

Institution: King's College London		
Unit of Assessment: 34 Communication, Cultural and Media Studies, Library and Information Management		
Title of case study: Everyday Creativity: Re-shaping the Language and Purpose of Arts Policy in England		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2014–2020		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Nick Wilson	Professor of Culture and Creativity	From 21/09/2009
Jonathan Gross	Post-Doctoral Research Fellow and Teaching Fellow	From 01/07/2015
Period when the claimed impact occurred: 2014–2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		

1. Summary of the impact

King's research has directly enabled arts policy in England to move beyond the paternalistic model of *Great Art for Everyone* to a new strategic approach that explicitly supports people's opportunities to pursue 'everyday creativity'. Working closely with a group of leading non-profit organisations, campaigns and projects that champion creative participation – via their roles funding or facilitating specific stakeholder groups (arts and cultural organisations, audiences and participants, voluntary arts groups, children and young people and local communities) – King's research has played a central part in reshaping the language and purpose of arts policy in England. This culminated in a major change of direction announced in Arts Council England's new 10-year strategy, *Let's Create*, placing the promotion of everyday creativity at its heart.

2. Underpinning research

Since its foundation in 1946, Arts Council England (formerly Arts Council of Great Britain) has been committed to the central principles and goals of 'Excellence and Access'. Against the context of profound transformations in patterns of cultural consumption, this strategic approach to arts policy has been widely criticised as a paternalistic deficit model – reproducing outdated notions of cultural taste and authority. King's research has responded to the need to repurpose arts policy in England by investigating how people are actually enabled and constrained in their creative and cultural opportunities: challenging the prevailing approach that presumes that the opportunities that matter are primarily those facilitated directly by publicly funded arts organisations, via their venues and outreach programmes.

Between 2014 and 2019, King's worked with leading non-profit organisations, campaigns and projects that champion creative participation. These include 64 Million Artists (formerly 53 Million Artists – a social enterprise), Get Creative (a national campaign led by BBC Arts), A New Direction (a London-based non-profit working with children and young people) and Creative People and Places (a programme of devolved arts funding with 33 local projects distributing a total of £54 million investment from Arts Council England and the National Lottery). Across these research projects, King's collected and analysed a wide range of data via interviews, focus groups, community workshops, surveys and activity diaries. Through these methods, King's developed four main empirical and conceptual research findings (F1–4) that have helped change how the cultural sector understands and talks about creative activities and cultural experiences:

- **F1.** King's research has identified and documented the plethora of creative activities and cultural experiences that take place up and down the country, but which are not otherwise accounted for under either the publicly funded arts system or the commercial creative industries – providing new empirical insights into the nature and value of 'everyday creativity'. [1,3,4,6]

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- **F2.** In doing so, King's research has expanded understandings of everyday creativity beyond the private and domestic spheres and demonstrated its 'interconnectivity' with the publicly funded arts system and the commercial creative industries. The research thereby documents the 'ecological' nature of culture – it takes place through interconnections and interdependencies between tangible and intangible resources of many kinds – and shows the importance of understanding how cultural ecosystems operate in specific locations. [1,2,3,5]
- **F3.** Building on the empirical and conceptual insights of F1 and F2, King's research demonstrated that since 1946 most arts policy in the UK has operated with an implicit understanding of 'cultural opportunity' that is very narrow and inadequately theorised, focused on increasing access to publicly funded arts organisations. Analysing fieldwork data through the framework of the 'capability approach' to economics articulated by Amartya Sen (1999) and Martha Nussbaum (2011), King's research developed a new conceptualisation and vocabulary of cultural opportunity, 'cultural capability'. [1,2,3,5]
- **F4.** Building on the empirical and conceptual insights of F1, F2 and F3, King's research revisited ideas of 'cultural democracy' articulated during the 1970s and 1980s and analysed the potential of these ideas to offer an alternative framework with which to develop a new approach to arts policy, beyond the paternalistic approach of *Great Art for Everyone*. Through this analysis, King's researchers developed a new conceptualisation of cultural democracy, grounded in its new empirical and conceptual insights into everyday creativity, cultural ecosystems and cultural capability. [1,2,3]

These findings are presented and discussed in a series of publications, including peer reviewed journal articles and books [3,4,6] and public research reports developed in partnership with the four initiatives listed above [1,2,5].

