The Arts in Solidarity –

EU Country	2022 € million	Population millions	€/head capita
SE	2837	10.52	269.68
NL	4649	17.80	261.18
B	2858	11.74	243.38
AT	2189	9.10	240.55
DE	15133	84.36	179.39
IRL	900	5.27	170.78
ES	6304	48.09	131.10
PL	3606	36.75	98.12
IT	5724	58.99	97.03
UK	5600	67.00	83.58
PT	750	10.47	71.65
F	1843	68.20	27.02

The Arts In Solidarity

13 April, 13:00
Casco Art Institute:
Working for the Commons

Navigating Funding Constraints and Shifting Paradigms of Growth and Competition

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Navigating Funding Constraints and Shifting Paradigms of Growth and Competition

Date: 13 April, 2024

Venue: Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons, Utrecht, Netherlands

Initiators: Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan (Partisan Social Club, UK); Aline Hernández and Marianna Takou (Casco Art Institute, NL)

"Gramsci used to say 'Pessimism of the intellect, optimism of the will.' What he meant is: understand how the bloody system works. What confronts you? The fact that the terrain is not favourable to your project. Understand that, even if it disillusions you, even if it keeps you awake at night. Understand it. Then you're in a position to say: 'Well, what is...? What can change? Where are the emergent forces? Where are the cracks and the contradictions? What are the elements in popular consciousness one could mobilize for a different political program?'"

Stuart Hall, 'The Great Moving Right Show' (1998)

About this Resource

Welcome to this resource, which brings together material from the Arts in Solidarity event held at Casco Art Institute on 13 April 2024 as a result of Hewitt and Jordan's spacex secondment.[1]

Inside, you'll find talks, contributions from participants, and responses from the day. We wanted to document and share the conversations that took place, extending them beyond the room to anyone who might find them useful. We also hope this resource can act as a tool for reflection, something to return to in future conversations abut art, solidarity, and resistance.

[1]Spatial Practices in Art and Architecture for Empathetic Exchange (spacex), 2020–25. spacex is a collaborative research project involving 27 academic and cultural organisations. Through secondments, it explores how spatial practices in art, architecture, and design foster public exchange and promote empathy in urban environments. The project addresses the rise of populist nationalism and social conflict in Europe by engaging diverse publics and encouraging dialogue in cities and towns. https://www.spacex-rise.org/

Contents

Thanks to Justin O'Connor, Laura Alexander, Yazan Khalili, and Christa-Maria (Mia) Lerm Hayes for articulating the contexts that shaped the day. Thanks to the Casco Art Institute team for supporting the event.

Thank you to everyone who attended the gathering and contributed to the discussion, your questions and comments are woven throughout this resource.

Michael Wright Design

Silly Gooze Print

The Event

The event was shaped as an open gathering, a space for those wanting to think collectively about the role of art today and the challenges of organising and speaking out in a time of war, crisis, and exhaustion. This moment, defined by funding cuts, shrinking public space, and intensifying neoliberal pressure, set the tone for a day of collective discussion, note-sharing, and talk-based reflection.

The Partisan Social Club produced a series of three banners for the event. The first displayed the event title, date, and location. The second proposed a set of principles for *Art & Solidarity:*

1. **Unite**
2. **Collectivise**
3. **Internationalise**
4. **Refuse to compete**
5. **Democratise everything**

The final banner called for all to *Build Tools, Technology, and Cultural Institutions for the Common Good.*

The Talks

The talks responded to the political moment, marked by wars in Gaza and Ukraine, the rise of the far right, and worsening inequality across Europe and beyond. Here we addressed the challenges concerning the arts not to defend cultural elitism or claim a privileged place for creativity, but because art and its institutions remain spaces where public culture and politics are still negotiated and expressed. This working assembly brought together artists, activists, scholars, and arts organizations from the UK and the Netherlands to address the impact of hyper-neoliberal policies on the arts. Co-convened by the Partisan Social Club (UK) and Casco Art Institute (NL) as part of the *spacex-rise* exchange project, the event explored how market-driven ideologies, and the erosion of public funding are reshaping cultural life and threatening the arts as a site of critical and collective practice.

Through presentations, dialogue, and collaborative reflection, the day considered how to resist extractive funding structures and cultivate practices of commoning, solidarity, and shared struggle. Contributors exchanged strategies for sustaining social and cultural work amidst growing austerity, institutional competition, and political drift.

A particularly powerful moment came with the contribution of artist and writer Yazan Khalili, whose reflections on the situation in Gaza placed the day's discussions in sharp relief. His intervention foregrounded the urgency of connecting critiques of funding systems to lived realities of war, occupation, and cultural erasure, reminding us of the global entanglements of cultural struggle and the ethical stakes of working in solidarity.

Rather than diverting from the event's aims, Khalili's talk sharpened our focus: highlighting the need for cultural work that not only responds to crisis but also builds transnational, anti-colonial solidarities. His contribution deepened the discussion, underscoring why the fight for public, equitable, and socially engaged arts infrastructures must remain inseparable from broader political urgencies.

Justin O'Connor, introducing his latest book *Culture is Not an Industry* (2024), revisited the original promise of the creative industries in the 1990s, rooted in democratic, grassroots cultural production. He argues that this promise has since been compromised, with the term "creative industries" now largely dominated by marketing and tech sectors that have little connection to cultural work. He critiques how culture has been captured by economic logic and calls for its reintegration into the foundational economy, alongside education, housing, and health, as part of the essential infrastructure of a livable society. O'Connor advocates for culture to be recognized as a public good and cultural right.

Laura Alexander, presenting on Trust-Based Funding: A Shift from Project-Based Support to Flexible Grants in the Arts, outlined the evolving approach of the Prince Claus Fund. She described the organization's transition to unearmarked, upfront grants focused on artists' needs and autonomy, reframing funding as solidarity rather than oversight. Drawing on feminist theory, she explored how trust must be continuously negotiated across asymmetrical relationships, particularly when navigating state and philanthropic frameworks. The talk offered a compelling model for how funding infrastructures might better support cultural work under contemporary constraints.

Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan, in their talk *Build Tools, Technology, and Cultural Institutions for the Common Good*, reflected on how UK cultural policy constrains the political possibilities of social art practice. Drawing from their own art practice and their recent journal article on depoliticization, Hewitt and Jordan examine how public funding, cultural institutions, and technocratic governance often redirect art toward consensus and compliance, rather than critique and political engagement. They argue for art that is "twice political". Art engaged both with broader social struggles and with transforming art's own institutional conditions. Despite austerity and funding cuts, they see hope in practices that foster agonism, collectivity, and grassroots political exchange.

In the introduction to *What Matters Now?*, Yazan Khalili reflects on the emotional, intellectual, and political exhaustion that has shaped his thinking particularly in the wake of six months of intensified violence in Gaza. He describes a deep rupture: a moment when familiar tools, systems, and languages lose their meaning. The introduction marks a turning point, where assumptions about the state, institutions, and agency collapse, prompting a fundamental reckoning with how we think and act. Chaired by Christa-Maria (Mia) Lerm Hayes, the session opened in a spirit of urgency, calling not only for a confrontation with violence, but also for a recognition of the structures that perpetuate it. Rather than clinging to exhausted forms, Khalili calls for a sober reckoning and the courage to imagine otherwise.

Each talk was followed by discussion and questions from those present, and we have included a selection of reflections from the day. Thanks to Polly Jarman for collecting these comments.

Thank you to Christa-Maria (Mia) Lerm Hayes for chairing some of the talks and for providing an image documenting public arts funding per capita in Europe.

Special thanks to Sepp Eckenhaussen, who was present at the gathering, for revisiting his original text *The Liberation of Arts Philanthropy* and contributing it to this resource.

Thanks also to Marley Treloar for help in collating resources and links.

Finally, our thanks to Casco Art Institute: Working for the Commons, whose space, care, and collaborative ethos made this gathering possible. Thanks also to the support crew.

Edited and compiled by Mel Jordan and Andy Hewitt.

Justin O'Connor, *Culture is Not an Industry* (2024) book launch Nottingham, UK 2024
Photo: Mel Jordan

Justin O'Connor

Justin O'Connor begins the discussion by articulating the foundational thesis of his latest book, 'Culture is not an Industry', released in February 2024 by Manchester University Press.

To start, I'll talk a bit about my book. The first chapter focuses on creative industries, a subject I've explored extensively. I want to clarify that the concept of creative industries isn't just about economists transforming culture into economic terms. It has much deeper roots and encompasses a utopian vision or promise that was particularly vibrant in the 90s, especially in places like Manchester where I was actively involved. Back then, the movement felt like it emerged from popular culture—it had a 'grassroots', almost democratic ethos. These were small-scale, commercial endeavour's that stood apart from the larger corporate entities and state-funded cultural institutions, which, especially in the early 90s, seemed somewhat rigid and aloof.

In the 70s, it became apparent that most people experienced art and culture outside the publicly funded system. They engaged with a variety of commercial sources—ranging from large corporations to small-scale outfits that had been proliferating since the 1960s. This realization highlighted a more democratic distribution of culture, driven by both commercial and grassroots initiatives. So, to sum up, the creative industries were about more than just economics; they seemed to represent a dynamic and inclusive cultural landscape. Now, today I'd love to hear your thoughts and questions on this topic. What aspects are you most interested in exploring further?

The creative industries initiative originated as a positive effort towards the democratization of culture, a point I wanted to emphasize. However, part of the frustration expressed in my book is about how this idea was ultimately compromised in its implementation. The UK government embraced the concept of creative industries and popular culture, epitomized by 'Cool Britannia.' The Conservative Party was seen as outdated, and New Labour was expected to renew Great Britain, transforming it into the creative hub of the world with creative industries at the forefront.

At the time, this was viewed as a genuine democratization of the creative sector. Figures like Richard Florida talked about the 'creative class' inheriting the earth, as they carried the means of production "within their heads". However, my concerns about the creative industries took a while to surface and unravel. The Labour Party saw these industries as a source of employment, not for the traditional working class, but for their university-educated children who found success in this new economic sector.

I'm sure many of you are familiar with the concepts I'm discussing, but what I really want to highlight in my book are the myriad problems associated with these ideas. Chief among them is the sheer incoherence of the definitions used, which, in my opinion, remains the most concerning aspect.

Just the other day, I was perusing the Department of Culture, Media and Sport's economic report, and they were still referring to terms like "creative industries," "cultural sector," and "creative sector." Yet, upon closer examination (which, unfortunately, I tend to do), these definitions simply don't hold water. The ongoing confusion surrounding these terms is evident in discussions at conferences dedicated to the creative industries, where endless debates revolve around defining what exactly constitutes these industries.

