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SPECIAL ISSUE: *Mapping an Altered Landscape: Cultural Policy and Management in Ireland*

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Thank you very much everyone and it's very nice to be here this morning. I am afraid I am about to lower the tone and talk about money and finance. In particular, I want to talk about public funding for the arts and the cuts that everyone has been living with the last couple of years.

In my review of what has changed over the last while, I am looking at change not as a working artist because I am not a working artist, but as somebody who has had a lot of experience with arts organisations over the years, both at board level as a board member working with the management in arts organisations, and specifically as a board member of Business to Arts and of the Dublin International Film Festival. I certainly know at very first-hand the rapid changes in technology, in demographics, in the economy and in government and public policy over the past five to six years, and how these changes have complicated the jobs of arts managers and the boards of arts and cultural organisations – people like all of you in the room today – as never before. The changes have been enormous, not least in the area of public funding for the arts, and I'm pretty certain we will not see a return to the pre-2008 levels of public funding.

It seems to me that how it is NOW is how it is going to be for quite some time to come. This is the new reality and we all need to get used to it. It's going to be even more difficult to make arguments for continued public funding or additional funding or new funding for the arts in the next couple of years.

I was lucky enough to be invited to partake in a think-in as part of the Arts Council's strategic review in the last month or two. It was most interesting, a fascinating mix of people in the room, people bringing very different perspectives to the debate about which issues the Arts Council needs to prioritise in its strategic review.

One of the observations that really stuck me, and struck a chord with others in the room, was one made by a representative from the ESRI. This was the fact that in Ireland at this time, without the intervention of progressive taxation, 50% of the population is at risk of poverty. And even after the impact of progressive taxation is taken into account, the figure still stands at 17%. That is a reality that underpins every decision that is going to be made by Government about public funding over the next number of years, and we all need to accept that. I believe that public funding for the arts is going to be well down the priority list of Government for a while. Not only that, but private funding for the arts has also really suffered over the last number of years, and even at a very basic level, ticket sales for arts events have also fallen significantly over the last number of years.

One of the really frustrating but interesting things that I experienced as Managing Director of RTÉ Radio concerns RTÉ's Performing Groups. The MD of Radio is responsible for the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra and the RTÉ Concert Orchestra – and audience behaviour around ticket sales for their concerts changed a lot from 2008. Audiences didn't fall away

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in the sense that no-one was going to events – it was just that audiences were leaving their decisions about attending concerts until the very last minute. So you could have an event – you're all nodding – you have an event booked with great artists that you knew in 2005/2006 in the Concert Hall, you would have nearly sold two-thirds of the tickets two weeks out from the concert. But now you find that it's the day before the event and you have only a one third of tickets sold. So people are making their decisions very late; they are much more careful about the decisions they make about spending money; and decisions about ticket purchasing for arts and cultural events are getting weighed up in a way that they didn't before – they are no longer seen as a casual spend.

So I think that in recent years, there has been a lot less money about, and what money there is, is now coming with many more strings attached than previously. What this means is that in order to manage and adapt to this changed environment, the whole arts eco-system is being forced to become more business-like, and adopting more of the values and the language and the expectations of the business world. And while some of you may now take a sharp intake of breath, I don't necessarily think that it is a bad thing. I think that arts organisations and cultural organisations need to understand the new reality, and get to grips with it and skill up on it.

What it means for a start is recognising that in terms of making the case for public funding, job creation is going to be a key priority. As with other forms of public funding, the decision-making around public funding for the arts is increasingly factoring in what the return on the investment is going to be, and top of the list of desirable returns is going to be the creation of jobs. So the arts agenda is going to have to address the issue of job creation as part of its advocacy. The days of passively handing out of public funding grants with few if any strings attached – those days are gone! Accountability is now paramount and is a key component of the whole public funding process for the arts:

- What do you want to do with this scarce public money you are asking for? What did you do with the last money you got from the public purse?
- What return was given back to the taxpayer through the community? How many people participated in the event or attended the concert or visited the gallery?
- Did the public funding that we gave attract matching or part-matching private funding?
- Was there outreach into the wider community?
- How are you measuring the excellence of what was created or supported? What impact did it have and how did you measure your impact?

It's not about becoming more businesslike in any kind of crass way. It's about using a language that's appropriate for the arts but that also addresses these challenges of being more accountable in a businesslike way. I also believe that since the economic downturn, more and more arts organisations and cultural bodies, both big and small, are going to have to change their funding model. They will have to move towards a mix of public funding, philanthropic support and commercial/ticket income. With that mix will come the challenge of being more businesslike in approaching the management of and accounting for funding, while still preserving the integrity and the authenticity of the work, of the art. It should be expected, if not demanded, that arts organisations are able to manage their 'business' in a professional and business-like manner, and that they are well-run, well-governed, accountable and transparent. The issues that have arisen in the charity sector over the last number of months are going to have an overflow into other voluntary sectors including the arts. So, if they haven't already, arts organisations need to get their houses of governance in order and make sure that they are showing

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'best practice' as required by the Charities Regulator.