3. References to the research

1. Wilson, N., Gross, J. and Bull, A. (2017). *Towards Cultural Democracy: Promoting Cultural Capabilities for Everyone*. London: King's College London.
<https://www.kcl.ac.uk/cultural/resources/reports/towards-cultural-democracy-2017-kcl.pdf>
2. Wilson, N. and Gross, J. (2017). *Caring for Cultural Freedom: An Ecological Approach to Supporting Young People's Cultural Learning*. London: A New Direction.
anewdirection.org.uk/asset/3299/download?1508337726.pdf
3. Gross, J. and Wilson, N. (2018). Cultural democracy: an ecological and capabilities approach. *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, 26(3), 328–343. doi:10.1080/10286632.2018.1538363
4. Martin, L. and Wilson, N. (Eds.) (2018). *The Palgrave Handbook of Creativity at Work*. London: Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. Chapters 22, 24, 25, 30 by Gross; Wilson; Wilson and Speers.
5. Gross, J. and Wilson, N. (2019). *Creating the Environment: The Cultural Eco-systems of Creative People and Places*. London: Creative People & Places.
<https://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/our-learning/creating-environment>
6. Wilson, N. (2019). *The Space that Separates: A Realist Theory of Art*. Abingdon: Routledge.

4. Details of the impact

The impact of King's research arises from making possible new ways of understanding everyday creativity and cultural democracy, contributing to (i) a new vocabulary and self-understanding of the cultural sector in England; (ii) new missions and *modus operandi* for organisations championing creative participation; and (iii) a new core purpose for arts policy in England. King's research has thereby helped cultural policy in England move beyond the tenacious paternalism of 'Excellence and Access', providing a new framework within which cultural practitioners and policymakers of many kinds can support and promote not just 'Great Art' but also the conditions that enable everyone's creativity.

Each of the key research findings that underpin the impact were generated via close collaboration between King's and leading cultural organisations, campaigns and projects championing new approaches to supporting creative participation. This began with a partnership between King's and 64 Million Artists (2014–15). This led, in turn, to the collaboration between King's and the Get Creative campaign (2015–16), A New Direction (2017) and Arts Council England's Creative People and Places programme (2019). In each case, King's developed pathways to impact via sustained relationships with partner organisations during and beyond the research process itself.

King's research has provided the cultural sector in England with a new vocabulary and self-understanding

Due to King's research, published in *Towards Cultural Democracy* [1] and in subsequent journal articles, books and reports [2,3,4,5,6], the language of everyday creativity has now been adopted widely within the cultural sector in England, including by Arts Council England (ACE) and the organisations it supports. ACE is the largest and most influential arts funding agency in England, supporting 840 organisations as part of its National Portfolio and hundreds more organisations and artists through strategic funds, investing £408 million each year. The reach and significance of King's impact is explained by ACE's Director, Strategic Partnerships: King's research "*provided the organisation with a new way of understanding and describing the range of cultural and creative activity that takes place outside of arts organisations and the profit-making creative industries,*" and through this impact on ACE, King's research has helped "*to give a new vocabulary to cultural practitioners*", with many of "*the organisations that ACE supports now mak[ing] use of the idea and language of everyday creativity within their work.*" [A]

