

# WOR CULTURE - WHAT DO WE NEED FROM 'CULTURAL LEADERSHIP' TO BUILD BACK BETTER AND WITH EQUITY?

Welcome to this reflection from our **Wor Culture** event **What Do We Need From 'Cultural Leadership' to Build Back Better and With Equity?** Here, we'll share the presentations, reflect some of the discussions, provide some (hopefully) useful links and resources, and let you know what's happening next.

For those of you who couldn't be with us for our zoom gathering, further information on what **Wor Culture** is about can be found at the end of this document. Please get in touch if you'd like to contribute, have any suggestions, or would like to share any links or resources.

We look forward to welcoming you to one of our events.

The #WorCulture team,

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## Presentations

Our event included presentations from **Izzy Finch**, an arts project manager, producer and facilitator; **Kathleen Boodhai**, a post-graduate researcher at the School of Arts, Design & Social Sciences, Northumbria University; and **Jenny Young**, Executive Director at **Blue Cabin**.

Watch the full presentations here

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vQPCy2KSmWM> ,

Subtitles are available by clicking 'Subtitles/Closed caption (c)'

## BREAKOUT ROOMS

After the presentations we split into Breakout Rooms (smaller discussion groups), here's a summary of the key points from those groups.

### 1. What is the change we want to see and how can we make it?

- The culture of leadership in the sector needs to be more diverse and inclusive – more open to ‘unusual suspects’ and less captured by a self-referring and appointing set of people from a narrow range of backgrounds and lived experience. (Cf board memberships, lots of revolving faces in the North East.)
- A change in who is represented with the workforce, including at leadership level – this will mean changes to recruitment processes and patterns, and to support given to people when they enter the workforce, so that people can thrive
- Leadership needs to involve different people with different approaches – a wider variety
- Changing perceptions of art, ensuring people value it as a part of their everyday lives and that it is valued within the structures we live in.
- Address the access and psychological barriers to the arts.
- Create spaces where justice, equity and care are embedded , can we think about taking the lead from the social sector where people with lived experience are heard more and involved in creating and collaborating
- Challenge ourselves to remember that we're always looking through our own lens and that that comes with its own biases and its own particular understanding of the world which is limited
- Look globally to see how things are done elsewhere in the world
- Avoid polarisation between small and activist organisations, who seem to be driving forward change, and the larger organisations who are sometimes potentially tied up with business plans and find it harder and slower to make change. To avoid this share practice and opportunities across organisations whether as freelance artists, working for a small organization or whether we are embedded in a large organization
- Create mentoring and learning opportunities for people to actually experience organisational cultures and comment on them, and vice versa, to

share learning. Consider not just who is missing from conversations, but what is missing in the art itself.

- Creating art together and not taking art to anybody so that it's always a collaboration
- Learning from each other as humans, not just sharing skills from within our work but also thinking about all the individual bits that makes us who we are e.g. being a parent

## 2. Multiplied leadership – through networks, how can we develop strong and multiplied leadership?

- Working beyond the organisation: boundary crossers such as consultants who work across organisations can contribute to multiplying leadership as they can cross fertilise ideas and act as connectors;
- Networks are crucial to connect people from different organisations, artforms and practices;
- Decentralising leadership and flattening structures - moving from the horizontal patriarchal hierarchical system to one which is vertical and flatter;
- Networks provide space for reflection and learning;
- There are challenges with the organisational models in our sector - borrowed from business and not necessarily relevant to cultural practices;
- Structures can hinder good people - “Do we have to step out to do great work?” Creating change within organisations is tough - “The organisation itself can be too big to fight.” Levels of agency must be challenged - “We all hold a piece of the jigsaw”;
- Leadership is “our practice” no matter whether we are in an organisation or outside of it;
- Coalition, connection and reciprocity were recurring themes within the conversation;
- Using our cultural leadership outside of the sector to influence other sectors and work in cross sectoral ways will make us stronger as well as strengthening the social systems we work within;
- There are systemic challenges all around us and we need to work together both outside of and inside organisations to challenge and change them systems;
- Can we reconcile models of organisational leadership with those models that work beyond organisations and across them to get the best out of both?

