

Which groups of people participate in your organisation's arts activities?

Small World Theatre is an Arts and drama for development organisation as well as a producing and performing company. In our accessible and environmentally friendly building in Cardigan we also present our work and other touring shows. We implement a wide range of participative projects. The beneficiaries are often the local community, NEETs, those with disabilities, and many other groups and sectors. Sometimes our work is intergenerational. We run participative arts and drama workshops, giant and carnival construction, festival promotion and have an astonishing range of innovative activities and productions. We are not ACW revenue funded. We are also operating a "what's on" website and support cultural tourism in the region.

This means that we work with the widest range of people. We aim to work in an integrated and inclusive way with a large section of society. (NOT "Big Society" that is of course a divisive and deeply flawed concept, anti developmental and obviously strategically naive.)

2a. Do you think that budget changes have affected participation in the arts, either positively or negatively?

b) Contrary to popular belief the arts do not thrive unaided in a recession. This is an outright fallacy. There has been a remarkable drop across the board in attendance and we have responded by keeping prices low for workshops and other participatory activities even though our funding has ended for some of these workshops. The company also creates work and employment for many artists and artists from marginalised or disadvantaged groups. We have found it harder to make things pay for themselves and it has become much more time consuming to access funds for all aspects of our work. It is a diminishing market and the competition is greater and this has meant that getting people to attend means spending a greater amount on marketing and promoting. This is not just because we were not trying hard enough before, it is a direct result of cuts and recession, the Olympics "hovering" up the lottery money.

2b. Do you think that certain groups of people have been affected more than others?

Even with our dropping prices, attendance from the low-income unemployed sector is less. Children and young people seem to participate less or it is even harder to fill workshops and activities especially without subsidies. Other charities have folded or merged and don't have budgets for transport to bring participants too us which can effect us too. Councils too have lessened their involvement and longstanding work has evaporated. We are increasingly being asked to provide space and our services unpaid. We have responded to some of these requests but we can go no further on the good will and generosity of staff. Even the artists who deliver the work are being squeezed out of the profession. The company itself has made people redundant. What is the point in seeking to support participants and beneficiaries if the people and organizations that are skilled experienced and trained to deliver the work are being so squeezed and are under threat.

3. Are there gaps in provision for people to participate in arts activities,

either demographically or geographically?

Much of our work is successful in plugging those gaps and getting people participating. Gaps in the provision of funding make it harder for people to participate in arts activities. Much of the funding is heavily biased to shifting political agendas. There seems to be conflicting philosophies on participation as to whether to support scores of under represented groups or to promote their participation in a totally integrated way in mainstream facilities. Much of our successful work is with integration especially refugees and people classified with those differently abled

Fuel prices have put people off venturing out in this rural area and bad weather does have an impact too. It is a "no brainer" that rural areas are hit hardest, our catchment area is vast.

4. Are there enough funding sources available other than the Arts Council for Wales? Are alternative funding sources accessible?

Funding it is very difficult. Especially for a company like ours with over 30 years of fundraising experience and the expertise in implementing great projects. We have a massively diverse spread of funding bodies that we go to. This is OK but we deliver consistent and effective work, often well exceeding expectations, targets and outcomes. However good work should be funded on an ongoing basis and we should not have to always reapply with a "NEW" idea when the process is working well and especially when the longer term working relationship with clients and communities yields exponential and cascading positive effects and outcomes. It would be so much more effective to let the people and charities who know how to do this work get proper funding to carry on. Short term funding is ok but developing a community, bringing true change eliciting behavioural change and lasting benefits as well as systemic approaches takes long-term commitment. Consequently we have to divert time and energy in chasing micro budgets to solve massive or entrenched problems with a backdrop of deteriorating infrastructure and harder to access governmental support. With over 30 years of work behind us we have been here longer and know more than politicians and policy makers about this work of participation and development. They live in a world in which their existence is precarious and it seems they would like to transfer this precarious, competitive and short term thinking to those that implement the real work. Not only is this short sighted but divisive and in the end self destructive to their personal ambitions of re election or career building.

5. What role does the voluntary arts sector play in promoting participation in the arts in Wales and how can this be supported?

What role does the voluntary arts sector think it's playing in Wales? You can ask them. They will say, "*The sector is responsible for being absolutely vital to our health, social and economic development.*" If that is so then why is the funding not commensurate with the obvious society stabilizing outcomes?

They know what an amazing job we are all doing but do other people outside their immediate remit understand. We know voluntary agencies are crucial. If

the voluntary arts sector seeks support how will it do this without being suspected, by the so-called Professional Arts Orgs of "stealing the bread from their mouths"? Must we rob the transport budget? They would hardly notice the donation of our present annual needs and only mildly flinch when we increase our budgetary requirement by a factor of 5.

6. Is the strategic relationship between the Welsh Government and the bodies that distribute arts funding effective in increasing participation?

A strategic relationship is based on some form of power dynamic. These relationships are never equal. Welsh government is only as good as it is informed. Most of the fund distributors know very little of the extensive work we do, for instance. Directing funds at those who are well established that show success, that are innovative, that create and develop new approaches would increase effective participation. Do they know what's going on out here in the real world?

It is very difficult to wholly isolate participatory arts from other performance audience-based arts.

If the process of defining under represented groups points them primarily at certain areas of participative arts activities this also can create an unnecessary division while paradoxically aiming for inclusion. It is safe to say that when seeking inclusion many people would be surprised to find that some inclusive policies are responsible for exacerbating that exclusion or amplifying further division. Systemic reviews are essential.

Arts and culture is CENTRAL to any form of development. The governmental bodies have been told this, they know this is manifestly true but they must have trouble believing what they know. If there was an informed "will " there would be a way.

Across Wales the picture of funding distribution is puzzling. For instance there is no arts officer in Ceredigion, WHAT? I hear you say. The way the small amount of funding for Ceredigion is distributed is not clear and any meaningful policy hard to find. Strange but true I think.

After extensive online research this came as close as any



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7. All public bodies in Wales will have published a strategic equality plan by April 2012. Do you think that these new public sector equality duties will help to increase participation in the arts among under-represented groups in Wales?

How many £ millions are set aside to back this and publicise these new public sector equality duties ? Not much one would expect, Then No, probably not any increase in participation or maybe a micro increase. Nothing in isolation works well. It may well only take 7 years for people to grasp the existence of a policy. When there is a societal backdrop of cynicism and being de-moralised this allows the majority to feel "under-represented" and the under-represented to increasingly feel ignored

A new paradigm is needed.

This is a longer conversation.