threat to continued investment in music making, leading to a similar limitation of supply.

I believe that the truth may lie in neither scenario. We are living through a moment of profound change in the way music is enjoyed: we are in the age of the iPod, Spotify, Nokia Comes With Music, LastFM and Passionato.com; the age of music-based console games like Rock Band and Guitar Hero; we are seeing the birth and growth of online, micro and community radio, such as Resonance FM and Roundhouse Radio; and we are seeing the live music scene burgeoning (not unrelated to the proliferation of online music). We are living in an age where music is all around us. So maybe there's never been a better time to be a music lover or a music maker.

We are living through a profound change in not just the way people enjoy listening to music, but also in how they participate in making music. There are more ways of creating music, open to more people, than ever before. Technology allows increasing numbers to access music in an ever more flexible manner, seeing growing numbers of Pro-Sumers or others joining the ranks of what Charles Leadbeater calls 'Pro-Ams', leaving traditional demarcation between

professionals and amateurs and producers and consumers increasingly redundant.

It is worth pointing out that I am not talking here about people's ability to 'mash-up' or remix another creator's music. I will go along with Ken Robinson's definition of creativity being: 'imaginative activity fashioned so as to produce outcomes that are both original and of value.'¹

Although there are imaginative mash-ups that produce these outcomes (my favourites being DJ Dangermouse's Grey album that fuses Jay-Z's Black Album and The Beatles' so-called White Album,² and KultiMan's musical mix of YouTube clips – mainly drawn from musicians' uploaded tutorials³) there are many that don't. But that's okay, because even working within copyright's extending reach, there's a whole industry that shows that work can be both 'original and of value' with the merest side-step from previously copyrighted work – where much of the work of Franz Ferdinand makes one reach for reissued Talking Heads, or where the Kaiser Chiefs sound uncannily like XTC. It is really not that difficult to create original content. If copyright is any sort of monopoly, it certainly isn't one that erects barriers to entry.

Even without leaning on existing works, it has never been easier to fashion imaginative musical activity. Music creators use YouTube to share techniques and teach one another how to use music tools – from 35 video tutorials of how to create a Dubstep wobble bass sound⁴ to over 200,000 violin lessons.⁵ Piano and guitar lessons come as standard with every new Apple Mac and music-making software is available for the iPhone (for instance the Moo-Cow-Music suite of software, or the Tenori-On emulator Melodica). Even console games are introducing new players to 'traditional' instruments. In the report I wrote in 2008, 'Why console games are bigger than rock 'n' roll', looking at the phenomenon of music-based console games, I interviewed Stephen Lawson, editor of the magazine *Total Guitar*.⁶ He told me:

We were pretty sniffy about Guitar Hero when it first came out. Recently though, our view has moved on a bit. We always liked the fact that the game

glorifies guitars and guitar playing, but we've started to be contacted by young people who have bought electric guitars based on being introduced to the guitar by GuitarHero.

Although not wanting to overplay this, there are techniques that you can learn through music-based console games that can stand you in good stead when you graduate to a 'real' instrument. Especially console games that allow errors so one can learn in the Niels Bohr mould, where: 'an expert is someone who has made all the mistakes that can be made in a very narrow field'.

The leap from Rock Band or Guitar Hero World Tour's 'drum kit' to the real thing is so straightforward that drummers have even adapted real kits via MIDI to be able to play the charts from the games.⁷ And bands such as San Francisco's The Guitar Zeros modify Guitar Hero controllers to use as MIDI controllers onstage.⁸

So today's media give many, many new ways of expressing oneself making music or exploring and identifying oneself listening to music. But does this add up to music's role in an expressive life?

Many of the examples given above assume that a path through an expressive life should be self or peer-defined. Although individuals of course need the goal of being 'the authors of their own life story',⁹ there are interventions that policy makers and politicians can make to ensure that all authors have a full range of options to make their story as compelling, unexpected, dramatic or dull as they choose.

If an expressive life is a right, then it has to be open to everyone and all entry points to an expressive life should be accorded an equal validity. To achieve this we must recognise that it is culture's ability to affect and resonate that hold its power, above the vocabulary by which culture chooses to express itself.