Through and beyond its impact on ACE, King's research on everyday creativity – framed, specifically, in the language of cultural democracy – has provided organisations and practitioners in the cultural sector with new ways of understanding and communicating their work. What this looks like in practice is illustrated, for example, by the Learning Officer at The Box, Plymouth, who explains that the *Towards Cultural Democracy* report [1] "*has given me a language with which to describe work I was already doing, as well as changing the work I do too ... It has changed my work in that I now have a 'Cultural Democracy Query' when designing any new project, to consider the ways in which it embraces cultural democracy, or what can be done to change a project if it doesn't.*" [B] By introducing the term 'everyday creativity' into policy discussions and bringing the term 'cultural democracy' back into public consciousness [C], King's research has changed the terms of arts policy debate in England. The Co-Founder and Co-Director of Fun Palaces, an annual celebration of community culture, writes that King's research "*broadened and supported a wider discussion around cultural democracy*" and that as a result "*there is a more live conversation happening across the board.*" [D] As ACE's Director, Strategic Partnerships, states, through its empirical and conceptual contributions – its new accounts of everyday creativity and cultural democracy – "*King's research has helped shape the self-understanding of the cultural sector in England*". [A]

King's research has helped to reshape the missions and modus operandi of leading national organisations championing creative participation

King's research has enabled leading non-profit organisations, campaigns and projects that champion creative participation to rethink and restate their missions: to support 'everyday creativity', reframing their role within the 'cultural ecology' and in some cases to do so with an explicit commitment to 'cultural democracy'. King's research has directly influenced the following organisations to develop their missions and practices:

64 Million Artists

64 Million Artists' activity in support of everyone's creativity ranges from running events with small groups in specific workplaces, to initiatives at a city scale, such as Hull City of Culture 2017 and Coventry City of Culture 2021, and supporting thousands of participants online through the 31 days of the January Challenge. King's research has been central to how the organisation has developed its mission, which is explicitly positioned against the deficit model of cultural participation, and adopts the language of 'everyday creativity'. As the CEO and Co-Founder explains, "*King's research enabled us to establish our founding mission, to develop the 'Do, Think, Share' methodology, and employ the language of everyday creativity. We have since supported thousands of people to engage in everyday creativity in locations across England. For example, in the 2020 January Challenge alone, more than 30,000 people took part. Having this research embedded in the start of the company has ensured that our commitment to rigorous methodology has continued and has impacted our work in communities across the UK.*" [E]

Get Creative

Get Creative is "*the UK's biggest ever celebration of creative participation*". During the 2019 Get Creative Festival, 1,200 people took part in 1,700 events. King's research played a central part in enabling Get Creative to clarify and develop its mission. The Chair of Get Creative explains that King's research played a very direct role in shaping the development of the campaign. King's

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findings led the Get Creative Steering Group to “agre[e] on common language to describe the campaign” and “revie[w] and refin[e] explicit objectives for the campaign”. King’s research led to a clarification of the role of Get Creative’s ‘Champion’ organisations, clarification of the role of education in the campaign and agreement “to actively recruit a more diverse range of Champions, including non-arts organisations” [F]. In these ways, King’s research directly impacted key strategic and operational decisions for Get Creative, which now supports the ‘everyday creativity’ of thousands of people across the country every year.

Voluntary Arts (VA)

VA is the umbrella body representing approximately 63,000 amateur groups in the UK and Ireland, whose activities are participated in by 10 million people each year. VA is by far the largest and most significant organisation of its kind in the UK. Its activities include providing advice and guidance to local authorities, voluntary sector agencies and 198 umbrella organisations (from the National Association of Choirs to the National Association of Street Artists) and providing support to anyone wishing to set up a new voluntary arts project themselves. VA’s Chief Executive explains that King’s research led directly to “changes to our organisational strategy and approach.” This included the rewriting of the organisation’s mission. The Strategic Plan has been updated to state that “Voluntary Arts believes that, rather than starting from a deficit model that suggests not enough people are taking part in a prescribed range of arts and cultural activities, it is important to support the broad engagement of people in their and their communities’ creative lives, and on their own terms.” Operating with this new mission, VA plays a central role in supporting the Get Creative campaign, which in many cases involves participants beyond the groups that VA has traditionally supported. Enabling VA to develop its strategic and organisational approach in these ways, King’s research has thereby enabled it to “achieve some considerable advances in the recognition and valuing of the everyday creativity we represent and support” [F].