This lack of clarity persists even in major statistical organizations. For instance, the Australian Bureau of Statistics and the DCMS, despite being government bodies, offer definitions that are nonsensical at best. This confusion extends beyond national borders, with similar issues present at the EU level and around the globe.

To add to the complexity, a significant portion of employment within the so-called creative sector is tied to software and computing, which, arguably, have little to do with traditional notions of culture. In today's digital age, the production of culture is undeniably influenced by digital technologies, but this isn't unique to the creative sector. Education, healthcare, finance—all sectors are deeply impacted by digitalization.

In essence, the lines between what constitutes the creative industries and other sectors have become increasingly blurred. It's a complex issue that warrants further exploration and clarification.

A significant inflation within the sector is evident, with over half comprising information technology, computing software, advertising, marketing, and industrial design. This trend is exemplified by the creative industries award winner in Shanghai, who designed a Porsche.

When we expand our view to include the traditional cultural sector, encompassing film, television, radio, computer games, music, performing arts, and heritage, we find a sector that is relatively small and experiencing decline in many areas.

The reality within the creative industries is characterized by precarity, low wages, diminishing professionalization, and evaporating career paths. Public funding is dwindling, while global platforms dominate, eroding local sectors. The cultural landscape, spanning from the commercial sphere to the marginalized public sector, is in a state of disarray and continuous diminishment.

The fundamental question arises: how do we navigate

this situation? The creative industries have effectively confined discussions on culture within the parameters of an industrial framework. In my book, I endeavour to explore how we can liberate culture from this industrial categorization, repositioning it as a vital component of our societal foundations alongside health, education, infrastructure, and social services. This re-evaluation is crucial because, while certain aspects of culture, such as libraries and heritage, are recognized as public assets, significant portions remain neglected in terms of investment and acknowledgment.

We must reconceptualize culture not merely as a local phenomenon but as an integral part of our broader social fabric. This entails recognizing its significance at various levels, from the local community to national and global contexts. Restoring culture to its rightful place within our social foundations requires a multifaceted approach. While local initiatives are essential, we must also acknowledge and nurture its broader national and global dimensions.

Maybe I'll stop talking there a little bit and take some questions

Justin is joined by Andy Hewiit and Mel Jordan to take questions from the assembly.

Andy: You were explaining why culture needs to be emphasized again. Can you summarize that again quickly please?

Justin: Let me address some of the points Mel raised earlier... Firstly, I don't believe we're still entrenched in neoliberalism. That model has largely faded away over the past decade, albeit without necessarily ushering in a notably kinder system. The discourse on globalization being dead, along with the demise of the Washington Consensus, is gaining traction. What we're witnessing is the resurgence of the State. Initiatives like Biden's Inflation Reduction Act and the EU Green Transition funding, not to mention Starmer's advocacy for green transition, signify a notable shift toward state intervention in the economy. Industrial strategies are making a comeback, and China's impressive state-led endeavours, such as becoming the world's largest vehicle exporter—are drawing attention globally.

With the resurgence of the State comes the idea that it should safeguard its citizens, a sentiment that has been accentuated by the pandemic and the calls for border protection. The traditional pattern of 1990s globalization is no longer dominant. Investment in infrastructure has become a focal point, with global financial organizations like Black Rock pouring funds into essential infrastructure projects. Governments are also prioritizing social services alongside green transitions, signalling a shift towards reinvesting in systems that underpin the economy.

In this evolving landscape, the cultural sector has failed to assert itself adequately. It hasn't effectively argued for its pivotal role in shaping society. Yet, there's a genuine opportunity for culture to reaffirm its position as a cornerstone of social cohesion and quality of life. Just as we recognize the need to reinvest in education and healthcare, which have suffered under neoliberal policies, we must also prioritize reinvesting in culture. This is the essence of the argument I put forth in my book—exploring how culture can be integrated into broader societal reinvestment efforts.

Mel: Yeah, and we were trying to align that to the foundational economy as well. You've done some work with that. Could you say a bit more about it?

Justin: Yeah, well, it's a group from Manchester, but they are part of a broader movement. The term "zeitgeist" might be a bit much, but like many others, they introduced the concept of the foundational economy. Alongside those promoting wellbeing economies, they recognized that an exclusive focus on GDP as a measure of wealth and the idea that this wealth would somehow trickle down to the rest of society—doesn't work. We all know this now, probably everyone except for those at the Cato Institute. We've seen GDP growth slow down, and any increase in GDP has disproportionately benefited the richest in society. Any gains in GDP or productivity have been captured by an increasingly smaller group. This has led to massive inequality.

The foundational economy seeks to redefine what the economy should do and what it means. They identified that 60-70% of employment, depending on the region, is in basic and social infrastructure—water, utilities, education, health, social services, and what they call the "small, everyday economies" that make our cities livable. In places like Wales, only 30% of employment is in high-tech, high investment, globally connected industries. So, why is economic development, and cultural development, so focused on this 30% when most of our lives are lived within the foundational, everyday economy? This is where the battle for liveability and a decent life takes place. This is where we need to focus on achieving improvements. Initially, the foundational economy was very much about promoting basic services and physical and social infrastructure. However, especially after the pandemic, they've also emphasized the importance of social infrastructure, which includes access to culture and cultural spaces.

This concept has gained significant traction in the UK recently, with various research institutes beginning to examine the idea of social and cultural infrastructure. As I mentioned earlier, there has been a shift towards focusing on infrastructure—encompassing the social, systemic, structural, and collective aspects. These are large-scale social systems, many of which are clearly in crisis. A defining characteristic of infrastructure is its invisibility; you get on the bus to visit a friend or turn on the tap for a glass of water without thinking about the underlying transport or water systems. These infrastructures should fade into the background, but their current crises have made them very visible. The same applies to culture. Libraries are closing, public sector funding is being sucked dry, and the cultural sector is falling apart. Artists and cultural workers are leaving the field because they can no longer afford to stay. Creative education and arts courses are being decimated, especially in the UK.

This systemic collapse is setting off alarm bells. To address this, we need to consider culture as part of the social system, akin to a 'cultural right.' Everyone should have the right to fully participate in art and culture, as enshrined in the 1948 Declaration of Human Rights. For these rights to be effective, we need a robust cultural infrastructure. It's from this fundamental level that we need to start pushing back.

Mel: It's really important to think about alternatives thank you. I would like to open it up and see if there are

any questions from others here today?

Question 1: If I understand correctly, you're suggesting we need to correct some of the mistakes made by the creative industries, now often referred to as the creative economy. We've already moved a step further away from the original concept, with some still focusing on it primarily for cash flow. Your approach seems to advocate looking at the foundational economy to find an alternative. My question is: the main negative effect of neoliberalism is applying economic logic to every domain of our life, including arts and culture. Can we really repair this issue by applying another economic perspective to the problem? I have serious doubts that this will help.

Justin: But I don't think I am looking at it from an economic view, if that's what you meant. I come from a background of what I would call political economy, which understands that the way the economy is framed is part of a political question. So, I think I'm not making an argument from an economic perspective that we need a different kind of economy. I would say that culture must reassert its radical distinctiveness against economic logic and needs to have the confidence to do that. This confidence collapsed for various reasons at the end of the 90s. In the 90s, culture was poised to inherit the earth. Culture was seen as the new frontier, the new oil; we were in a post-materialist society where culture was the foundation on which society would develop. That vision has absolutely disappeared.

Now, when we discuss the green transition or new forms of ecological consciousness, culture is almost never mentioned in mainstream thinking. I believe the cultural sector has been a victim of the creative industries, being associated with consumerism and other commercial aspects. But culture should assert its radical distinctiveness from economic logic. Historically, that has been its strength. In that sense, I'm not making an economic argument except to show that the economics of the creative industry—or creative economy, which is an even more vacuous term—doesn't work on its own terms. It's partly a critique and an assertion of the actual nature of culture. Culture is about things that are made up, things that are imagined, things that do not exist yet. The cultural sector thrives on the space of imagination, which is fundamentally problematic for a purely economic logic.

Question 2: In considering cultural expressions and innovations, particularly in the UK with the recent introduction of social prescribing by the NHS, I'm intrigued by whether similar movements are occurring elsewhere globally. Social prescribing, which incorporates cultural experiences like visits to art galleries alongside traditional medical treatments, blurs the lines between healthcare and cultural engagement. This raises questions about the distinction between creative industries and broader cultural activities. Given that social prescribing is not unique to the UK and has been implemented in other EU countries, it prompts reflection on whether the UK is following a broader trend of cultural assertion seen elsewhere. Can you provide examples of similar cultural initiatives or practices outside the UK, particularly in the EU, where healthcare systems are integrating cultural activities into patient care?

Justin: Well, my perspective on social prescribing is somewhat sceptical regarding its efficacy in promoting cultural enrichment. While the idea of prescribing visits to art galleries may serve as a temporary solution to certain issues, it overlooks the intrinsic value of culture itself. What I observe happening in various communities is a blending of social and cultural infrastructure, where boundaries between social and cultural activities become increasingly blurred. Take Casco, for example, where it's challenging to distinguish between social and cultural endeavours. We see artists running food banks and libraries transforming into communal spaces, reflecting this convergence. While this fusion is positive in many ways, my concern lies in the potential neglect of the unique contributions that culture offers. In my discussions, I often highlight the detrimental dichotomy between art and culture a notion pervasive in cultural studies, where culture is celebrated as inherent to everyday life while art is portrayed as elitist. This opposition has deeply hampered the cultural sector. I advocate for a shift away from this divisive mindset and a reclamation of the power of art within culture. While art should certainly be integrated into everyday life, it's crucial to recognize its distinctiveness and not diminish its significance by relegating it to an elitist realm. We must reaffirm the importance of art within culture and move past this limiting dichotomy.

Justin O'Connor is Professor of Cultural Economy at the University of South Australia and Visiting Professor at Shanghai Jiaotong University. He has worked globally on cultural policy, including with UNESCO, advising governments and cities across Europe, Asia, and the Pacific. He co-founded Manchester's Creative Industries Development Service and is currently part of the Reset Collective.

Justin has edited and authored key works on cultural industries and creative cities, including Red Creative, Reset, and Culture is Not an Industry.

More: justin-oconnor.com

Laura Alexander, Mel Jordan and Andy Hewitt, Arts in Solidarity, Casco Art Institute 2024

Andy Hewitt & Mel Jordan (Partisan Social Club)

Build Tools, Technology, and Cultural Institutions for the Common Good.

We aim to reflect on the current UK context and the impact of neoliberal policies on social art practices, hoping these concerns resonate with the cultural challenges also facing the Netherlands. Our starting point is our recent article, *Depoliticization, participation and social art practice: On the function of social art practice for politicization*, where we examine how funding structures and policy agendas, particularly those that emphasize social inclusion and audience engagement can ultimately constrain the political potential of art.

