

APPENDIX I

A REVIEW OF TOURING POLICY FROM THE 1970S TO 2000³

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³ Please note that this Review contains references to correspondence between the Arts Council and The Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism.

⁴ It would not have been possible to complete this Review without the support and experience of Phelim Donlon (see Section 1.3) and Catherine Marshall (see Section 1.4). Phelim Donlon began his career in theatre as general manager of the Olympia Theatre in Dublin, after which he became general administrator of the Irish Theatre Company (ITC). ITC was the National Theatre Touring Company, and was funded by the Arts Council. The company toured its productions to many varied venues throughout Ireland and also toured to venues in Britain. He joined the staff of the Arts Council in 1983, as Administration and Film Officer, and he was appointed as Drama Officer in 1985, a post he held until 2000. He also had responsibility for Opera from 1996-2000. He retired from the Arts Council in 2001. Phelim researched and wrote a case study on NOMAD, a producing Network touring new theatre productions, for *The Touring Experiment* (see Appendix V). Catherine Marshall is an art historian and former lecturer at Trinity College, Dublin, and the National College of Art and Design. Since 1995 Catherine has been head of Collections at the Irish Museum of Modern Art (IMMA) but is currently on a two-year secondment to the Arts Council, where she is visual arts advisor on Touring and Collections. Catherine has curated many exhibitions for the IMMA including exhibitions of Irish art for China, Canada and other venues outside Ireland and written many monographs and articles on such artists as Nick Miller, Louis le Brocqy, Robert Ballagh, Hughie O'Donoghue, Alice Maher. She is currently co-editing, with Dr. Yvonne Scott, a history of Irish Art since 1900. Catherine was the Visual Arts Specialist for The Touring Experiment. She also researched and wrote a case study for *The Touring Experiment* on Wexford Arts Centre' Tour of Contemporary Art - 'Surface Tension' (see Appendix VI). Belinda Moller (Ph.D) is an organisation consultant and researcher. In this capacity, she has worked in the arts since 1998. Jane Daly, Co-Director, Irish Theatre Institute and Dermot McLaughlin, Chief Executive, Temple Bar Cultural Trust, made invaluable contributions to this Review.

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1. Introduction

What is a tour? For the purposes of this Review, a tour is when the same and/or a development on the same exhibition / performance / show / reading / series of readings / workshop / concert / gig is transported in a planned, professionally managed way from one venue to at least one other venue. In the case of *The Touring Experiment*, the venues are all located within the island of Ireland.

This Review is concerned with tours in 6 artforms – dance, literature, music, theatre, traditional arts and visual arts. A number of methods were used to gather the information presented in this Review. A systematic, artform-by-artform analysis of the Arts Council's Annual Reports from 1982 to 2000 was conducted to discover facts and patterns in relation to funding touring. A range of published reports, articles and papers was also examined to capture contrasting perspectives, gather the facts and build an economic, social and political 'picture' of the period³. Most of these documents are available on the Arts Council's (Publications) website and referenced at the end of *The Touring Experiment* Report (see Appendix XV References). The Arts Council archive (mainly 1980s) was also used to, 1. Discover the logic and thinking behind the establishment of critical touring institutions/entities such as the National Touring Agency and Music Network and, 2. To get a 'feel' for the political climate and the reality of touring practice for producers and venue managers during that time (see Appendix XV References). As part of this process, Phelim Donlon (see footnote 2 above) was interviewed. He provided critical insight to the development of touring in theatre and dance. A number of people contributed substantive feedback and written work to this Review (see footnote 2). Finally, readers will observe that theatre and dance touring policies are more thoroughly and rigorously dealt with than music, traditional arts, literature and visual arts policies. This is for two reasons, 1. Theatre represents the largest and most comprehensive sample of tours in *The Touring Experiment* and, 2. Based on the research conducted for this Review, The Arts Council's Theatre Touring Scheme (ACTTS) was the longest running and best documented of touring schemes examined.

3 With special thanks to Pascal Letellier, Records Management Assistant with the Arts Council.

The purpose of this review is:

- To inform *The Touring Experiment* team of the history of touring policy and related strategic thinking at the level of the Arts Council and to highlight any historical patterns that may offer insight to the findings of TTE;
- To provide a wider context for touring that takes into account how the touring environment has changed over time; the development of venues, for example, or the growth in cultural funding at national and local level;
- To provide a historical and factual basis on which *The Touring Experiment* can propose to the Arts Council policy for the medium and long term - 2009-2014 (see *The Touring Experiment Report*).