Bill Ivey explores this point in his book *Arts Inc.*, where he argues that access to a full expressive life is hampered if there is an assumed hierarchy between arts, and one cultural vocabulary is accorded superiority over others. He gives the example of classical music: 'Too often classical music employs a sales pitch

that, right out of the gate, treats every other form of music as inferior.’

Once this hierarchy is in place, what follows is an implication that the arc of the story in an expressive life has a favoured direction of travel, regardless of the connection or resonance with an individual: ‘The process is not about finding ways to connect with the interests and concerns of listeners but rather to convert consumers from the popular to the refined.’

These two ideas hamper universal access to an expressive life. This is not to say that all musical expression has equal effect or equal merit – the riches of a musical expressive life are multiplied the deeper one delves – but I believe that all starting points have equal validity, and that there are various directions of travel in a life’s musical journey that can lead to equally exciting, compelling destinations.

Other than the dynamics with which sounds are played, instrumental music has only three basic tools: rhythm, melody and harmony. Different musical cultures utilise these tools to different degrees.

The zither-like kanun, played throughout the Near East, has string bridges with built-in levers. Thus the tonal centre of the music can change by degrees of quarter tones mid-work, adding a capacity for melodic subtlety and complexity that are hallmarks of Near Eastern music. Professor Meki Nzewi (now based at the University of Pretoria) once railed at me for having the temerity to talk about ‘cross rhythms’ when referring to the polyrhythmic patterns common in sub-Saharan African music: ‘It’s not three against four – that’s the trouble with you Westerners. Everything’s always in opposition! It’s three with four – like a man with short legs walking alongside another man with longer legs.’ In sub-Saharan music, rhythmic sophistication is as natural as two men walking side by side.

Western Classical music, and forms derived from it, employ harmony as a weapon of choice, with the layering of sound so developed and ingrained that certain intervals are associated with given emotions.

Thus one culture can trump another in the expressiveness, subtlety and depth of development of the musical tool that it

favours. A hierarchy and favoured direction of cultural travel denies this, hinders access to an expressive life for all and precludes access to the expression of others.

If policy makers and politicians are serious about developing lives that are expressive, this might mean investment in deeper progression routes through cultural forms from a range of starting points (for instance, by encouraging the development of education that facilitates excellence across the broadest range of styles and genres, led at all stages by people who truly understand these music forms). This will allow the highest aspirations in many more cultural forms, enriching the lives of those who enjoy and create this music, and enriching the UK's wider culture. If all are to enjoy a full musical expressive life the range of cultural gatekeepers needs to broaden dramatically and the gates that are kept need to be unlocked and open to everyone, regardless of their direction of travel.

Yes, a teenager from Bow, with Grime as her musical introduction, should be encouraged to enjoy *Peter Grimes* at the ENO, but shouldn't then a 50-something from Peterborough brought up on Fauré be encouraged to enjoy the Dubstep of FWD>> at Plastic People?

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Notes

- 1 Robinson, *All Our Futures*.
- 2 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Grey_Album (accessed 30 May 2009).
- 3 See <http://thru-you.com/%23/videos/> (accessed 30 May 2009).
- 4 YouTube searched with search string 'Wobble Bass Tutorial' on 29 May 2009, see www.youtube.com/results?search_type=&search_query=wobble+bass+tutorial&aq=o&oq=wobble+bass+tuto (accessed 16 Jun 2009).

- 5 YouTube searched with search string 'Violin Lessons' on 29 May 2009, see www.youtube.com/results?search_type=&search_query=violin+lessons&aq=f (accessed 16 Jun 2009).
- 6 See www.musicleader.net/uploads/documents/doc_504.pdf (accessed 30 May 2009).
- 7 See www.youtube.com/watch?v=0j4v_1Gxo4M (accessed 30 May, 2009).
- 8 See www.theguitarzeros.com/ and www.youtube.com/watch?v=vbpZBQ7jXgI (accessed 30 May 2009).
- 9 Reeves and Collins, *The Liberal Republic*.