While the arts are under increasing pressure and facing ongoing cuts, which weakens their critical force, we argue that cultural work still holds power. In particular, we highlight the importance of *associational life*. Those moments where people come together through cultural activity to form connections, exchange ideas, and open up space for new forms of collective action. Our work is situated within these tensions, and we've tried to develop artworks that critically engage with the roles and expectations placed on art and culture. Even as social art practice becomes more tightly shaped by instrumental policy frameworks, we believe it retains agency through these everyday acts of gathering and meaning-making, and it's here that we find possibility.

Mel: In preparing our talk, we returned to our longstanding interest in the UK artist collective Art & Language, and particularly Mel Ramsden's essay *On Practice*. Ramsden describes art as a dialectical process in which the artwork and its modes of production change simultaneously. In this view, the contemporary contexts for making and displaying art, modern institutions, public funding mechanisms, cultural policy, and market forces -form the societal conditions that shape the production of artworks.

This sense of grappling with paradoxes has been present throughout the history of contemporary art, from institutional critique to what we might now think of as infrastructural critique. Ramsden refers to this as the "material practice problem world," in which artworks become a kind of temporal, local practice. Importantly, he argues that critical practice should start by creating a context in which you can recognise your own problems.

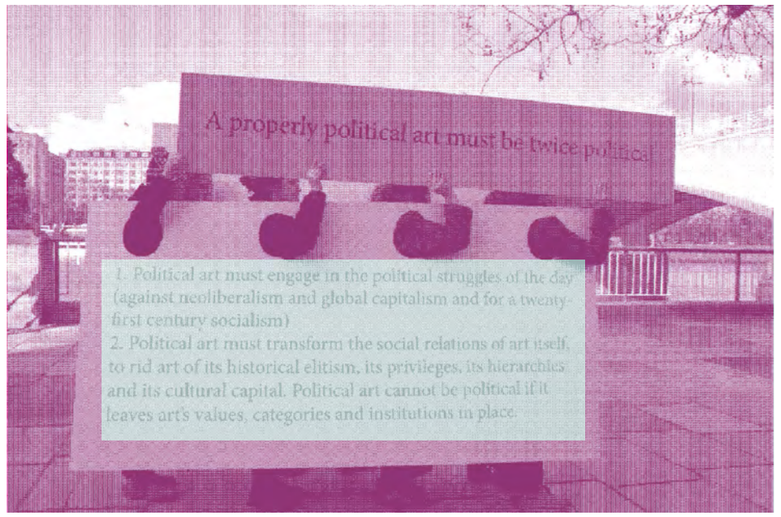
We'd like to begin by acknowledging the importance of that kind of recognition. One of our early works, a billboard poster sited on a Sheffield street in 2004, stated: *The Economic Function of Public Art is to Increase the Value of Private Property* (2004).

At the time, as rhetoric around the 'creative industries' gained traction, something Justin O'Connor has spoke about earlier today, we were interested in exploring how this shift operated, particularly in relation to private property. Another work from that period, *The Function of Public Art for Regeneration is to Sex Up Control of the Underclasses* (2005), considered how the production of public art has historically functioned as a means of social conditioning - intended to 'civilize', 'improve', and regulate marginalized populations. We examined how cultural work plays a role in this process and how different generations of UK artists have responded to this problematic.

For Ramsden, just engaging with political themes doesn't make art political. To be properly political, art has to go further - it has to actually change something, challenge systems, and imagine alternatives. That thinking fed directly into one of our later works, *A Properly Political Art Must be*

1.*The Economic Function of Public Art is to Increase the Value of Private Property*, Freee, 2004, Sheffield UK

Twice Political (2014), which is a kind of group sandwich board sculpture. The text takes inspiration from Marta Harnecker's *Rebuilding the Left*, where she maps out ideas for 21st-century socialism.



2.A Properly Political Art Must be Twice Political, *Critical Machines (Exhibition and Conference)*. AUB Byblos Bank Art Gallery, American University of Beirut Lebanon, March - June 2014.

A truly political art must be "twice political."

First, it must engage with the struggles of the present—challenging neoliberalism, global capitalism, and advocating for 21st-century socialism. Second, political art must transform the very social relations within art itself, dismantling its historical elitism, privileges, hierarchies, and cultural capital. Art cannot be truly political if it leaves intact the values, categories, and institutions of the art world itself.

Andy: Social arts practice, through projects, workshops, and exhibitions creates spaces for public interaction and dialogue. While these initiatives are often celebrated for fostering discussion, UK funding structures tend to prioritise consensus-building, aligning with broader neoliberal agendas. This creates a tension, limiting the arts' capacity to critique or to stage speculative imaginaries. In our practice, we aim instead to promote *agonistic discussion*, where conflicting ideas are exchanged and collective disagreement is rehearsed as a vital mode of engagement. We're more interested in what you could call *agonistic* discussion—spaces where disagreement isn't shut down but welcomed. Where people can work through conflict together.

We've used approaches like slogan-making and collaborative publishing to open up these kinds of spaces. One example is our work with manifestos, using what we call spoken choirs. In *The Manifesto for a Counter-Hegemonic Art* (2005), Freee Art Collective reworked the *Communist Manifesto* to speak back to the art world. In *The Manifesto of a New Public* (2012), we adapted a text by Vladimir Tatlin, "The Initiative Individual in the Creativity of the Collective" (1919) retaining some of the original language while reworking it to explore the relationship between the individual and the collective in a contemporary context.

We'd then invite participants to annotate the text, underlining what they agreed with and read their selections aloud together, forming a kind of spoken choir. It wasn't a performance in the usual sense; there were no spectators, only participant—readers. As people spoke, you could hear where ideas resonated and where they didn't, when only the three of us read certain lines and the room fell silent, that silence carried weight.

Those pauses made disagreement audible. They revealed the messy, complex nature of collective life and reminded us that disagreement isn't a failure but a necessary part of being together and essential to politics. Yet, this kind of engagement can sometimes sit uneasily within funding frameworks that tend to favour narratives of social cohesion. These pressures don't necessarily come from bad intent, but they can unintentionally steer social art practice toward meeting policy goals and prescriptive outcomes rather than holding space for exploring difference.

Mel: To really understand how depoliticization operates, we need to step back and look at the wider landscape, culture wars, austerity, privatization, funding cuts, and the rise of technocratic governance. Having explored how these pressures shape our own practice, we now want to return to the broader forces that frame and sometimes constrain the function of art.

Depoliticization is basically when real decision-making gets taken away from democratic institutions. Instead, it's handed over to these semi-independent bodies, quangos, that aren't directly accountable to the public. Ministers appoint these groups, who then make or carry out policies. This lets governments either take credit for the good stuff or avoid blame for the unpopular decisions.

This tactic was first explained by Jim Bulpitt in the early 1980s as part of Thatcher's style of governing. It looks like power is being spread out, but really, it's just governments keeping control while pretending otherwise. These quangos are often run by unelected experts. They seem separate from government but actually operate within the same set of ideas and rules.

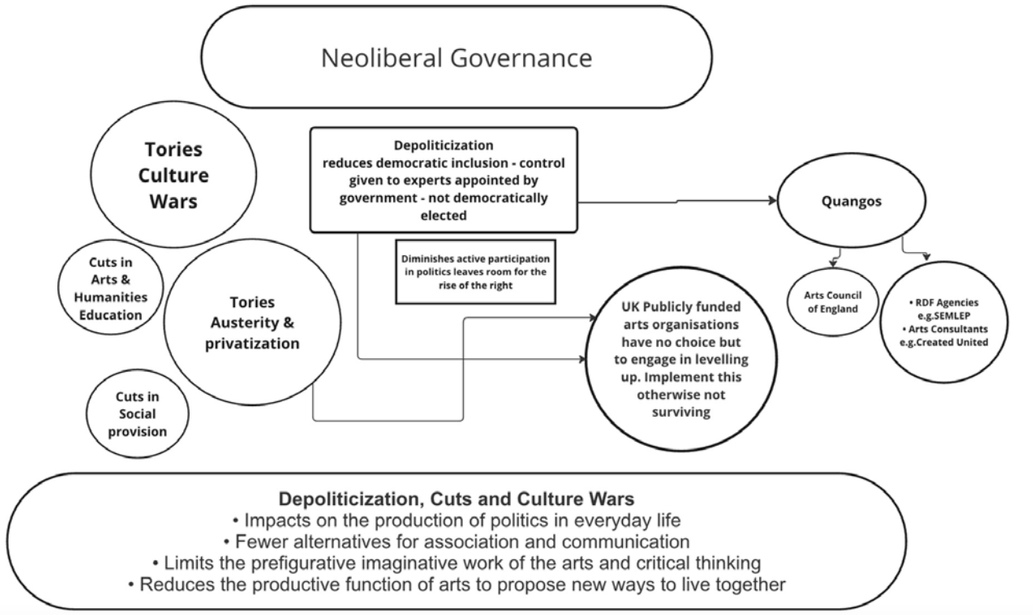
Colin Crouch calls this whole thing "post-democracy"—a term he introduced in 2004 to describe a condition where democracy appears to function, but real power rests with corporations and unelected elites. Politics becomes more about management than genuine representation, leading to public cynicism and disengagement. Depoliticization, in this context, can feed right-wing populism, as people lose faith in the political system altogether.

3.*The Manifesto of a New Public*, (Spoken Choir — agree and disagree) 2012, Freee Art Collective

But that way of looking at things misses something. It focuses on institutions and governance but overlooks the everyday politics that play out through culture and community life. We want to reclaim that broader idea of politics. As Ramsden points out, recognising our problems also means acknowledging the limits of our institutions and nation-states.

It's not enough to point out what the state isn't doing, we also need to consider how culture, technology, and collective action can open up new ways of doing politics: locally, practically, and together.

Andy: The big challenge we're facing is a huge wave of budget cuts and the dismantling of state provision for social and cultural funding, something we've learnt about working with Casco Art Institute and others in the Netherlands. In the UK, it's already happening, and like Justin O'Connor said earlier today, the arts are really being hollowed out. We expect the same tough times in the Netherlands soon. Back in 2010, government chancellor George Osborne, the chief architect of austerity, pushed for constant cuts to public services to keep the UK's credit rating up. The fallout hit the most vulnerable communities hard. More recently, Brexit combined with the financial chaos under Liz Truss caused the UK's credit rating to drop and billions of pounds lost - so much for their arguments on tight fiscal control for the benefit of all. As such, austerity does not end, and that includes for the arts.



4.Diagram H&JTalk Depoliticization Diagram, Jordan 2024

In late 2022, Arts Council England announced funding cuts for 2023–2026. Their budget, mostly from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport, was slashed by 12.5%, down to £1.4 billion. That means many arts groups are facing the reality of significant reductions to their budgets, some losing funding completely. It's a similar story in the Netherlands, making arts funding way harder to get in lots of cities and where many organisations face being axed.