Three important contexts are described below. These help to explain the strategic backdrop against which the Arts Council supported touring from the 1970s onwards. Arts Council support included assigning money, administrative structures, strategy / thinking and practical actions such as schemes. These can only be properly understood with reference to these three contexts,

1. Changes in the Arts Council's approach to support for touring starting from a low resource base in the 1950s up to the 1970s and the emergence of an authentic desire to address fundamental questions about the status and resource requirements of the arts and to plan accordingly in the 1980s;

2. The Arts Council's emphasis on strategic priorities and detailed planning in the 1990s in order that funds could be allocated more precisely with more visible and more measurable outcomes. This may be seen partly as a consequence of the creation of a cabinet Ministry for the arts and the propulsion of arts policy, planning and funding into the cut and thrust of high level policy making and resource allocation; the Arts Council's first Arts Plan (1995-1997) reflected a desire to provide coherent responses to a lot of questions that had been inadequately addressed regarding planning and providing for the arts nationally and locally; the Council was operating with minimal resources and staffing in the face of a relentlessly expanding and apparently limitless range of demands for access to and support for the arts (Benson, *Views*, 1995: 6). The Arts Plan was the first formal published statement of forward planning by The Arts Council and it provided 'a blueprint for a whole series of initiatives for the development of the arts in Ireland' (Drury, 1998: 334). This Arts Plan reflected the reshaping of official arts policy through consultative processes and research activities. Further, this plan identified the use of strategic partnerships to secure maximum benefit for the arts as one of its strategic objectives (Kiberd, *The Arts And The Magic Of The Word*, 1998);

3. The partnership between the Arts Council and local authorities that began following the 1973 amendment to the Arts Act of 1951 to empower local authorities to support the arts, has consistently developed the role of the local authorities in providing arts infrastructure, services, funding and in encouraging local arts programming. Alongside this partnership, there has been considerable investment in a spread of regionally based and professionally managed arts centres and venues. This development began on a small scale in the 1970's and took-off dramatically when European Regional Development Funds became available in the 1990's.

The first and second Contexts are addressed throughout the text. The following section is a very brief account of the third Context and it is an overview of the development of arts centres and the changing role of local authorities in developing and paying for the arts. This provides a background that is critical for a comprehensive grasp of various core and recurrent themes, and ways of thinking and operating that continue to influence how touring policy and touring activity are played out mainly within the Republic of Ireland.

After the third Context is addressed, this Review provides an outline of Arts Council touring policies in six art forms. First, it provides a section on the performing arts - theatre, dance, music and traditional arts. Then, the Review continues with a brief section on visual arts touring followed by a section on literature policies with reference to touring. The Review closes with a summary and conclusion.

Table 1 (at the end of this Review) provides detail on the Arts Council's Theatre Touring Scheme and expenditures on touring in theatre and dance from 1982 to 2000.

1.2. The development of arts centres and the changing role of local authorities in developing and paying for the arts.⁴

Legislative context and change:

The 1973 amendment to the 1951 Arts Act created the momentum and legitimacy for an ambitious and expansionist approach to Arts Council policy. This was because as well as amending the range of activities that could be classed as ‘arts’ for the purposes of the Act, the legislation empowered local authorities to play a direct role in servicing the arts in their areas. In 1976, The Richards’ Report provided the Arts Council with a clear *raison d’être* for supporting the arts at all levels of the Irish population. Richards stated that the Arts Council’s role

‘...should be one of assisting (financially and otherwise) those who want to promote and create, of seeking all means of improving standards and of educating, informing, encouraging and coordination, with the aim of offering maximum opportunities for every level of the Irish population to enjoy and participate in them’ (Richards, 1975; 94).⁵

The Arts Act was updated in 2003 and provides a basis for broadening access to the arts in local authority areas. Section 6 the 2003 Act states that a local authority may financially support the stimulation of public interest in the arts, promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts or, improve standards in the arts within its functional area. It states that a local authority may financially support the stimulation of public interest in the arts, promote knowledge, appreciation and practice of the arts or, improve standards in the arts within its functional area. The Act requires that local authorities prepare plans for the development of the arts but there is no legislation to fund and implement arts plans (National Economic and Social Forum, NESF, 2007; 28).

