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# SCOTTISH CULTURAL POLICY RESEARCH NETWORK

2022-2023

SUII KNOWLEDGE  
EXCHANGE  
PROGRAMMES

SUMMARY REPORT



## MAIN OBJECTIVES AND CONTEXT

The Scottish Cultural Policy Research Network was established to bring together key actors within the Scottish creative industries, including cultural policy researchers, policymakers, consultants, artists, and businesses, to promote collaboration, knowledge exchange, and policy and industry impact. The decision to form this network was driven by the recognition of Scotland's wealth of research expertise in cultural policy and the belief that leveraging this unique advantage could be crucial in positioning Scotland as a leader in cultural policy and creative industries research both nationally and globally. In addition, the network could play a critical role in supporting the Scottish creative industries to thrive in the post-pandemic environment by facilitating the sharing of data, evidence from research, and facilitating collaborations to address evidence and knowledge gaps.

With this initial funding, the network aimed to

- Offer gathering opportunities that would allow for a provisional map of Scottish cultural policy and creative research expertise to emerge (to include consultants and independent researchers) and recruit members to the network;
- Organise four events that are co-designed by network members, and that could be used to help shape the functioning of the network;
- Develop a 'vision manifesto' and research agenda that will guide the activities of the network beyond the SUII-funded period;
- Develop a sustainability and funding strategy for the network to operate beyond SUII's funded timeline.

Throughout the network's activities, a strong emphasis was placed on promoting evidence-based policy thinking, enhancing communication channels, and fostering collaboration among policymakers, the sector, and researchers from diverse backgrounds, including independent scholars, consultants, and artists-researchers. Led by a steering group composed of members from the University of Aberdeen, Glasgow School of Art, University of Dundee, University of Glasgow, and Creative Scotland, three knowledge exchange events were organised to explore themes that have been identified as significant in both academic and policy-related discussions in Scotland and beyond

- Initial Network forming meeting- 'Mapping Scotland's Creative Industries'
- The creative sector and post-covid recovery in Scotland (including the challenges and opportunities for young artists entering the job market)
- The role of arts and culture in addressing climate change and the commitment to net-zero.



## AN ACCOUNT OF THE INSIGHTS RESULTING FROM THE PROGRAMME

The network provided a valuable opportunity for artists and researchers to connect and collaborate in a way that is not readily available elsewhere. Many artists, prior to joining the network, had primarily worked in isolation, making the network an ideal platform to connect and discuss common interests, challenges and issues in their respective fields. For some members it acted as a platform for removing the feelings of isolation they had been facing since the COVID-19 pandemic. While these discussions helped highlight the need for changes in policy and funding, members identified that such changes were unlikely to manifest without getting policymakers and funders to engage in these discussions. It was noted that the number of policymakers and funders attending was low across all three events. It was discussed that further opportunities should be provided to bring these individuals into the room to be involved in these networks and to plan for a way forward across some of the issues and challenges identified.

Throughout the events, members discussed and expressed concern regarding the funding situation across Scotland. The emergency funding provided for the creative sector during the COVID-19 pandemic has ended, leaving many artists worried about their future. Members had questions about what sorts of support mechanisms could be implemented to help those still struggling to recover from the loss of income and work since COVID-19. At the second event, many freelance artists shared stories of adapting their creative practice to online mechanisms during the pandemic to find ways to retain their livelihoods and artistic careers. While some artists have returned to their original means of creative practice, others have continued working online, seeing it as more cost-effective and environmentally sustainable. Although such practices are growing, members who have transitioned believe that further funding support should be offered to enable them the time and space to grow their new creative practice. However, funding cuts would make this significantly harder to achieve.

When discussing COVID-19, network members expressed a desire to shift the sector's language from 'recovery' to 'innovation'. They believed that there was so much learned during the pandemic that going back to the way things were would be disappointing. Instead, the learning should be taken forward and used as a starting point for redeveloping the sector at all levels, from funding to the way it is valued by policymakers and governments. This is where the network bringing together researchers and artists was perceived as most valuable, as researchers can develop and share insights that may influence policymakers.