So with all of that change and disruption, and all that change in the language around arts and culture, and the new expectation and measurement going on, how can artists go on creating great art? And how can arts organisations enable the creation of great art from the artists that they support, when the very organisations themselves are struggling to remain sustainable because of the pressures and the disruptions we've just mentioned, and in particular because of the uncertainty around their funding?

I believe that much great art nowadays needs the support of well-run arts organisations, and a well-run organisation has to have some certainty around its funding. With some degree of financial security, an organisation can plan well and can plan better. So arts organisations need to be able to plan further ahead than they currently do which is, at best, around twelve months ahead. Business to Arts has done research in this area and has discovered that a lot of organisations in Ireland are working to a ten-month cycle which is driven by the annual funding cycle of the allocation of public funding. But it is impossible to be ambitious, to aspire, to improve and to grow if you can only plan for a maximum of ten months ahead. An arts organisation can't put in place genuine development programmes, or book renowned incoming artists, or start up outreach and engagement programmes, or plan programming of any real significance if it only has sight of and certainly for the next ten months.

Part of becoming more businesslike and part of finding new sources of funding and part of becoming less dependent on public funding and being freed from some of those shackles has to be about being ambitious and creative and being able to offer exciting, creative original programming to your potential patrons and engagers and stakeholders. So it seems to me that arts organisations are going to have to break out from the shackles of uncertainty around planning, and get into a position where they can put in place powerful, ambitious three- to five-year strategic plans. The only way to do that is if they have certainty of funding over more than ten months. And that means revenue diversification – finding ways to get your money from more than one source.

But the challenge of doing that, of finding new sources of funding from sponsors, from corporate donors and individual benefactors and patrons (as well as public funding, which is always going to be essential), is that arts organisations are going to have to take the first step and change how they do their business. For arts organisations to attract new funders, they have to become the kind of organisation that attracts new funding. It's kind of chicken and egg! And that is why programmes like the Business to Arts *New Stream* capacity programme, delivered by Business to Arts in partnership with the Devos Institute Management at the Kennedy Centre, are so crucial.

Through *New Stream*, Business to Arts has been working with a number of Irish arts organisations across the country, encouraging them to move to become the type of organisation that consistently produces good art and delivers a superior offering to their audiences, and that effectively markets who they are and what they do. *New Stream* teaches Irish arts organisations how to find out who their audiences (both current and potential new audiences) are, to understand what it takes to engage with them, to excite them, attract them and retain them. They learn how to create a 'family' of funders and 'friends' to support the organisation and fund it, and in so doing to transform the financial resource into a more stable income stream, which then goes into delivering a bigger and better programme the following year. This, in turn, attracts new audiences and supporters, who in turn are engaged and encouraged to join the 'family of friends', and to provide funding, which feeds into the programming for the following year and so on and so on...

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It's a different model of funding ... and I think people in Ireland have an innate resistance to it, in that it's an 'American model', and seen as being too dependent on philanthropy and patronage. But if we are asking ourselves what has changed in the last six years, to me this is one of the profound changes – in that we are going to have to move to a different funding model.

I just don't see it being possible to sustain the richness and the vibrancy and the breadth of arts activity and arts organisations which we want, while they are all solely dependent on public funding. So in the future so we are going to have to diversify the sources of funding for the arts. It is a new way of doing business and it is a challenge, and I am sure it is something that will come up later today. But that to me is probably the biggest change in the arts landscape since 2008. Pat also asked me to consider and reflect a little bit on broadcasting and the role of broadcasting in the arts. When I reflected on it, something struck me that I had never considered before, which was this – why are broadcasters so absent from the planning and debate around arts and culture policy in this country?

My former employer RTÉ is a public service broadcaster part-funded by the TV licence fee which, appropriately, gets spent on many activities of public value. RTÉ is probably the biggest patron of the arts in this country. It's certainly the biggest employer of musicians, actors and of writers across very many art forms. For example, RTÉ Lyric FM commissioned over seventy new music works in the last ten years. Who else is commissioning works by composers in this country? Lyric FM has published over twenty CDs by Irish composers and musicians. The RTÉ Performing Groups employ 134 full-time musicians as well as supporting two fantastic voluntary choirs, their administration and the provision of conductors.