In the 1970s the Arts Council began funding and assisting the development of theatres and arts centres particularly in Limerick, Cork, Sligo and Tralee (Views, 1995; 122). From 1976 into the early 1980s, in response to the building of new arts centres (e.g. The Hawk’s Well Theatre in Sligo and The Belltable in Limerick) there was an attempt by the Arts Council to encourage more arts activity at a local level, and to encourage local authorities to develop existing centres and local theatre companies.

4 This Section was researched by Belinda Moller and co-written with Dermot McLaughlin, Chief Executive, Temple Bar Cultural Trust. Temple Bar Cultural Trust is one of two consortiums that co-managed The Touring Experiment (See The Touring Experiment Report for details).

5 Richards, J.M., Provision for the Arts: Report of an enquiry carried out during 1974-1975 throughout the twenty six counties of the Republic of Ireland. The Arts Council and Gulbenkian Foundation, January 1976.

At this time local Arts Festivals were beginning to develop. There was a necessity to improve regional venues and the availability of other resources to support touring companies. In 1977, The Arts Council reduced funding to the Dublin Theatre Festival in favour of increasing support for regional arts and touring. In tandem with the Richards' Report, a framework of Regional Arts Committees began. The first was developed in the mid-West in 1977. The Arts Council and the local authority shared the cost of employing a Regional Arts Office who set up co-ordinating committees in the Mid-West areas. This was followed by similar schemes in Galway/Mayo, the South West, the South East and County Donegal (Brinson, 1989; 36). By 1980, 5 out of 9 Regional Development Organisations had appointed arts officers covering 13 counties (O'Hagan, 1987: 66). The Arts Council grant-aided the projects and paid 50% of the arts officers' salaries. The Brinson Report identifies this model as successful and urged the appointment of arts officers across all twenty-seven councils to 'provide a basis for arts activity that is truly responsive to the needs of an area' (Brinson, 1989; 36). By 1989, the Arts Council had increased capital grant levels to The Hawk's Well in Sligo, The Belltable in Limerick, The Everyman in Cork, Druid in Galway and Garter Lane in Wexford and Siamsa Tire in Tralee. In 1987, O'Hagan reported that whilst local authorities were funding projects, the majority of funding was still coming from the Arts Council.

'Regionalisation' and how it was implemented in this context:

The underlying purpose was to address regional inequalities in accessing the professional arts. This was pursued through the objectives of the Arts Council and it is worth observing the fact that the State made provision for local authorities in the 1973 Arts Act, implying a degree of recognition of that priority. In 1987, O'Hagan observed that the relative novelty of regionalising the arts has meant that budgets were (still) relatively small and that a narrow financial base would affect regionalisation strategies. Regionalisation can be understood in two ways (O'Hagan, 1987): a convenient regional arts administration versus effective democratisation of the decision-making process and the ability to initiate and direct major projects for the region. An examination of the funding strategies of the Arts Council's Theatre Touring Scheme (ACTTS) between 1981 and 2000, for example, reveals the former (See Section 1.3.1. and Table 1 below) whilst in recent years, the Council has been more concerned with the latter (e.g. increased funding of local festivals).

O'Hagan identified that the regional arts officer has been replaced by the county-based arts officer alongside a shift in strategic thinking towards 'county arts' (1987). The Review Group for the City and County Managers' Association and The Arts Council published a best practice document on 'Appointing an Arts Officer' (1998) providing a framework to address the developmental needs of the arts locally. And, the increase in the number of arts officers and supporting structures has indeed been rapid; between

1985 and 1997, 30 arts officers were employed by 30 local authorities with the Council continuing to share the cost of salaries (Arts Council, Local Authorities and the Arts, 1998; 4). In 1998, 20 local authorities reported having a dedicated arts and/or cultural committee system in place (Arts Council, Local Authorities and the Arts, 1998; 4). The concomitant increase in local arts activity and demand for funds has also been predictable; request for funding outstrips supply by over 2:1 (2007 Correspondence from Arts Council to Mr. Philip Furlong, Secretary General, Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism). As the Arts Council progressively shifts its strategic stance towards development and the provision of information and expertise, and away from financial assistance, per se, pressure from a centralised funding source should be alleviated (O'Hagan, 1987).