In the UK, the 'portfolio organisations', which get about £446 million to support nearly 1,000 arts groups, are now facing a 16% cut. The visual arts are especially hard hit with a 16% drop. On top of inflation and with less support available from hard pressed local councils, most arts organizations are scrambling to find extra cash to survive.

Local council cuts have been brutal. Places like Birmingham and Nottingham are drowning in debt, which means big cuts to arts budgets. Birmingham's arts funding is being halved this year and cut out completely next year. Nottingham is now dropping funding for cultural institutions entirely. This mess comes from austerity policies Osborne started, which have slashed government funding by over 27% since 2010 — and culture has taken the worst of hit.

Clearly, these cuts represent a severe blow to public arts funding and to the network of small arts organizations and groups that depend on funds and resources to maintain their community-based activity, a truly bleak situation. Funding that remains for culture is often for heritage institutions and museums, protected due to their historical collections, while small arts organizations, which produce culture for the everyday, are more easily left unfunded.

In addition, the government has been systematically withdrawing funds from arts and humanities education, slashing departments, most recently at Goldsmiths College, where they plan to cut staffing by 40%, but also across many universities, as a result of a reduction in arts and humanities teaching in secondary school education in favour of science subjects.

These cuts limit access to resources and constrain the spaces for everyday politics and the arts as a space political organization. They also undermine the potential of a critical culture making citizenry.

Mel: So, what are the political implications if arts continue to face cuts? Art creates a space for cultural exchange and the expression of imaginative, prefigurative ideas, elements that are crucial to politics. In this context, it seems to us that depoliticization is being applied to the arts. The Arts Council England, a quango, has become increasingly instrumental in shaping policy agendas. While some may support having an expert like Nicolas Serota at the helm, we see the danger of a non-elected leader directing the cultural conversation, prioritizing an agenda that doesn't necessarily reflect the critical potential of the arts.

Arts organizations are expected to meet policy agendas. Art-based participation is promoted through these policies, with projects frequently aiming to foster community engagement in a way that aligns with government objectives. The focus tends to be on inclusion, improvement, and reducing the gap between policy and artistic outcomes. In many cases, artwork becomes a tool to promote these policy goals, framed as "good for you", largely uncritical in content and convivial in relations, rather than asking questions and challenging the status quo as we would hope. Instrumental functions for the arts also extend to higher education, where arts and humanities research is increasingly expected to align with government agendas. Research councils now demand that arts and humanities projects demonstrate clear value and purpose in addressing governmental priorities.

Meanwhile, all of this occurs alongside the ongoing culture wars, and the sidelining in the UK of the arts in school curriculum, which further complicate and diminishes the political potential of the arts for the future.

Andy: So, we have another question: does understanding the political process help us resist these conditions? Returning to Mel Ramsden, and his call for the development of alternatives within critical and political art practices, we believe understanding these mechanisms is the first step toward creating actionable resistance. We are working towards that here, now. There is hope in art practices and art institutions that employ social praxis, critical pedagogy, and participatory methods. These approaches can offer significant opportunities for public engagement and exchange, moments like this, where we can share knowledge, understand the challenges, and organize collectively. Build Tools, Technology, and Cultural Institutions for the Common Good.

Andy and Mel answer questions from the assembly

Question 1: Do you see a shift in where political agency sits within the establishment? I recognise that changes are happening, but I wonder if some organisations, like unions or professional associations, are better positioned to engage on a more equal footing. They seem more attuned to their role as representatives

of the field or of political power. Given that many of us are working toward a shared politicization, could it be that universities or associations are actually becoming more influential? I'm curious how you see this playing out in your experience.

Mel: In my experience, regional development agencies (RDAs) play a significant role in distributing government funds, particularly for cultural projects. However, their funding is tightly bound to economic outcomes, there's a constant need to demonstrate job creation or contribution to the so-called 'creative industries.' This means that culture is often instrumentalized as an economic driver rather than valued for its intrinsic or political qualities.

RDAs are quangos, much like the Arts Council, which has long operated as a government arm with its own institutional priorities. My concern with the current Arts Council leadership, exemplified by figures like Nicolas Serota, who comes from a major institution like Tate, is that there's a prevailing institutional mindset rooted in large, established art organizations. This tends to prioritize market-oriented or institutional interests over more radical or community-led political engagements. Meanwhile, smaller grassroots arts organizations are increasingly being sidelined or absorbed by professionalised agencies focused on professional development or managing the creative sector workforce. These agencies often receive Arts Council or local government funding, but that funding is channelled more toward sustaining the creative industries infrastructure rather than supporting actual art production or genuine political activism within art.

So, while these organizations have resources and official roles, their agendas are constrained by economic and institutional imperatives. Because of this, I'm sceptical about their potential to serve as equal partners in advancing the politicization we are working toward. They seem more invested in managing and regulating the field than in challenging or reshaping it.

Andy: I like the idea that some of these organizations might occupy a different or more flexible position. From my experience, that's not always the case, but occasionally you come across individuals whose role is primarily to allocate funds without overly scrutinizing how the money is spent, as long as it's used. They might not engage deeply with the aesthetic or political implications, which can be frustrating. Still, I can see how some organizational models might offer more openness or autonomy compared to the clearly top-down structures we more commonly encounter.

Question 2:
In the Netherlands, organizations collaborate closely with unions to improve things like insurance and pension schemes for workers. These programmes are politically funded by quangos, working alongside federations and unions to develop them. So, while professionalization is happening, they're also addressing key labour market issues.

Mel: Yes, that's definitely true in the UK as well. However, much of this work has shifted into agencies focused on professional development. There's training to help people navigate their roles, but actual funding for producing art is increasingly scarce. And that training is often designed and delivered by middle management rather than artists themselves.

Andy: I agree and many of the boards governing these organizations aren't arts-led anymore, they tend to be professional administrators. Artists are more likely to be brought in as trainers or contractors rather than having real decision-making power. So yes, that shift you're describing is very much happening here too.

Mel: It's a clear move away from earlier grassroots models, like the Artist Newsletter setting up affordable insurance or organizing artist assemblies.

Andy: Exactly. More like the rise of third-sector organizations, which we see across the sector now.

Question 3:
Why aren't these organizations more accountable? Why doesn't the ministry hold them to account? Instead, there seems to be this 'objectivity washing'. Decisions get outsourced to bodies where it's unclear who's really responsible, making it harder to hold anyone accountable. It'd be better to know exactly who makes the decisions so you can identify allies or opponents clearly.

Mel: I think we've moved from hoping the Arts Council would include cultural workers who understand art from the inside, to this official culture that mainly produces 'safe' heritage ideas. Smaller, more critical or experimental arts organisations get squeezed out or put at risk in this process. I'm also worried about the widespread apathy and cynicism—people don't vote because they feel powerless. The notion of depoliticisation is interesting but oversimplifies political culture. Political scientists working within government often have a dry, detached view of politics that doesn't capture the lived reality. And honestly, what's happening at Goldsmiths—the cuts to arts and humanities—is just shocking.

Andy: It's deeply political. Much of this ties back to policies targeting overseas students, which have hit universities hard. The Tory government has played a particularly vicious game here.

Mel: They've used the Marxist left as a scapegoat. We get accused of that, but in reality, critical education has been stifled. Undergraduates are no longer able to learn how to transform society constructively.

Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan

Andrew Hewitt is Professor of Art and the Public Sphere and co-lead for the Art and Design Research Centre at the University of Northampton. Mel Jordan is Professor of Art and the Public Sphere and is director of the Centre for Postdigital Cultures at Coventry University. Until 2020 she was Head of Contemporary Art Practice at the Royal College of Art. In 2018, Jordan with Hewitt formed the Partisan Social Club (http://partisansocialclub.com), previously they worked with Dave Beech as part of the Freee art collective. Hewitt and Jordan are initiators and steering group members of the spacex project along with Emma Mahony and Socrates Stratis. https://www.spacex-rise.org/.

Mia Lerm Hayes and Laura Alexander, Arts in Solidarity, Casco Art Institute 2024

Laura Alexander

Trust-Based Funding: A Shift from Project-Based Support to Flexible Grants in the Arts.

Laura Alexander, independent researcher and former Monitoring, Evaluation & Learning Coordinator at the Prince Claus Fund, explores the Fund's ethos, an independent foundation dedicated to culture and development.

I work with the Prince Claus Fund, an organization based in the Netherlands that provides funding for cultural and artistic initiatives. Our financial support is primarily derived from Dutch public funds, including contributions from various Dutch ministries. While our base is in the Netherlands, our focus is global, we collaborate exclusively with artists and cultural practitioners from Latin America, the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, and parts of Eastern Europe, reaching diverse communities across much of the world

We are an independent foundation led by a small team of fewer than 20 people. Over the past few years, we have moved from project-based funding to what we call 'trust-based funding.' Since 2021, the Prince Claus Fund has shifted to supporting artists directly through unearmarked grants. These funds can be used flexibly, whether for living expenses, travel, training, or creating new work, with no conditions on how the funding is spent. One reason we, and other funding organizations, have successfully shifted to trust-based funding is that it aligns well with the neoliberal frameworks within which ministerial bodies operate, making this transition relatively easy to present.

This shift can be framed as a devolvement narrative, though that isn't its origin within our organization. It's interesting how the same change can fit different political narratives.

Supporting artists in this way, akin to a short-term basic income paid upfront, has been highly positive. Recipients receive the full grant upon award without needing to prove any specific use of funds to secure a final payment.

Moving away from the need for conditions or earmarked funding has led us to reconsider our role, viewing it as a form of research into the impact of supporting artists. This shift invites questions beyond conventional metrics, exploring what truly happens when artists are supported unconditionally. It has sparked new thinking, especially in how a funder perceives its relationship with artists. Drawing on Donna Haraway's idea of knowledge as 'seeing' has been vital in reimagining our stance, observing artists globally through a vision metaphor that transcends binary views. This perspective helps us move beyond the typical divide between the objective, data-driven mindset of ministerial bodies and the subjective, nuanced understanding that artists embody. While ministers may see their work as grounded in facts and objectivity, artists often approach their role as more relative and essential to the social fabric, resisting rigid quantification. This binary traps us in mediating between these perspectives. Haraway's insights guide us in acknowledging both without reinforcing the divide, synthesizing diverse narratives into a language accessible to all.

A key project in developing this perspective was the Forces of Art initiative (2018–2020), a collaborative research effort with Hivos and the European Cultural Foundation. The aim was to revisit a decade-long archive of projects supported by these institutions and subject them to various academic analyzes. This allowed us to explore the legacy and afterlife of these projects—how they continued to evolve and impact new contexts long after their initial support.