A New Direction (AND)

AND is London’s leading non-profit agency supporting cultural and creative opportunities for children and young people. In 2019–20, AND worked directly with just over 200 arts and cultural organisations and over 1,000 ‘education establishments’, including schools. The organisation is currently working to support the development of 16 local strategic partnerships to benefit cultural learning in 14 London boroughs, connecting education, cultural, youth sector, public and private sector organisations. AND’s Deputy Chief Executive explains that King’s research prompted “a profoundly different way of understanding our role in respect of supporting children and young people to be creative”. Due to King’s research, the organisation has “reframed how we discuss children and young people in relation to culture, consciously moving away from a ‘deficit’ model”. King’s research has provided “the conceptual tools to move ... towards understanding how to nurture and develop their inherent creativity.” In re-writing their business plan, AND “used the language and findings of King’s Cultural Freedom report to re-align where we stand and what we are trying to achieve for the long-term.” [G]

King’s research has impacted AND’s approach to partnership and investment, directly influencing the organisation’s *Place Strategy* [H]. This strategy includes, for example, the Challenge London programme through which AND is investing £1.1 million in cross-sector partnership (£2.2 million with match-funding), with the aim of all young Londoners being able to develop their creativity and play an active part in the culture and heritage of the city. Challenge London is designed to support “sustainable cultural opportunity” for the young people in the locations involved, with 4,000 children to benefit from this series of partnership investments by 2022. AND’s Senior Partnerships Manager explains that King’s research “was suggested as reading for partnerships applying to Challenge London and specifically in the guidance notes for applications to ‘strand 1’, which was specifically about borough level local cultural education partnership working.” [I]

Directly employing the language of King’s research and citing key empirical findings about how young people’s everyday creativity is enabled, AND’s *Place Strategy* states: “Our research, *Caring for Cultural Freedom with King’s College London* suggests that spaces of ‘supported autonomy’ are essential, and we know that spaces for culture are at risk. In all our partnership working, we will support consideration of local ‘free’ and ‘open’ spaces in which young people can create, alongside more tightly programmed opportunities.” [H] As AND’s Deputy Chief Executive explains, “The Cultural Freedom report provides a template for how places can develop collective

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approaches to supporting cultural freedom, we are building these ideas into our work with local places and have made it part of our partnership 'methodology'. [G]

King's research has helped reshape the core purpose of arts policy in England

Beyond the impact on these specific organisations – each of which plays a far-reaching function in supporting the cultural opportunities of particular constituencies and groups – by developing new understandings of everyday creativity and cultural democracy, King's research has impacted the overall framing of arts policy in England. As ACE testify, King's research has played a decisive role in pivoting the mission of ACE itself, which now self-describes as *"the national development agency for creativity and culture."* [J] *"The idea of everyday creativity has now become a central part of ACE's Ten-Year strategy, Let's Create."* [A] Over the next three-year period of funding, ACE plans to invest £1.45 billion of public money from government and an estimated £860 million from the National Lottery *"to help England be a country in which the creativity of each of us is valued"* [J]. As ACE's Director, Strategic Partnerships, says, *"Without the new ways of understanding and talking about everyday creativity that King's research has made possible, the new Ten-Year strategy is unlikely to have developed such a strong and central emphasis on supporting everyone's creativity"* [A].

5. Sources to corroborate the impact

A. Arts Council England, Director, Strategic Partnerships. Testimonial.

B. The Box, Plymouth, Learning Officer. Testimonial.

C. *A Return to Cultural Democracy?* Documentary film, screened at The Phoenix, Leicester, CAMEO conference, 19 September 2019.

D. Fun Palaces, Co-Founder and Co-Director. Testimonial.

E. 64 Million Artists, Co-Founder and CEO. Testimonial.

F. Get Creative and Voluntary Arts, Chair, Get Creative, and Chief Executive, Voluntary Arts. Testimonial.

G. A New Direction, Deputy Chief Executive. Testimonial.

H. A New Direction, *Place Strategy*.

I. A New Direction, Senior Partnerships Manager. Testimonial.

J. Arts Council England, Strategy 2020–2030. *Let's Create*.