The strategy of allocating arts funds across regions and then to local authorities has obvious advantages to audiences and artists alike. One of the possible unforeseen drawbacks is relative inequality between counties because of differences in wealth, power and experience of the arts. In that case, mediation or modification by a centralised agency may provide some balance (O'Hagan, 1987; 68).

Capital investment by Government in arts infrastructure:

Beginning in 1994, capital funding from central government, mainly through the Cultural Development Incentive Scheme (CDIS) and the Arts and Cultural Enhancement Support Scheme (ACCESS), had a significant impact on the infrastructure for the arts in Ireland. Between 1994 and 1999, CDIS supported the development of 27 pre-existing and brand new arts venues and centres nationwide in partnership with local authorities and private groups. Local authority expenditure on the arts increased from £3 million in 1991/2 to £6.5 million in 1995 (2007 Correspondence from Arts Council to Mr. Philip Furlong, Secretary General, Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism). The number of venues available for arts programming and touring is far larger - *The Touring Experiment* (2007-2008) had 203 venues listed amongst its venues including libraries, churches, hospitals, retirement homes, 'pubs' and other unconventional performance/exhibition spaces (See Appendix XIII for details of the distribution of touring events within *The Touring Experiment*). Between 1999 and 2004, the ACCESS programme allocated €45 million to 27 arts venues and multi-disciplinary centres (see www.arts-sport-tourism.gov.ie/arts/access.html). The purpose of ACCESS I was to enhance arts facilities at local level with emphasis on community-based projects; to bring greater participation in the arts and creation of employment in arts and local economies. ACCESS II, 2007 – 2009, will now provide funding of €32 million to the promoters of 67 projects nationwide. The purpose is to continue to assist the provision of high standard arts and culture infrastructure, thereby enhancing access to the arts throughout the country. The completion of ACCESS I & II means that every county with a sufficient population will have a designated arts facility in its county or main town. ACCESS will have supported the delivery of a range of arts facilities that

supplement and enhance existing provision through the CDIS scheme and previous Arts Council capital programmes intended to address the infrastructural deficit at a regional level. These schemes initiated a three-way arrangement between the Department of Arts, Sports and Tourism (DAST), local authorities and the Arts Council, and have created, in effect, a shared responsibility for the development and provision of new arts facilities in the context of a national arts infrastructure.

The schemes have also precipitated concerns in relation to the ongoing funding of this infrastructure. It has not been possible to deliver the 'triangulation' model the Arts Council proposed as a potentially successful financial framework, recommending equal contributions of local authority: Arts Council and earned income.

The fact that this nationwide arts infrastructure has developed very rapidly over a short timeframe has created a number of apparent tensions – some of which are developed through and implicit in the text below,

'The Council looks forward to being in a position to provide funding to arts centres more closely related to their needs. However, the Council also hopes that local authorities will begin to see the ongoing funding of arts centres as a central part of their support for arts provision at local level. The Council is determined to ensure, insofar as possible, that new centres coming on stream will see a more realistic sharing of the funding responsibility between the local authorities and the Council' (Arts Council Annual Report, 1991; 38).

This explains the recent and current position in which the Arts Council consistently refers to the fact that, the shortfall between funding sought by arts centres and funding offered is so great, that in order to realise projects, local authorities are required to incur significant capital debts (2007 Correspondence from the Arts Council to Mr. Philip Furlong, Secretary General, Department of Arts, Sport and Tourism). There is a further danger that servicing ongoing capital debt will militate against the local authority's support to the venue's ongoing revenue costs, and the needs of the arts in the county more generally. Clearly these factors must pose risks to the extent to which a local authority has capacity to assign resources to meet the needs of the arts locally.