One powerful outcome was understanding the extended influence of artistic work as it transformed over time. This project culminated in a book, a collection of texts that I'm proud of. It highlighted how monitoring and evaluation can be a form of knowledge creation. However, while such outputs are valuable, they don't always align with the practical institutional needs of fundraising and donor communication. Merging diverse approaches with practical needs has been challenging, especially when demonstrating impact to those outside our field, people who may not align with participant or academic perspectives or even share our values. At the Prince Claus Fund, we strive to present the work we support in a way that meets these external demands while maintaining a critical perspective. This involves subtly packaging meaningful projects to appeal to impact-oriented evaluations. Looking ahead, there is concern that if our funding ministry undergoes drastic political shifts, as recent elections suggest might happen, this translation work could become impossible due to growing ideological divides.

My daily work focuses on understanding how the Fund's interventions—financial support, recognition, and connecting artists globally—shape both artistic practices and their local impact, including improving lives. Yet, the concept of the 'artistic practitioner' is largely an institutional construct, essential for allocating resources but not naturally occurring. If funding methods changed, so would the categories and insights that arise. For now, this constructed idea of the global cultural practitioner shapes our work and understanding.

A significant part of our work involves synthesizing unique experiences into general insights that resonate with decision-makers, despite challenges such as physical distance from most of the 140 artists we support annually. Most interactions occur online via Zoom, emails, and surveys.

We employ broad reporting formats, sending follow-up reports to artists a year after funding, combining multiple-choice and open-ended questions to understand their experiences. These reports are analyzed for recurring themes to draw conclusions across cohorts. Additionally, we conduct in-depth annual conversations with a random 10% of recipients to explore long-term impacts.

This dual approach allows us to translate knowledge into metrics

that satisfy impact-focused requirements and inform our own practices, including potential policy changes and broader insights into global artistic practices. Despite external pressures, maintaining meaningful solidarity with artists is crucial. Trust-based funding, where grants are fully disbursed upfront, supports honest feedback and transparency.

Ensuring artists feel safe sharing their true thoughts involves clear communication about how their input will be used, options for confidentiality, and control over their words. We also seek ways to share our findings beyond internal records to show other donors the value of trust-based approaches. Ultimately, we aim for an exchange of knowledge that fosters solidarity between funders and artists, even within restrictive frameworks.

Laura is joined by Christa-Maria (Mia) Lerm Hayes to take questions from the assembly

Question 1: Trust seems to be an essential component in this dynamic, but I wonder how this trust is established and perceived by both sides. Often, it feels like this level of trust hasn't yet been fully developed. How is this trust built and what does it feel like when it truly exists between the two parties?

Laura: It was interesting that you mentioned trust as being assumed because, in any dynamic involving significant power imbalances, trust can never be taken for granted. When we engage with the ministry, they hold the power; conversely, when we interact with artists, we are the ones in the position of authority. For the party with power, trust must be earned, not assumed. Transparency is crucial, not just as a moral obligation but as an essential form of communication. Being transparent to the fullest extent possible is an act of vulnerability and openness that helps build trust over time

Question 2: I find your insights on knowledge sharing and the desire to share more within your organization really intriguing. I'm curious, what other methods or approaches are you considering for spreading information, aside from making it available online?

Laura: This is an ongoing process, and we're still in the early stages of working in this way. It's a matter of experimentation and figuring out what works. One constant challenge is scaling, especially when it comes to information gathering. With such a broad scope, it's impossible to manage every individual artist, so generalizing becomes necessary. At the same time, scale presents another challenge: the best way to convey knowledge is through direct, in-person engagement—spending time with people, having genuine exchanges. But given our limited resources, we can't be physically present all the time to share these ideas. So, writing things up and posting them online becomes our second-best option, though it's still evolving. That raises the question: are there other, more effective ways to share this knowledge? And how do we ensure that people even know it's available? My hope is that, despite these limitations, the things we create, and share can be built upon by others, transforming them into building blocks for future knowledge. Even if it's not a Prince Claus production, we want what we put out there to inspire further development and ongoing knowledge sharing across different communities.

Question 3: Briefly, I was wondering if you have a sense of how unique the process you've started at Prince Claus is, or if you see similar transitions happening across other funding organizations in the Netherlands. Specifically, I'm curious about this shift from product-based to trust-based models. Are these kinds of changes or similar types of funds becoming more common in the sector?

Laura: I think that within funding bodies in the arts, there's a strong interest in trust-based funding, but also a degree of doubt and scepticism surrounding it. Interestingly, though, I see it gaining more traction in philanthropy in general. While I'm not an expert in this area, I observe from a distance that there's more research being done on the impact of simply transferring money to people and allowing them the freedom to use it as they see fit. In the arts, however, there's more hesitation. The arts are often seen within the funding world as less tangible, more 'fluffy,' which can create anxiety, especially for those in ministerial positions who may view this type of funding as too subjective or relativistic. This perception increases the anxiety around this kind of approach. My hope is that we can develop solid methodologies to show that just because we're not rigidly monitoring whether someone creates an exhibition exactly as planned, it doesn't mean we're not still deeply interested in the real-world impact and outcomes. This could help build more trust and make this approach more widely accepted in the arts sector

Question 4: I've been reflecting on how this shift towards a more radical funding model came about. Coming from an arts collaboratory model, we've always preferred working with artists and ecosystems on a process-based approach, rather than relying on the overproduction of exhibitions or more structured galleries and conversations. As we navigate this transition, I'm curious, how can we observe and support this shift in action?

Laura: Our board directed us to reexamine our strategy and develop a new organizational approach. Specifically, we were asked to focus on the Prince Claus Awards, which have been awarded since the organization's founding in the mid-'90s. These large-scale awards recognize artists who have made extraordinary contributions, often serving as lifetime achievements or acknowledging their impact over the history of the Prince Claus Fund. The board emphasized that this was a crucial aspect of our work and asked how we could expand this model across all our activities.
We began exploring how to apply the award model to artists at various stages of their careers—emerging, mid-career, and beyond. This naturally led us to a shift towards un-earmarked, trust-based funding. There was a brief period, a few months, when the decision to reimagine, the awards was being discussed. During this time, it seemed that even some within our organization didn't fully grasp the radical nature of this change. Some people were saying, 'Wait, you're proposing moving entirely to trust-based funding?' and others replied, 'No, no, we're just giving awards.' But in essence, that's what it was. Over time, this shift in perspective has fully taken hold, and we are now proud to say that our approach is centred on trust-based funding.

Laura Alexander is an independent researcher and evaluator, formerly the Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning Coordinator at the Prince Claus Fund. She develops collaborative Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning practices that support arts practitioners and critically examines the role of funding bodies in society. She holds a master's in philosophy from the University of Amsterdam, focusing on citizenship and socio-political justice.

Yazan Khalili, and Mia Lerm Hayes, Arts in Solidarity, Casco Art Institute 2024

Yazan Khalili

What Matters Now?

Yazan: Thank you for inviting me. I'm not well-prepared. It's been a tough six months, especially the last three weeks. I'll explain why. Right now, I'm just thinking out loud, sharing my thoughts and impressions as I hear the other presentations. Since the beginning of the genocide in Gaza, I've been trying to make sense of the world I live in. I'm experiencing a major shift in my understanding. Everything I've done before these past six months feels like it belongs to a different world. The world is changing dramatically with new power dynamics, new forms of violence, new geopolitics, and a new economy. Using the same old tactics and talking the way we used to no longer seems relevant.

I no longer expect anything from the world in its current state, as it has become clear that we don't have any type of agency to act according to our humanity and moral and political duties to act to stop the atrocities like the ongoing genocide in Gaza. What are we doing if we can't even go to Gaza and intervene? Despite having the means of transportation and infrastructures of communication, we lack agency. So, who are we addressing when we talk about funding, structures, or wanting better institutions with fewer cuts? Who are we really speaking to? Can we still address and demand things from the state and its institutions?

The agency we think we have over state structures doesn't exist. We have no real agency. This should show us our limits when it comes to stopping the environmental crisis, What power do we have to prevent the collapse of the environment?

In the past years my work in Palestine was about rethinking the Palestinian culture scene through its economy, to challenge the donor economy and the way it has reconfigured the politics of cultural practice, this now feels futile. The genocide doesn't leave any space to think of a future and imagine its possibilities. I'm not trying to sound defeated, but acknowledging this defeat is crucial for political consciousness. A professor from 25 years ago once said, "Any demand that is less than changing the world is meaningless."

Is it our role now to sit and demand better funding structures? Can we even make a difference there? Honestly, I'm sharing my collapse in thinking. It's not just deconstruction; it's a total fall. I don't know when we'll hit the bottom, but we're falling.

It is obvious now that the state structures are becoming the main enablers of the neoliberal economy and the hegemony of the market driven monetized economy. And we should be careful in our critique of the state of not falling into the neoliberal logic, but rather to think of structures of solidarity and communing to navigate against the tide of this economy and imagine by practice a future beyond the state.

What's happening in Palestine is a glimpse of the future everywhere. People struggle to understand this future, where state violence, protected by its structures, leaves us powerless. We can only demand the state to stop what is happening, but the state is complicated.

So, here I am, falling, collapsing, and wondering: Are there new structures that can emerge from this fall? Is the fall itself a structure? How do we act? Do we try to stop the fall, or simply observe ourselves falling?

Let me give you a concrete example to make this less abstract. In Germany, two years ago, we, a collective from Palestine called the Question of Funding, were part of the famous Documenta 15 (D15), the Lumbung, and the racialized attacks on the artists during Documenta. Since our collective's focus is to think of art and culture through its economic models, and to engage with economic questions through structures of production and communing, part of our practice in D15 was inviting a group from Gaza called Eltqa to learn from them how they managed to work and produce in Gaza for around 25 years under challenging conditions of siege and oppression. We conducted research on their artistic practice and economic model and finally managed to bring some of them and their artwork from Gaza to Germany through a very complicated process.

Even before any of the works were exhibited, we have been attacked. The exhibition space was vandalized and death threats were sprayed all over the place. Eventually when D15 opened, German media attacked Mohammed Al-Hawajri's piece, 'Guernica Gaza,' because they thought it was inappropriate to compare Nazi Germany's bombing of Guernica in Spain to the Israeli bombing of Gaza! Other than the stress and fear that we all had to go through during the preparation and exhibition period, the whole attacks shifted the discourse from discussing and looking into commoning and economic models into the whole memory debate in Germany.

Eventually, due to the continuous siege on Gaza, we couldn't send the artwork back, so it stayed in a gallery formed within documenta fifteen called Lumbung Gallery. The Lumbung Gallery was established to create a structure to support artists into selling their works in the art market in a collective way, in order to create a model that can be extended beyond the 100 days of D15. The sales distribution was structured so that 70% went to the artist, 20% to the lumbung collective pot, 10% stayed with the Lumbung Gallery.