Or take *Fair City*, which delivers 208 half-hour episodes of original television drama every year, and on which forty scriptwriters work. Or *Love/Hate*, the opening episode of Season Four attracted 970,000 viewers on RTÉ 1 and the season finale attracted over 1 million. And don't even get me started on RTÉ Radio One and Drama on One, Sunday Miscellany and all the writers and musicians who are used every week on that programme. Yet somehow, that engagement with the arts through those RTÉ services and through what TG4 does with drama and culture and TV3 has done recently in drama – that engagement and patronage from broadcasters somehow gets overlooked, or even forgotten. It's seen as a lesser engagement in the arts, somehow inferior, not recognised or acknowledged as a key part of arts support, funding and consumption in this country. Is it looked down on in some way? The person who watched *Love/Hate* in their living room and who experienced the actors performance and the writing through the script – is that experience somehow seen as inferior to the experience of the person who goes to The Abbey and The Gate?

If you take the thousands of people who listen to the Lyric concert five nights a week on Lyric FM – is that somehow a less valuable experience than that of the 1,200 who are the absolute capacity of the National Concert Hall for a sell-out concert? I think it's very strange, that it's a big elephant in the room that broadcasters are excluded when cultural policy is considered. I would say to the Arts Council and to the Department of Arts & Culture and to academia as well, why are you not seeing Irish broadcasters as key partners in the development of arts strategy in this country? If you want to broaden cultural engagement with particular artforms surely the broadcasters should be in the room as part of that discussion.

If we are talking about the provision of training and career paths for artists in this country, like writers, actors or musicians, surely their experience with broadcasters is going to be a key part of that career path. In fact, the reality is that these artists move back and forth between broadcasting and other platforms all the time. For example there are freelance musicians who could be in a recording studio playing backing music for a Damien Dempsey album one week,

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and the next week they are sitting playing with John O'Connor as part of the RTÉ National Symphony Orchestra in the National Concert Hall. And there are actors who are on set in TG4's *Ros na Rún* one month, and on stage in *The Project* the next.

Currently, Irish arts policy does not recognise that fluidity. However, I think the time has come to address that issue and particularly now after the announcement yesterday of a debate and consultation on arts and cultural policy. I would say to the Department and to the Minister and to the Arts Council to make sure that the broadcasters, the biggest spenders on arts in the country, are in the room and at the table when that debate starts. I think that these broadcasters would have interesting things to learn and interesting things to contribute.

Finally, I want to leave you with two thoughts. The first concerns the explosion in digital media.

One of the key changes in the arts landscape, even since 2008, has been the availability of spaces online which offer myriad forms of free arts content, places where we can all interact with the content, we can engage with it, we can experience it in our own living rooms, we can curate it for ourselves and contribute to it, and we watch and we add something to it and we in turn become a part of that arts creation. There are now 30-40% more 30-year-olds living in this country than there are either 15-year-olds or 45-year-olds. 45+'s are the biggest consumers of the arts actively in the country. So what implication is it going to have for all of you in this room when our current 30-year-olds who are so digitally savvy and who are experiencing their arts in quite a different way, turn 45? As they move up through the age profile – what impact is it going to have on how they consume the arts? And are arts practitioners thinking enough about it, are they building that into their strategic planning?

And my final observation draws on a different cut on the same set of figures – and it is that, in 1991, one in twenty people living in Ireland were born outside the country and in 2011, one in six people living in Ireland were born outside this country.

Do the arts in Ireland reflect this? No. I don't believe they do at all.

Should they? Yes.

So what are we all going to do about it?

Clare Duignan is an experienced executive and non-executive director, with over twenty-five years of CEO and senior leadership experience spanning broadcasting and communications, strategic development, digital (including social) media and traditional linear media, and organisational change. As a radio and TV producer she created compelling programming. As Director of Programmes, RTÉ Television, and Managing Director RTÉ Radio, she transformed home-produced content, leading her teams to deliver original, competitive programming, winning increased audiences and international recognition. In driving RTÉ Radio's Digital development, she ensured that this great content reached the widest possible audience through delivery across all platforms. Leaving RTÉ in 2013, Clare now works as a consultant and non-executive director. Clare serves on the boards of both public and private organisations and received the Diploma in Company Direction (Dip IoD) in July 2013. She is a board member of the Broadcasting Authority of Ireland, the Digital Hub Development Agency, Business to Arts, the Dublin International Film Festival and Women for Election. With a lifelong passion for the arts, she has also served as a member of the Arts Council and of the Abbey Theatre Advisory Council. With a strong track record of strategic leadership, Clare brings to her board work a deep understanding of consumer needs and behaviour, marketing, branding and social media, and many years experience in recruitment, leadership and performance management.