Although members of the network recognised the potential for the creative and cultural industries to support climate change initiatives, they felt that policymakers in Scotland could do more to link cultural and climate agendas in policy. It is important, however, that any such connections consider Scotland's complex geography and the unique characteristics of each area, to ensure that policies are not simply transferred without considering the differences in infrastructure and other factors. Members also felt that a climate manifesto was necessary to enhance the sector's environmental sustainability. They emphasised the importance of involving artists in developing the manifesto to ensure its seamless integration within the industry, rather than it being disconnected from those actively involved in delivering and carrying out the work.

Removing this feeling of disconnect among different actors in the creative arena was believed to be integral for shaping future cultural policymaking in Scotland that could support innovation and



sustainability at all levels in the sector. To achieve this, members felt that networks such as these were vital because they could potentially affect and influence change, depending on who was in the room to be involved in the discussions.

‘Linking Networks Enables People to Find The Place Where They Can Make the Most Difference’

(Network Member 2023)

## MAIN OUTCOMES AND IMPACT

The network accomplished several outcomes, including the delivery of three successful knowledge exchange events. A delay in the announcement of the funding and resulting a domino effect on dates meant that it was not feasible to hold a fourth event in the timescale of the project. These events brought together scholars, local authority officers, arts and cultural organizations, third-sector organisations, and artists to discuss various issues related to the key themes identified. To support engagement, various locations within Scotland were chosen to host each event to ensure attendance: Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen. Freelance artists and creatives were also paid to attend the events, so they could be part of the conversations without losing income. Fourteen freelancers used this opportunity to attend and contribute to at least one of the events. In total, 123 individuals attended at least one of the Knowledge Exchange Events (see table 1 for a breakdown).

Table 1- Number of attendees across three events

| Event   | Total Number of Attendees |
|---|---------------------------|
| Initial network forming meeting- University of Glasgow (April 2023)   | 42 Members                |
| The creative sector and post-covid recovery in Scotland- V&A Dundee (June 2023)   | 45 Members                |
| The role of arts and culture in addressing climate change and the commitment to net-zero- University of Aberdeen (October 2023) | 36 Members                |

During the funding period, the network developed a membership of scholars, organisations and artists from across Scotland. For a detailed breakdown of the network membership please refer to Table 2. Additionally, the network forged an international partnership with Boekman Foundation, represented by Jan Jaap Knol, the Director of the Institute for Arts, Culture, and Related Policy based in Amsterdam. Jan participated in the inaugural meeting and had since remained an active member of the network, with both parties eagerly exploring possibilities for future collaborative efforts.

Table 2- Membership overview

| Higher Education Institutes/ Researchers | Arts and Culture Organisations | Third Sector Organisations | Artists and Creatives | Local Authority Officers |
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|
|--|--------------------------------|----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|



|            |            |            |           |           |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|
| 70 Members | 30 members | 20 members | 4 members | 4 members |
|------------|------------|------------|-----------|-----------|

The collaboration of various stakeholders within the Scottish Creative industries has created a unique opportunity for connections to form, something which has been missing for many members, particularly freelance artists/creatives who live scattered across Scotland, and sometimes in rural and remote locations. This collaboration acted as a catalyst for enabling individuals to learn about the different work of organisations such as Carbon Scotland and the Scottish Artists Union, and the various levels of support and opportunities these organisations may offer.

Alongside hosting these three events, the network has also developed various platforms to disseminate the discussions and to promote continued engagement and collaboration among its members. These platforms include a dedicated Facebook group with 38 members, an X account with 232 Followers and a YouTube channel hosting several speakers' videos. Additionally, the network is developing a website, which will go live in the summer of 2024. This website will serve as a platform for sharing and disseminating future events and collaborative opportunities.