Just more than one year after the end of D15, the artists from Gaza had to evacuate their homes and spaces multiple times, eventually settling in Rafah, losing many members of their families and communities due to the Genocide. Their space in Gaza City was destroyed by and locals looted what remained, taking the wooden furniture and frames from the paintings for firewood. Eltiqa members told us, "It's sad to lose our art, but survival comes first. The wooden frame became more valuable than the painting."

They reached out to us, saying they needed to leave. Israel's bombings were one challenge, but Egypt's

closed borders posed another. Palestinians often face restrictions on becoming refugees, as once they leave, they are never allowed return, a situation ongoing since 1948. Egypt, through a private company called Ya Hala, implemented a neoliberal refugee system: pay to leave. Every adult had to pay $5,000, while those under 16 paid $2,500. The money had to be delivered in cash to an office in Cairo. To collect the needed amount, we contacted the Lumbung Gallery to sell the artworks that remained after D15, to which they agreed and played a pivotal role through the whole process. Remarkably, in less than two months, we collected around $100,000, enough to help 22 Eltiqa members and some of their families to leave.

Despite my criticism of the economy of money and artwork selling, I found myself deeply involved in contacting potential collectors, organizing lists, and coordinating the transfer of funds. This couldn't have happened without the Lumbung Gallery as a legal and registered structure that managed to officially sell artworks, export them, receive the funds, and sending them to their destination. Such structures are essential to deal with state bureaucracies and the restrictions on sending funds around the world. If they didn't already exist out of D15 lumbung practice, it would have been impossible to create them during the time of extreme urgency.

Yazan is joined by Christa-Maria (Mia) Lerm Hayes to take questions from the assembly.

Question 1: Hearing your story and what you managed to accomplish, I sense a lot of agency. How do you reflect on that? Do you believe agency lies more in communities and individuals than in the place of the state?

Yazan: With these structures, like Lumbung Gallery, one can show there is community and agency to try to help and support, Around 40-50 people made significant moves, sending money, coming together to buy artwork, with no commissions involved. All funds went directly to aid. The real issue, though, isn't collecting money to get people out of Gaza, but our collective inability to stop the genocide. It shocks me that, after witnessing something like the Holocaust, we live in a world where people simply observe and don't or can't intervene. We all remember where we were on 9/11, but after months of this ongoing genocide, I wonder: when we look back, will we be able to say we did something, or will the truth be that we did nothing?

Mia: What we should be doing is using the ecosystem we have through the arts, academia, as friends, and global citizens—to help. We should also take a moment of silence to honour those we've lost, including artists and academics. For example, Al Jazeera has reported the deaths of journalists since October 7, 2023. This is part of what we can do as a community, showing solidarity with each other. As you mentioned, we can't keep asking questions and moving forward without pausing to truly listen, it's hard, but necessary.

Question 2: I can talk about funding here today, but it feels like what we're doing here now is more about collaboration. Since the genocide began, there's been so much discussion about its impact on us. For instance, Casco released a statement, but it's difficult to act as an organization, especially when we're seeing growing concerns, like the rise of anti-Semitism in Germany. As individuals, we can organize, go out, and witness what's happening, and we've been doing that. But as institutions, we're up against powerful lobbies, like the Israeli lobbies we've seen in Germany, Mexico, and beyond. They have their influence everywhere. I keep wondering: what is all this for? What are we really achieving? In Germany, I wanted to see the people there stand apart from these influences, but I'm starting to question what will happen in the Netherlands as well, especially with movements now emerging in organizations and institutions here. Are we stuck in a small fix, or is there a way forward? Becoming a collective is always an option, but after so many years, I wonder what more we can do as Casco Art Institute.

Mia: I think what we have here today is too valuable not to ask the difficult questions about how we prepare for what's coming especially in terms of funding and the political shifts ahead. While it's frightening, it's not the first time we've faced such challenges. And while I don't want to make direct comparisons, there's much to learn from strategies used elsewhere. For instance, my family's experience in East Germany illustrates how critical art can be targeted by state power, with artists being pushed out of organizations and denied space to exhibit. This, of course, built an antagonistic relationship between artists and the state, and we're seeing similar struggles today.

The use of networks, both personal and institutional is key. We must trust organizations, both local and global, and forge solidarities without relying on money alone. Art can transcend traditional boundaries. People create, educate, and support one another in ways that go beyond formal systems. As seen in Northern Ireland, there were artists who chose not to accept funding from the Arts Council, yet they were the ones whose work truly mattered and inspired others. These artists built alternative networks and initiatives that sustained them and challenged the status quo.

Documenta 15 and Lumbung show us the power of collective action, where initiatives across the globe come together, not only to support one another but to strategize for future movements. Artists from different regions, such as Mexico and Indonesia, are now working together to create something greater. A movement of movements.

This is a call for connectedness, for seeing the interconnectedness of all things, whether in the arts, social justice, or political activism. It's about teaching people to see beyond the surface, to understand the lasting impact of colonialism, of systems that work against us. The arts have an incredible ability to foster this kind of awareness and relationality, something that formal educational institutions often fail to do. We need to create spaces for people to reconnect with each other and with the world around them, where art is not just a decorative luxury but an essential tool for understanding and change.

Yazan: I want to talk about art and poetry, particularly in the context of the genocide and the increasing use of artificial intelligence. When we realize that we are relying on AI, we start to question the language it's using. Every bit of knowledge, every language, and every piece of information that has been processed through the machine is now influencing decisions, decisions like creating killing lists. In a sense, the very knowledge we've accumulated as humans is being used to identify targets for destruction. This raises a profound question: How do we produce knowledge now?

I believe it's poetry that can help us navigate this challenge. Poetry, with its coded language and deep emotional resonance, is something that machines cannot simply extract

data from. In this age of AI, we can no longer rely on traditional language to derive meaning from knowledge. We need a new way to resist, to challenge the total meaning, and insist on a language beyond its machinic function.

Right now, in Gaza, so much poetry is emerging. The poets there are documenting their experiences and sharing their stories through words. When I read their poems, I immediately feel their urgency. It's almost as if poetry has become the only way to make sense of a world where raw information can no longer capture the complexity of human experience. Poetry becomes the means to process the unprocessable and to speak the unspeakable. In a way, in this time it's only art and poetry you can have, otherwise you become complicit.

Question 3: We turn to poetry to make sense of things. But do we need to say anything more?

Yazan: Is there a way to create poetic structures that can help resist the monetization of everything, where everything is measured and calculated? In one of the presentations today the concept of trust came up, and I think that's key. Trust exists in language, in measurable terms, where we can compare trust and distrust. But in a poetic structure, trust has no opposite. It's not something you can measure against betrayal, it's simply a decision, a commitment. Even if things go wrong, trust still stands. Without trust, nothing can happen. In the process of helping Eltiqa members to leave, we made the decision to trust whether it was sending money or taking risks because without that trust, we couldn't have made it work. In this system, trusting each other is essential, even if it means taking big risks.

Question 4:
Something I've been reflecting on a lot lately is where the line between an institution and the individual lies. Institutions are made up of individuals they have no existence without the people who form them. But at the same time, institutions also have a life of their own, separate from the people who make them up. Ideally, institutions are supposed to exist to foster trust. Through institutions, we can enforce policies and hold people accountable, rather than relying on 'he said, she said.' The very idea of an institution is grounded in trust. However, what's been truly disturbing to witness in Europe's response to the genocide is the utter collapse of trust in institutions. A few weeks ago, for example, a group had their bank account frozen in Germany and was asked to provide the bank with a list of every single member, including names and addresses. This complete failure to fulfil even the most basic function of a bank, as an institution that holds and protects money, is striking. Banks, of course, are not neutral, but this event highlights how fundamentally the most basic institutional responsibilities have been undermined.

I don't think there is a choice in the matter. Regarding the question about whether trust is assumed or earned, I believe one of the things power allows is the ability to compel trust. In that sense, trust can't always be freely given, it becomes something you are forced to offer. The question then becomes: how do we trust in systems, versus how we trust in people? And ultimately, how do we decide who or what to trust?

Yazan: In trust, there is agency this is something we often overlook. The agency built out of trust is exactly what institutions challenge. They tell us trust doesn't exist. Take, for example, an experience I had when I left Palestine. I sold my car, and typically, selling something is a straightforward exchange. You give the car, and you get money. The person who was interested in buying my car didn't have the money immediately, and I didn't want to sell my car through the bank, where the bank makes profit by lending him the money. Instead, he gave me a promissory note, essentially, a paper saying he'd pay me in instalments every six months. Six months passed, and I hadn't received any money. When I called him, I found out his bank account had been frozen because someone had taken a loan using his name as collateral, and the borrower couldn't repay it.

The point is, I wasn't left with nothing. I called a friend who knew his wife, and after a conversation, my friend helped me resolve it, few months later, I was fully paid. This shows how social relations, connections based on trust, can get things done without relying on formal institutions like banks. It's about knowing someone who knows someone, and in those moments, these networks of trust are invaluable. This is the real power of trust. Social relationships that go beyond institutional barriers.

Yazan Khalili is an architect and visual artist. Currently he is a PhD candidate at Amsterdam School for Cultural Analysis, UvA. He is the co-founder of Radio Alhara and The Question of Funding.

Christa-Maria (Mia) Lerm Hayes is an art researcher, sometimes curator, currently working as Professor and Chair of Modern and Contemporary Art History at the University of Amsterdam. She completed her PhD at the University of Cologne on Joseph Beuys in 2001, focusing on the artist's reading of James Joyce's work. She has lived in Ireland for 20 years. Her academic research addresses art's role in social transformation, art (practice-based) research, and the intersections of art and literature.

Sepp Eckenhaussen

The Liberation of Arts Philanthropy

Philanthropy is on the rise in the Dutch visual arts. Fat cash prizes, big-name exhibitions, large-scale renovations, spectacular public artworks, and big scandals are changing the public display of art and undermining the democratic governance of art institutions. While some have critiqued the patron's rise to power, the majority of the art world remains silent, muted by a combination of ignorance and self-censorship. How can we overcome this deadlock and start cultivating a healthy public debate?

A Rotterdam Icon

On July 2nd, 2023, the statue *Moments Contained* by Thomas J. Price was unveiled on the Stationsplein in Rotterdam in the presence of State Secretary for Culture Gunay Uslu. It's a larger-than-life bronze statue of a Black woman, standing confidently in the middle of the square, with her clenched fists in the pockets of her tracksuit bottoms. The public's response was universally positive. *Moments Contained*, it was said, became an 'instant Rotterdam icon'.