Perspectives on Local Authority expenditure on the arts:

In 1998, the Arts Council published a comprehensive survey of local authority arts expenditure between 1994 and 1997. The survey involved 31 county councils and shows that direct grants to artists and art programmes increased by 32%, whilst administrative costs (mainly payroll-related costs of newly appointed arts officers) increased by 207%. The direct grants category represented the lowest increase whilst expenditure towards municipal venues (art galleries, centres) increased by 38%. On the one hand,

autonomous arts programming at the level of local government is more secure because of the investment in professional arts administrators, and on the other, it is unclear how this sustainability will proceed given relatively low direct funds to artists and art programmes.

The survey also showed that whilst the county councils grant-aided over 700 individuals and arts organisations that did not receive funding from the Arts Council, it also showed that the amount of money given to arts centres for direct expenditure on arts programming (exclusive of Arts Council revenue) was very small at £52,000 (1997 figure for 31 local authorities.) In December 2007, the Arts Council offered €3,000,000 to 34 local authorities for Local Arts Expenditure (www.theatreforum.ie).

The Arts Council's 1997 mid-term review identified that, with respect to arts centre funding, levels had increased whilst reliance on FAS schemes had fallen (Arts Council 1997; 14). Ten years on in 2008, it looks like there are about 50 to 60 venues that are subsidised annually or regularly by the Arts Council and this is close to the number of professionally managed venues listed as members of Theatre Forum.

What this all means for *The Touring Experiment*:

The Arts Council, local authorities and central Government have made significant capital expenditures in the infrastructure for touring; venues appear to be reliant mainly on the Arts Council for funding to enable them to stay in business; annual funding is a fact of life that cannot help venues or others make plans for professionally managed, curated and regularly delivered touring; the physical infrastructure covers most of Ireland; the absence of a formal agreement on 'triangulation' perpetuates dependency on Arts Council funding and reduces the imperative for earned income; there appears to be an absence of strategy for planning and providing for operating costs of new or refurbished venues in the long term, notwithstanding the significant capital funds assigned for these purposes. Despite these difficulties, there is also a sound and flexible legislative basis for both the Arts Council and local authorities to work synergistically. Touring, therefore, happens within a domain where advance planning is difficult or impossible; grant-aid rather than earned income dominates financial planning and business targets, and there is a significant network of venues to receive touring work. This describes the organisational and systemic culture that *The Touring Experiment* has investigated.

Table 1 at the close of this paper provides details of the level of funding from the Arts Council to venues and local authorities in the period 1982-2000⁶. Appendix XIII provides a series of maps that show the distribution of 49 *The Touring Experiment* tours between 2007-2008.

6 The data is incomplete because, during this period, the Arts Council regularly changed categories of expenditure and methods of presentation.

1.3. An analysis of touring policies in the performing arts⁷, 1973-2000

From the 1960s escalating costs, changing life-styles and alternative employment opportunities began to impact on theatre touring - 'independent' producing companies not in receipt of public subsidies 'were forced to restrict the scope of their touring activities' (Views of Theatre in Ireland, 1995; 122). In the late 1960s, a lobbying campaign by Equity and The Irish Theatre Manager's Association urged Government to provide a support structure for the professional management of touring.⁸

In 1976 the State transferred responsibility for the funding of the Abbey Theatre, the Gate Theatre, the Dublin Theatre Festival, the Irish Theatre Company (ITC) and the Irish Ballet Company (IBC) from the Department of Finance to the Arts Council. The Ballet Company was based in Cork but was *sui generis* a touring company. The other four organisations were all based in Dublin, and the Irish Theatre Company, was also *sui generis*, a touring company.

The effects of this decision on the Arts Council were most profound, since these five organisations brought their dowries with them and, collectively, increased the funds of the Arts Council out of all proportion to what it had prior to the transfer.

However, the transfer also brought with it responsibilities in respect of these organisations, all of them with their own mature and well-developed policies, and areas of operation and influence. From the point of view of touring policy and strategy, the Arts Council found that it had two organisations, one in Ballet the other in Drama with specific touring remits, which in effect were the first significant players in the field of performing arts touring with which the Council had had any direct dealings. However, within a decade of being assigned these responsibilities, the Arts Council withdrew funding from both ITC and INB (see Section 1.3.1).

One perspective is that Arts Council's strategies in relation to performing arts touring were often shaped by re-actions to events largely outside its control, as much as by pro-active policy decisions of its own.