10 YouTube if you want to: being expressive citizens in the 'Video Republic'

Peter Bradwell

In May 2009 the then Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government Hazel Blears gave Gordon Brown a bit of a dressing down for his media performances. And her jibe 'YouTube if you want to'¹ was an indication of the difficulty mainstream politicians have had dealing with a new digital world. As Malcolm Tucker from Armando Iannucci's satire *The Thick of It* said, they can end up looking like 'analogue politicians in a digital age'.

It is not just the tricky demands of sites like YouTube that politicians have struggled with. The whole issue of legislating for the digital age has proved to be a tough nut to crack. But it is important that we get it right. So far efforts by government such as the Digital Britain review have led to mixed results. They have not been led by a clear vision about what kind of a creative and participative culture that technology can help promote. Legislation needs to understand what it wants from technology and how its own interventions can help make that a reality.

In the research for the Demos pamphlet *Video Republic* we found that in the noisy platforms like YouTube a new forum for public exchange is emerging. It is a messy realm of discussion, debate and trivia. There is a lot of potential for these new spaces, opened up by technology, to bring about a more participative cultural environment.

We might prefer to see the new folk-style internet culture as a type of democratically assembled 'commons'. In reality the Video Republic has sparked an extraordinary collision of private interests. While some corporations are haemorrhaging profits as individuals share and produce content for free, others are busily

establishing extraordinary monopolies over content and information.

Given that a great deal of the excitement about this new 'public' space has been generated by the absence of traditional sources of authority, there has been a certain reluctance to encourage regulation. Indeed, from the outside it might seem that little is required – to many the Video Republic is self-regulating.

But this republic – the kind of world we might want technology to help us build – will not just *happen*. It needs to be built. We are all citizens of this republic, and it entails new opportunities, responsibilities and vulnerabilities. It confers new rules for the businesses, individuals and governments that reside in it. In their quest for dominion over this scrappy, unpredictable space, there are a range of actors who could easily compromise the principles of a democratic cultural realm.

The battle lines in the Video Republic are being drawn and they extend outwards into questions of copyright, privacy, freedom of speech and monopolies of influence. Who determines the ground rules for use? Who regulates the norms, boundaries and limits? Who decides who gets to take part, and on what terms? If we want technology to help people have more power over their lives and the world around them, the accessibility of content and the laws that govern its use are crucial. A better understanding of the role of technology legislation is important for a vision of the 'expressive life' to become a reality.

Copyright

Music, television and film companies no longer hold a monopoly on the way content moves between people. The way governments, business and the legal system are responding is deeply confused. They too easily equate the economic interests of rights holders with the interests of creators – the video makers, artists and musicians – rather than with the health of the cultural realm. Many film and music companies would prefer to frame the argument in terms of theft. But 'content' is not just an economic asset. Content is culture. It is the currency through which we

build a sense of who we are. While video should not become free of economic value, it should be freely used as currency in cultural exchange and creation. Concerns about economic value can easily undermine the promise of new kinds of cultural exchange.

There is a democratic imperative to give people the ability to contest, remake and critique content. A society that claims to value free speech and a vibrant, participative cultural life has an important tension to manage. It means making some difficult and groundbreaking choices, but as Lawrence Lessig observes, there can be some guiding principles: ‘We start with the principle of free speech, not the values of the proprietary network. We start with the principle and see what’s possible.’²

Our copyright regime, applied in the digital age, does not support people being active participants in cultural life. Trying to use technology to stop file-sharing, for example, has made things worse, not better. The technical and legal ‘solutions’ to file-sharing have only punished consumers, made it harder to find new models for the culture industry to make money, threatened people’s privacy and made it harder to capitalise on lots of new opportunities for people to engage with the culture around them. There are no success stories from the efforts to eradicate file-sharing. The outcomes usually involve ludicrous court cases in which, for example, a woman can be fined \$1.92 million for sharing 24 songs, as happened in the case of Jammie Thomas-Rasset.³

Declaring our digital rights

The European elections of June 2009 brought astounding gains for Sweden’s Pirate Party, which won two seats in the European Parliament. It campaigns not only about legal file-sharing, but on a broader platform of internet regulation that promotes privacy and good internet governance. As the journalist Jack Schofield points out, we might think about establishing a similar party in the UK.⁴ It could draw on a strong background of campaigning. The Open Rights Group and others such as Electronic Frontier Foundation have been banging the drum for online rights for some time. It is time to turn this message into policy.