This is unfortunately true in multiple ways. Yes, *Moments Contained* is an ode to the city's diverse citizenry. But it is also an icon of the exploitation of Rotterdam's dock workers by the few family firms owning the port. *Moments Contained* was gifted to the city by the philanthropic foundation Droom & Daad, which was founded by Martijn van der Vorm, inheritor of the investment firm HAL (former Holland-America Line). This was part of an enormous campaign. Just two weeks earlier, on July 16th, 2023, a Dutch national newspaper reported that Martijn van der Vorm had donated €793 million to social and cultural causes in Rotterdam of his own choosing over the previous years. As the article reveals, these gifts have earned Van der Vorm's charitable foundations an intimate relationship with the municipal government. Droom en Daad has direct access to the Rotterdam municipal executive via a special construction. They have also been exempted from the standard integrity investigations by the municipality's real estate department. The article then continues to uncover the flipside of Van der Vorm's generosity. HAL has been dodging Dutch taxes for years. These shady practices, however, have not affected Van der Vorm's warm relationship with the Rotterdam Municipality. According to Mayor Ahmed Aboutaleb of the Dutch Labour Party, the Van der Vorm family's fiscal constructions are 'totally irrelevant'.

Philanthropy Research by Platform BK

As someone who loves art and works in the Dutch visual art world, I've witnessed the recent rise of arts philanthropy with astonishment, annoyance, and — increasingly — anger. Martijn van der Vorm's blatant art-washing, defended by the Mayor of Rotterdam, is a frontal attack on democratic governance. The implicit message is loud and clear: the rich know best what is good for society, and they should be allowed to provide public services without the intervention of cumbersome democratic systems of redistribution. Unfortunately, I've experienced how the public debate on this issue is subtly suppressed.

My engagement with the topic of arts philanthropy dates back to 2021. At the time, I was working for Platform BK, a Dutch art workers' representative organization. As part of our discursive program, we published an article by artist Timo Demollin titled 'The Philanthropy Trap'. In this piece, Demollin discussed the disruptive position of three new philanthropic funds: Ammodo, Droom en Daad, and the Hartwig Art Foundation[1]. Looking at these cases, he observed a shift in the role and position of arts philanthropy. Philanthropists are traditionally mostly interested in being part of high-profile success stories, such as the acquisition of masterpieces for prominent museums. But this new generation of philanthropists distinguishes itself by providing (long-term) financing to medium-sized, socially engaged, and critically minded art organizations. They don't mind if their money is used to cover running costs like salaries, buildings, and experimental programming instead of contributing to the purchase of yet another Rembrandt painting for the Rijksmuseum. At first sight, this development 'sounds good—the more money that goes to the arts the better,' Demollin writes, but at closer inspection 'it testifies to a creeping systemic rot'. Three decades of systematic budget cuts have made public art institutions increasingly dependent on patronage. This gives patrons more power in shaping the public display of contemporary art. They also get tax breaks and a free reputation boost in the process.

'The Philanthropy Trap' was very well-read and stirred some commotion. We received emails in support and messages from critics, and lively discussions arose on social media. With his sharp and accessible piece, Demollin had in one fell swoop made the rise of a new patronage visible, understandable, and, therefore, debatable. He also offered a perspective for (collective) action: 'Artists, curators, and cultural workers would do well to unite wherever possible, beyond competition and self-interest, so that the art sector can collectively put a stop to the influence that philanthropists can exert on art.' At the same time, Timo had conjured a series of systemic questions it could hardly begin to answer: Which interests drive the rapid rise of visual arts patronage in the Netherlands? How is philanthropy changing the public display of art? And how does the increasingly complicated 'mix' of public and private money affect the power structures in the field?

It was therefore important to forge ahead and further encourage the public conversation about patronage. We decided to jointly organize a one-day symposium on the 'culture of giving' in the Dutch visual arts and called it *The State of Patronage*. This is when we first encountered the seriousness of the self-censorship around questionable money in the arts. We wanted to organize the symposium

[1]The people working at Hartwig Art Foundation, Ammodo, and Droom & Daad also read the article, though without making this known publicly. We were even contacted by the Dutch Association of Property Traders due to alleged misrepresentation of Dutch flash traders—the profession of Rob Defares, the patron behind the Hartwig Art Foundation.

in collaboration with a (preferably small) art institution that receives philanthropic funding, to bring in their practical experiences and questions. Out of the dozen or so such institutions in the Netherlands, we approached the two with the most explicitly socially engaged program. Both institutions seriously considered our proposal, but, ultimately, didn't dare to host the symposium. Backing off, one of them explicitly expressed fears of 'patron bashing'. The Mondrian Fund, the national Dutch visual arts fund, which had been invited to join the discussion several times, also rejected participation and was very displeased with the symposium.

In the end, we collaborated with the contemporary art space Framer Framed, which hosted and fully supported the political vision of the event. On April 30th, 2002, *The State of Patronage* took place, bringing together most of the very few public thinkers who had substantially engaged with the issue of patronage in the Netherlands[2]. These experts discussed the topic with each other and with artists, representatives of institutions and public funds, and, of course, private donors[3].

The result we aimed for was an intense, critical, but constructive conversation between various stakeholders to map out patronage's current and ideal role. In the end, the event was both interesting and frustrating. Jack Segbars wrote in his report:

The State of Patronage made it clear that there is much confusion concerning roles among stakeholders in positioning, valuing, and supporting the arts. Therefore, productive and disruptive practices of patronage exist side by side in an amorphous lump that resists any assessment of accountability, equity, or democratic values. As a result, disruptive donors have free reign, recipients of donations are at the mercy of arbitrariness, and responsible patrons — who are needed to keep the art sector afloat — unintentionally end up being seen as suspect.

We were getting close now. The fundamental role confusion between stakeholders had become clear. However, in questioning the role of arts philanthropy, our goal was never to construct a disinterested description of the situation but to cultivate an explicitly political discourse on arts philanthropy in the Netherlands. Once again, it was clear to me that the public debate needed another push. To this end, I have collected texts by participants of the symposium into a little book, called 'The Liberation of Arts Philanthropy', published by Platform BK and the Institute of Network Cultures. Writing the conclusion of the book, I have tried one last time to go beyond role confusion and formulate a series of productive talking points towards a politics of philanthropy:

1. We need a political discussion about patronage that transcends moralism
2. Patronage on the ruins the welfare state is a uniquely European phenomenon
3. Patronage becomes political in the distribution of certainty and uncertainty
4. Patronage is a function of neoliberal governance (and that's not personal)
5. A revolution of powerful patrons is taking place right now
6. A democratic liberation of patronage is possible

Further Reading

Each of these talking points is elaborated with arguments, references, and case studies in an online longform on the website of the Institute of Network Cultures (in English): https://networkcultures.org/longform/2024/04/10/six-theses-towards-the-liberation-of-arts-philanthropy/

An English-language light version of 'The Liberation of Philanthropy' was published on the website of Platform BK: https://www.platformbk.nl/en/reader-de-bevrijding-van-het-mecenaat/

The full Dutch-language booklet, De bevrijding van het mecenaat, contains seven essays and an extensive literature list. It can be downloaded for free from the website of the Institute of Network Cultures: https://networkcultures.org/blog/publication/tod-49-de-bevrijding-van-het-mecenaat/

A recording of the symposium The State of Patronage (Dutch-spoken) can be found on YouTube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uAHq18RTaas&t=3s&ab_channel=PlatformBK

About the Author

Sepp Eckenhaussen is an arts researcher, writer, and organizer based in Amsterdam. He currently works at the Institute of Network Cultures (Amsterdam University of Applied Sciences) and Caradt (St. Joost Academy of Art & Design). From 2020 until 2023, he co-directed Platform BK with Koen Bartijn.

[2]Helleke van den Braber, professor of patronage studies at the University of Utrecht; Olav Velthuis, professor of sociology at the University of Amsterdam, specialized in the art market; Sofia Patat, who worked as a fundraiser and business director for large and small art institutions and has written about this in several publications; patronage expert Renée Steenbergen; and Roel Griffioen, a researcher and activist who has written multiple articles on the topic of 'real estate patronage'.

[3]Liesbeth Bik, artist and chairperson of the Dutch Academy of the Arts (Akademie van Kunsten); Kristel Casander, director of Voordekunst; Nous Faes, sociologist, policy advisor, and opinion maker in the visual arts; Yvonne Franquinet of the Amsterdam Art Fund (AFK); Marjolein de Groen of Collectie DE.GROEN; Stephanie Schuitemaker, director of Outset; and Steven van Teeseling, director of Sonsbeek and State of Fashion.

Reflections

Number 1

Am an artist, Asian, Work in the creative arts sector, Am interested in events at CASCO, Am a student

The event gave me insights into arts funding systems, the infrastructure for cultural funding and how artists must navigate these systems. It highlighted the challenge of budget cuts in the Dutch culture funding system, and how as an Asian artist maybe it may become even more difficult to find support in this system.

Number 2

Work in the creative arts sector, Am an academic, Am interested in events at CASCO

I worked for Platform BK, a solidarity organization for cultural workers. We both do actions but also research. See www.platformbk.nl

I found the event to be both very informative and urgent. I learned much on solidarity and funding systems and alternatives to current systems and I was inspired by it, (but the last presentation took all our emotional attention). All the presentations were valuable in their own way. I enjoyed hearing the more fundamental thoughts on the place of arts and culture in our society as 'fundamental'.

I know now that the situation in the NL is a bit better than the UK, but that we see similar tendencies. In this way the comparison was helpful. It also shows we have a long way to go to pull the arts out of the industry/market and organize is as something fundamental - like all public services. The event highlight a particular challenge, in my relationship with policy makers and my place in a system which is dominated by market logic

Arts and Solidarity, Casco Arts institute

Number 3

Student
My MA thesis is closely related to the subject of the workshop so I was hoping to gain interesting insights

It was very interesting hearing about the topic from different people, working in different contexts, and whilst we did not get to compare the Dutch to the UK context during the session, I did come out of it with new insights in both contexts and how they have shaped each other.

The severity of precarity in the arts really stood out to me. As a student who is only now really starting to come into the field. I felt like workshops like these are very necessary in working towards a more healthy sector, and I came out feeling very inspired and positive afterwards.

I felt very impacted by the words of Yazan Khalili, because he put into words a lot of worries I share about the state of the world. Yet, being at the workshop still left a very hopeful impression on me that at least we are in this together, no matter how precarious the situation is.
New undertstanding?

I was able to gain new understanding from the event, particularly the work of O'Connor who put into perspective for me about how we ended up in a situation where money and funding is on the one hand so important, and on the other so precarious.