Attending these events, also supported several artists and creatives to explore the Scottish cultural policy landscape and learn more about it. While they were already familiar with the funding landscapes and its impact on their work, they were exposed to new discussions about policymaking processes, cross-nation collaborations, the role of arts in addressing climate change, and other related topics. This opened valuable learning opportunities for some members, which they can apply to their professional practice. Moreover, researchers present at these events gained insights from the experiences and knowledge of artists and creatives. This provided them with a first-hand understanding of the impact of cultural policymaking, which is often lacking in their research.

## KEY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR END USER / POLICY / PRACTICE COMMUNITIES

Several key recommendations following the success of the first year of the Scottish Cultural Policy Research are detailed below:

- **Developing more opportunities to bring together artists, researchers, policymakers, and funders-** it is crucial to create more opportunities for artists, researchers, policymakers, and funders to convene and address the challenges and issues confronting the creative sector. The network members all actively agreed that peer connection and collaboration were vital for developing workable solutions to pressing funding and sustainability challenges. Similarly, the continued existence of the Network can provide a forum for freelance artists and creatives to connect and build resilience by finding shared experiences. It is imperative to approach these opportunities thoughtfully, ensuring that there is funding to compensate artists and creatives for their participation and that the locations for meetings and events are inclusive and accessible to all, irrespective of their location.
- **Finding sustainable funding-** given the significant funding cuts across the country, it was not surprising that funding was a key point of discussion. Network members expressed the need for further efforts to establish new funding mechanisms. Such mechanisms can ensure the sustainability of artists' practices and enable the sector to fulfil its role as a social and economic impact catalyst.



- **Sharing and developing the learning gained during COVID-19-** acknowledging that the COVID-19 pandemic has presented valuable opportunities for growth and development within the creative sector, it is essential to disseminate the learning gained from on the ground through further research and knowledge exchange events. This will enable policymakers to make informed decisions and promote growth in the post-pandemic environment. The collaboration between researchers and artists will play a crucial role in generating such insights to be shared with policymakers.
- **More considered 'place-based' policymaking processes-** due to the intricate geography of Scotland, with diverse creative and cultural infrastructures across various locations, it is crucial for policymakers to adopt a place-based approach when designing policies. This approach is essential for achieving desired policy outcomes. A place-based approach involves establishing collaborative pathways between policymakers and key players in the sector, which a network such as this one can play a pivotal role in facilitating.

## PLANNED FOLLOW UP ACTIVITIES (*IF APPLICABLE*)

Although, at present, there are no more events planned for the network, there are several plans in place to continue the network:

- **Launch of Website:** In the summer of 2024, we plan to launch an online web space dedicated to the Scottish Cultural Policy Research Network. This website will host reports and insights derived from the network's activities during this funding period. Additionally, this platform will feature presentations and video recordings from the three events designed to disseminate future insights. The website is currently under construction: <https://scprn.wordpress.com>
- **Development of a final report:** We are currently working on a final extended evaluation report that will detail the networks activity across the first year. This will be housed on the website and include testimonials from network members and organisers.
- **Continuation of social media platforms:** Recognising that the associated social media platforms, X, YouTube, and Facebook, have acted as platforms for sharing news and connecting artists, we will continue to run the social media platforms past the point of this grant.
- **Further funding opportunities and development of future networks:** We are exploring additional funding sources to ensure the long-term sustainability of this network beyond the initial grant and to organise future networking events. Furthermore, we recognise this network's significant role in uniting artists, policymakers, and researchers in Scotland, and we see similar challenges and opportunities for artists in other regions of the United Kingdom. Therefore, we are seeking ways to connect the network to other groups and networks in other areas of the United Kingdom. This expanded nexus of connections and collaborations might also create new research opportunities and enhance the network's potential for influencing policy. Alongside also building on the international collaborations that we formed with the Boekman Foundation. Members believed that looking at other international case studies could be integral for gaining new insights that support the development and growth of the Scottish Cultural Industries.