## RESOURCES/READS/SECTOR NEWS

This is not a comprehensive list (and many sources will have been updated or have become outdated by the time you read this). It is what we've come across, what people have been reading recently, and resources suggested by yourselves.

- Kathleen Boodhai presentation notes
- From Cultural Dominance to Cultural Humility  
<https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iiKZV2NAudzuPyOLIFVTAOlXyg-OF9/view>
- The Wheel of Power and Privilege  
[https://www.thisishowyoucan.com/post/\\_wheel\\_of\\_power\\_and\\_privilege](https://www.thisishowyoucan.com/post/_wheel_of_power_and_privilege)
- Clore Leadership <https://www.cloreleadership.org/cultural-leadership>
- Tactics for the Tightrope <https://www.tacticsforthetightrope.com/>
- Hierarchy: can't live without it, can we live with it?  
<https://www.thersa.org/blog/matthew-taylor/2021/05/hierarchy-cant-live-without-it-can-we-live-with-it>
- Multiplying Leadership in Creative Communities  
[https://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/sites/default/files/0750%20CPP\\_Multiplying%20Leadership\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.creativepeopleplaces.org.uk/sites/default/files/0750%20CPP_Multiplying%20Leadership_FINAL.pdf)

If you have any other resources you would like to add to this list please email [bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk)

Finishing Notes - in case you are wondering...What is Wor Culture?

*Wor Culture* is a forum for discussing issues relating to the culture and creative sectors in the North East, and contribute to shaping its future. The gathering is facilitated by Newcastle University but we strongly encourage you to propose topics for discussion, join in the debate, or offer to lead a session.

At the moment, due to COVID19, this is an online gathering using Zoom. We will be looking at alternative formats in due course.

How is the programme put together?

The sessions focus on topics suggested by you. You can also suggest speakers (or offer to do a presentation or provocation) and/or host a session (we'll support you!). All suggestions to: [bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk](mailto:bob.allan@ncl.ac.uk)

## What is the format of the event?

Normally the event follows a format where we have a series of short presentations (c. 10 minutes) to help establish the context for the discussion. This is followed by a Q&A. We then have a series of breakout groups each focused on a different theme or topic. You choose which one you want to join beforehand. Breakout groups are smaller, focused discussion groups. After this each group feeds back into a general discussion.

There is a function in Zoom called the 'Chat' function which is like texting or messaging. We use this to gather questions and comments. Participants can also use it to contribute or send a private message to the host if they do not want to speak using their video.

## What is expected of me?

We warmly welcome everyone who would like to come along to the event. How you participate is entirely up to you.

At the beginning of the event we ask everyone to mute their microphones and turn off their video to try to avoid any problems with background noise and videos crashing. You can listen, keeping your video and microphone off; you can contribute to the discussion via the chat function; you can contribute by turning on your video and asking a question; you can have your video on in the breakout rooms or not; and you can decide whether you want to come along to the coffee social. **We would love to hear your voice and have your thoughts** but there is absolutely no pressure to contribute.

### **What if I can't join in or come along to the Zoom gatherings?**

We are very aware that digital gatherings are not accessible for everyone for many reasons. We are working to make our sessions as accessible as possible (if you have any ideas or suggestions let us know) but we are still conscious that they still will not be accessible to everyone. If you would like to contribute to any of the sessions but cannot attend the zoom gathering, we'd be happy to talk to you beforehand by whatever means is best for you, you could

contribute in writing or by submitting a short video, and we can feedback to you after the event. Or, if you have any other ideas, do let us know.

## What happens after the event?

After each event we will produce a reflection of the event including information from the presentations, insights and questions drawn from the conversation on 'chat', information from the breakout room discussions, and any useful resources participants might have shared or we've discovered that are relevant to discussions. This might take a little time as we're a small team but bear with us! We will then circulate this to participants, regional networks, colleagues in local authorities etc. so they can see what your thinking is.

We will also look at the information and issues raised and, where possible, feed these into future sessions.

## Want to be kept in the loop?

For information on future sessions you can sign up [here](#) and view our blog at <https://blogs.ncl.ac.uk/culturencl/>