Number 4

Student
My MA thesis is closely related to the subject of the workshop so I was hoping to gain interesting insights

The event offered a beautiful connection between networks, themes and topical issues. Solidarity. I'm glad that contacts with ex students and new art world actors (Casco Art Institute staff) joined the spacex purpose of the event. The networks that exist in the art eco system, solidarity etc are part of our resource, too - maybe at the moment more important than petitioning governments, knowing that any heightened attention could be more likely to have adverse than positive effects.

Given the impending negative changes in the political landscape in NL, this event was a bit like calm and mutual care before the storm. The ongoing Gaza genocide made us look beyond our own little horizon. We're still rather privileged - and need to foster our networks, so that, when the crunch comes, there are those who are willing to protect the most vulnerable.

Resources and links

This section brings together materials referenced during the Arts in Solidarity assembly, including texts, projects, and external links that emerged through discussion or were shared by participants and contributors. Each resource is grouped according to the talk in which it was discussed, providing a contextual link between the conversation and the material. This structure allows readers to trace the flow of ideas and access further information in relation to each topic or speaker.

Talk 1: Culture is not an Industry — Justin O'Connor

Books and Key Texts
Justin O'Connor — Culture is not an Industry (Manchester University Press)
https://manchesteruniversitypress.co.uk/9781526171269

Videos and Interviews
Online Seminar (YouTube)
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wtmaDJ-aDE8

'Cool Britannia symbolised hope — but all it delivered was a culture of inequality' — The Guardian
https://www.theguardian.com/inequality/commentisfree/2017/jul/05/cool-britannia-inequality-tony-blair-arts-industry

Richard Florida Interview — The Guardian
https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2017/oct/26/gentrification-richard-florida-interview-creative-class-new-urban-crisis

Richard Florida — The Creative Class Revisited (PDF)
https://paas.org.pl/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/The-Creative-Class-Revisited-FLorida.pdf
Edward L. Glaeser — Review of Florida's The Rise of the Creative Class (Harvard)
https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/glaeser/files/book_review_of_richard_floridas_the_rise_of_the_creative_class.pdf

Corporate and Institutional Information
BlackRock — Corporate Information
https://www.blackrock.com/corporate/about-us

'BlackRock is the Biggest Company You've Never Heard Of' — Innovation & Tech Today
https://innotechtoday.com/blackrock-is-the-biggest-company-youve-never-heard-of/
Human Rights and Social Prescribing
Universal Declaration of Human Rights — Article 27
https://www.un.org/en/about-us/universal-declaration-of-human-rights

EU Social Prescribing Site
https://social-prescribing.eu/
Comparative Study: Social Prescribing Across Twelve High-Income Countries — Health Policy (2024)
https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0168851024000022

Groups and Organisations
Reset Group
A post-pandemic initiative from Creative People, Products and Places (CP3) at University of South Australia, Lab Adelaide at Flinders University, and the University of Adelaide. Reset rethinks how art and culture are valued in public policy, moving away from the dominant "culture-as-industry" model and toward the Foundational Economy—focused on essential services and public well-being.
Working Paper: O'Connor, J. (2022). Art, Culture and the Foundational Economy (CP3 Working Paper No. 2)
https://resetartsandculture.com/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/CP3-Working-Paper-Art-Culture-and-the-Foundational-Economy-2022.pdf
Website: https://resetartsandculture.com/

Foundational Economy Collective (Manchester)
An international group of mainly European researchers challenging mainstream economic thinking. The Collective proposes revaluing everyday economic infrastructures—like care, utilities, and culture—as central to well-being rather than peripheral.
Website: https://foundationaleconomyresearch.com/

UK Government and Policy
UK Department for Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS)
The government body responsible for the arts, culture, and creative industries in the UK. Recent documents and news provide insight into the UK's cultural policy direction.
Creative Industries Sector Plan (2023)
£380 million investment package to grow the UK's creative economy, with initiatives in film, music, games, and regional development.
Report: https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/creative-industries-sector-plan
Arts Infrastructure Support (2024)
£85 million fund to support vital repairs and upgrades for cultural organisations across the UK.
News Release: https://www.gov.uk/government/news/85-million-to-support-arts-and-cultural-organisations-across-the-country

DCMS Abolition Rumours (2025)
Concerns raised across the cultural sector after reports that DCMS may be dissolved, redistributing responsibilities to other departments.
Article: https://www.artsprofessional.co.uk/news/dcms-abolition-rumours-create-world-of-worry-for-cultural-sector

Talk 2: Build Tools, Technology, and Cultural Institutions for the Common Good Andy Hewitt and Mel Jordan

Projects & Collaborations
Partisan Social Club
An evolving collective facilitating co-learning and participatory practice.
Website: https://partisansocialclub.com

spacex (Spatial Practices in Art and Architecture for Empathetic Exchange)
Transdisciplinary EU project countering nationalism by fostering discursive cultural exchange.
Website: https://spacex-rise.org

Key Texts
Hewitt & Jordan (2023)
Depoliticization, Participation and Social Art Practice
Explores social art's role in countering depoliticisation.
https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/14702029.2023.2236200

On Trying to be Collective (2020)
Investigates care, collectivism, and democracy in art.
https://www.on-curating.org/issue-45-reader/on-trying-to-be-collective.html

Mel Ramsden — "On Practice" (1975)
Disassembles capitalist structures via the internalised subject.
http://www.meggsweb.com/ConceptualArt/text/On_Practice-Mel_Ramsden.pdf

Tatlin (1919) — The Initiative Individual
Art as collective amplification in revolutionary society.
https://monoskop.org/images/3/30/Tatlin_The_Initiative_Individual_1919.pdf
Freee Art Collective (2012) — The Manifesto of a New Public
Participatory manifesto challenging the idea of the public.
https://www.freee.org.uk/the-manifesto-of-a-new-public/

Stuart Hall — The Last Interview (2016)
On the legacy and direction of cultural studies.
https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/news/2440-the-last-interview-with-stuart-hall

Chantal Mouffe — *Artistic Activism*
Defines agonism vs. antagonism in critical art.
https://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v1n2/mouffe.html

Marta Harnecker — *Rebuilding the Left*
21st-century socialism and the art of the impossible.
https://monthlyreview.org/product/rebuilding-the-left/

Cultural Institutions & Structural Change
Laura Raicovich — *Undoing and Redoing Cultural Space*
Institutional change and solidarity in curatorial practice.
https://www.art-agenda.com/features/347513/undoing-and-redoing-cultural-space

Maeve Johnston (2014) — *Slow Curating*
Rethinking socially engaged art through deep contextual relations.
https://www.on-curating.org/issue-21-reader/slow-curating.html

Funding, Austerity & Artist Conditions
Arts Council Cuts (2023)
On closures, underpayment, and institutional fragility.
https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2023/11/06/arts-council-funding-cuts-london-impact

Di Novo & Easton (2023)
Analysis of UK cultural funding and policy impact.
https://research.gold.ac.uk/id/eprint/32799/

Artquest Survey (2025)
Standstill funding harms ambition, jobs and diversity.
https://www.artquest.org.uk/project/artist-survey-2025/

Industria & a-n (2023) — *Structurally F—cked*
Reveals exploitative artist pay and working conditions.
https://static.a-n.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/09/Structurally-Fucked-Final-Report.pdf

Talk 3: Prince Claus Fund and Forces of Art - Laura Alexander

Prince Claus Fund
Global leader in trust-based funding, supporting the transformative power of culture.
Website: https://princeclausfund.nl/

Prince Claus Awards & Programmes
Details of cultural awards and initiatives.
https://princeclausfund.nl/awards-and-programmes

Forces of Art (2018–2020)
Research initiative with Hivos and the European Cultural Foundation studying 45+ projects across 30+ researchers to explore art's impact through situated, collaborative evaluation.
Article (OnCurating, 2024):
https://www.on-curating.org/issue-58-reader/forces-of-art-monitoring-and-evaluation-as-a-situated-knowledge-making-practice.html

Book (Valiz, 2020):
https://valiz.nl/en/publications/forces-of-art
Key Concept: Scaling Small

Adema & Moore (2021) — "Scaling Small"
Outlines an alternative model for organising community-led publishing, grounded in care and mutual reliance.
https://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.918

Funding Bodies in the Netherlands
Mondriaan Fund
Supports visual arts and cultural heritage in the Netherlands and the Caribbean Kingdom.
https://www.mondriaanfonds.nl/

DutchCulture
Advises on international funding for cultural and media projects.
https://dutchculture.nl/en

Creative Industries Fund NL
National cultural fund for design, architecture, and digital culture.
https://www.stimuleringsfonds.nl/en

TransArtists
Platform for artist-in-residence programmes and international creative opportunities.
https://www.transartists.org/

Key Concept: Trust-Based Funding
Business & Arts Online Seminar
Steven Ayer on trust-based philanthropy in the arts, and steps towards mutual, transparent partnerships.
https://www.businessandarts.org/Resourceflix/exploring-trust-based-philanthropy-in-the-arts/

Artnet Op-ed (2024)
"Philanthropy in Almost Every Sector Is Moving Toward Unrestricted Funding—Except in the Arts. Why Is It So Hard to Trust Artists?"
https://news.artnet.com/art-world/philanthropy-in-almost-every-sector-is-moving-toward-unrestricted-funding-except-in-the-arts-why-is-it-so-hard-to-trust-artists-2289925

Talk 4: What Matters Now?, Yazan Khalili

The Question of Funding & Documenta Fifteen
The Question of Funding (Palestinian collective)
Participated in Documenta Fifteen; faced racialised attacks during the exhibition.
https://thequestionoffunding.com/

Documenta-Fifteen
Documenta Fifteen Overview
https://documenta-fifteen.de/en/lumbung/

Lumbung Gallery Mission
Shared practices and communal models inspired by the lumbung (communal rice barn).
https://www.lumbunggallery.theartists.net/mission

Eltqa and Regional Exhibitions
Eltqa at Jameel Arts Centre
Group exhibition featuring Palestinian artists including those working in Gaza.
https://jameelartscentre.org/whats-on/33356/

Mohammed Al-Hawajri — 'Guernica Gaza'

Museo Reina Sofía — Guernica Gaza
Documentation of Al-Hawajri's reworking of Picasso's Guernica.
https://guernica.museoreinasofia.es/en/document/guernica-gaza

Schlepper PDF (German context and commentary)
https://www.frsh.de/fileadmin/schlepper/schl_107/Beilage_Al_Hawajri.pdf

Artforum — Year in Review (2024)
Pablo Larios on Mohammed Al-Hawajri.
https://www.artforum.com/features/year-in-review-2024-pablo-larios-mohammed-al-hawajri-1234721661/

Further Reading
New Lines Magazine
Review essay on Gazan poets and cultural survival.
https://newlinesmag.com/review/gazan-poets-write-to-survive/

Coventry University

University of Northampton

spacex

Spatial Practices in Art & Architecture for Empathetic Exchange

Oasco Art Institute: Working for the Commons