Copyright is but one example of the battle for people's rights online. As more of our lives become dependent on technology, our digital existences have become a new battlefield for our liberty and democratic principles.

The decisions other people make about or for us in this space are increasingly significant for our 'offline' lives, affecting our citizenship, our relationships with those around us and our ability to be part of a shared political and cultural world.

Despite the utopian language that often surrounds new technology, it is by no means certain that it will automatically help to improve our freedoms and enhance our democratic process. Copyright is only one of the challenges. There are inequalities of access to technology and the skills to use it. From the increasing significance of personal information, through to the regulation of content on websites, to freedom of expression and our ability to critique and exchange the culture and information around us, it is becoming ever more apparent that our digital rights are manifestations of these age-old principles. That is why, in *Video Republic*, we called for declaration of digital rights, to translate principles of free speech, privacy and citizenship into the digital age.

If we do not as a society stake a claim for these digital rights, then technology is merely in the service of the world as it currently is. We will not find new spaces for expression, debate and exchange but will find overly regulated, inhibited forums. The internet will become merely a shop, rather than an engine of social, political and economic innovation.

The Digital Britain process and future government policy needs to base itself in the principles of access to and use of the content around us. Intervention and regulation around the internet was once seen as an attack on the principles of openness, creativity and autonomy. It is now necessary, in the right form, to guarantee that technology remains open, accessible and free.

This article is adapted from the Demos pamphlet *Video Republic*, by Celia Hannon, Charlie Tims and Peter Bradwell.

Peter Bradwell is a researcher at Demos and co-author of Video Republic.

Notes

- 1 Blears, 'YouTube is no substitute for knocking on doors'.
- 2 Lessig, speech to the Personal Democracy Forum Conference.
- 3 See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jammie_Thomas (accessed 16 Jun 2009).
- 4 Schofield, 'Sweden's Pirate Party wins EU seat'.

Conclusion: enabling the expressive life

Samuel Jones

Over the past few years the British Museum has put on a series of exhibitions centred on the lives of rulers from great civilisations of the past. Hundreds of thousands have seen art treasures and everyday objects from the worlds of China's First Emperor, Qin Shihuangdi, the Roman Emperor Hadrian and the Iranian Shah Abbas. In late 2009 thousands more will be able to enter into the life of the Aztec Emperor, Moctezuma.

If it were not for the cultural artefacts around which these exhibitions have revolved, we wouldn't know very much at all about any of those rulers. The images and objects that have been gathered in the British Museum's famous Reading Room for these shows are all expressive forms, and expressive forms define all eras. When we think of the 1960s today, we think of the Beatles and the psychedelic colours of Woodstock and the Isle of Wight. It is through the arts and culture that we get a sense of what happened, why, how and in what spirit. When Tony Blair spoke of his legacy in June 2007, it is no coincidence that he did so at Tate Modern, perhaps the most signal cultural institution of modern times. Why then do we not hold our cultural and creative *present* – our contemporary expressive life – in such esteem?

In his chapter in this pamphlet Tony Hall speaks with bafflement about why arts leaders have time and again to justify public spending on the arts. This collection provides a starting point for rethinking why government needs to develop positive and pro-active policies with regard to culture and the arts. Each of the essays stands alone as an example of how different forms of creativity – from young people's online behaviour to the artist Shepard Fairey's portrait of President Obama, as well as our heritage – contributes to our expressive life to form part of what it is to be a member of society, locally, nationally and globally.

The concept of the expressive life helps us to see creative production (used in the collective and widest sense) and heritage as being the fabric of what makes up our society. It suggests a principle from which to proceed and a requirement for the new thinking that Sandy Nairne calls for in his contribution (see Chapter 5). As established by Bill Ivey, the twin pillars of the expressive life are:

- *Heritage*: Belonging, continuity, community and history as expressed through art and ideas grounded in the cultural expressions and practices of family, neighbourhood, ethnicity, nationality and the many linkages that ground us in a specific place and within a wider community; to this might be added the stories of tension that, as Roshi Naidoo points out in Chapter 8, play an equal part in the formation of identity.
- *Voice*: A realm of individual expression; the means by which we can be autonomous, personally accomplished and cosmopolitan.

The chapters in this pamphlet demonstrate that the expressive life comprises choices and behaviours in many different subjects. Below is a set of guiding principles by which we can think about how to develop the policy that we will need and how to frame the institutions that provide for the expressive life. It starts from the recognition that cultural institutions, from museums and theatres to our education policy and websites, are creative organs within our polity and not engines of economic and instrumental delivery.

- *Culture, creativity and the arts should be seen from a cross-policy perspective.* The expressive life has impact across wide areas of policy. It cannot just be seen as the remit of one department. There should be greater cross-departmental collaboration, in particular in relation to education and to industry issues such as intellectual property.
- *Government should support both publicly funded and private practice.* The area of government responsible for the upkeep and sustenance of our expressive life should take an approach broader than the current focus on the publicly funded sector. We

need to support institutions for the expressive life – cultural organisations and education – but we must also provide security for private creative production. In particular, policy should cover publicly funded practice in the cultural and creative sector and relationships with the commercial and emergent enterprise sector that represents both creative expression and in which we make choices in relation to cultural consumption.

- *Young people must be educated to take an active and responsive part in the expressive life.* Great steps have been made in learning around culture and creativity. However, the expressive life can only be fully realised if creativity and a sense of heritage are connected to voice. By teaching young people early that creativity is a form of expression, we not only encourage and enfranchise their own choices and decisions in that area, but also set them on the path of seeing the expression of others in the world around them.
- *Our expression should be recorded and stored equitably to provide the heritage by which we can form communities and a sense of identity.* Technology provides the means of widening access to expression, communicating and distributing a far greater variety of expression than ever before and enabling people to take part in the expressive life as individuals, in their own terms and in personalised ways. While continuing to develop new ways of ensuring democratic and free access to the expressive life for citizens in the UK and elsewhere, we should also record and track such expression to create a vibrant heritage that is representative of the many values that make up our society and to which we can respond by shaping new values.
- *Institutions should stimulate and enable conversations about the values expressed in our cultural and creative choices.* The expressive life should be presented collectively. Technology can provide for expressive individuality, but this cannot be at the expense of community. Cultural institutions, from museums and concert venues to web-platforms and education, should ensure that expressive and creative forms are shown collectively, in communication with each other and in ways that allow people to group around them.

In the UK and beyond, changes in our behaviour, developments in technology, the increased frequency with which we encounter different attitudes and beliefs and changes in world-views and values brought about by the recession, combine to put culture and creativity at the centre of policy. We can achieve this by enabling the expressive life.

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ROYAL OPERA HOUSE

From the exhibitions we visit, to the videos we watch and make, to the clothes we wear; the choices we take about what culture to consume and what we create help us connect with others who share our opinions, ideas and beliefs. Through culture we find our place in the world; we explore who we are and who we want to be. This is our expressive life.

This collection of essays examines the idea of 'expressive life', as introduced by Bill Ivey. It helps us to see creativity and heritage as the fabric of our society that gives meaning and value to our lives. Contributors from across the creative and cultural sectors look at the effects of changes in our behaviour towards cultural institutions, developments in technology and the global exchange of different attitudes and beliefs. These combine with political uncertainty and economic upheaval to put culture and creativity at the heart of debate about the future of our communities and international relations.

Cultural policy should enable citizens to take an active role in shaping their world. To do this, policy-makers across all areas of government must work with professionals and institutions within the creative sectors to enable expressive lives.

Samuel Jones leads on cultural work at Demos.

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