1.3.1. The Arts Council's Theatre Touring Scheme (ACTTS), 1981 to 2000

The Arts Council's Theatre Touring Scheme (ACTTS) was established in 1981. The Scheme supported the touring costs related to production companies. It also supported venues and local authorities through guarantees against loss and, later, through programming funds. It mainly funded theatre but also dance (ballet and contemporary) in its early years (see Table 1 for details of expenditure on theatre and dance touring from 1982-2000).

7 Theatre, ballet and contemporary dance, classical and contemporary music and traditional arts.

8 Interview in April 2007 with Phelim Donlon

In 1982 the scheme gave £239,768 to theatre and dance touring (or 6% of the total expenditure on arts for that year). Funding in the 1980s averaged 4.9% of total expenditure on arts. During the 1980s, activity levels were high with an annual average of 9 companies 'on the road', 13 touring productions and 5 local venues in receipt of funds to guarantee against loss. Between 1983 and 1986 the ACTTS was outsourced - but not exclusively - to The National Touring Agency.

Under the aegis of The Arts Council Theatre Touring Scheme (ACTTS) The National Touring Agency (NTA) was set up in July 1982 by representatives of regional theatre venues and professional theatre production managements. The overriding context was the desire to develop regional venues, improve the standard and frequency of touring productions and increase audience attendance. The Arts Council paid for the NTA's salaries and the NTA administered the Theatre Touring Scheme between 1982 and 1985 before ceasing operations in 1986.

An examination of the Arts Council's NTA archive reveals that the NTA would address certain problems,

- Low audience attendance;
- Low levels of revenue and buying power;
- Lack of suitable available and competitively priced shows;
- Conflicts of type of product on offer versus type of product which can be sold by venue;
- Conflicts of differing requirements from different venues.
- The purpose of the NTA was to provide effective services for both producers and *'buyers of touring product...helping venues and managements to restrict or reduce touring costs...and to facilitate and promote the touring programmes'* (Arts Council Archival correspondence from NTA, circa 1982)

Other archival texts refer to the NTA,

- As a mediator between the Arts Council and parties interested in touring;
- As a tool to simplify the process of presenting shows;
- As a strong voice on behalf of interested parties to the Arts Council.

An implicit assumption of correspondence and documents in the Arts Council/NTA archive is that the most important issue was NTA's autonomy in relation to the Arts Council. This was because of NTA's stated belief that the renewal of regional theatre would be dependent on the various abilities and success of the parties in receipt of {touring} funding and that the NTA required independence to be able to assess those abilities and successes using unambiguous criteria. And because of the stated view that the Arts Council could not be aware of all the issues facing touring practitioners.

The NTA considered proposals from producers and venues on the basis of a three-week tour to at least four venues. The NTA implicitly supported a number of large and small venues in its grant application criteria – The Belltable Arts Centre, Limerick; Everyman Theatre, Cork; The Hawk’s Well Theatre, Sligo and Siamsa Tire, Tralee. It also ensured that touring productions visited The Town Hall, Skibbereen, Mullingar Arts Centre and Theatre Royal, Waterford (NTA files, The Arts Council Archive). The NTA was concerned with all aspects of touring,

- Improving conditions on the road and recognising that actors and crew had to be accommodated properly and treated well in order for touring to be sustained and;
- Pre-production and touring budgets;
- Agreeing salary and fee levels;
- Advising on availability of dates;
- Assisting preparation of application to Arts Council for recommendation;
- Confirming venue reservations OR where producer was choosing venues, NTA would advise on same;
- Requesting NTA fee or part fee (£250 approx).
- The NTA also provided ‘auxiliary’ services,
- Contractual arrangements – first between NTA and prod company, then between NTA and regional venues, then between production company and the venues, then the Arts Council – NTA – Production Company and Venue;
- Transport: provision and arrangement of;
- Marketing: audience development;
- Arrangement of accommodation: at proposed contract rates;
- Publicity/PR on specific productions;
- Arrangement of overseas tours.

(Note: The Touring Experiment has provided contemporary baseline data on all the basic categories of touring expenditure in six artforms, see Appendix IX).

After each tour the NTA asked for booking patterns, audience attendance, nightly-take at box office, ticket prices etc., and then prepared a pre-budget versus an actual budget (see Appendix IX for details of *The Touring Experiment* tours and budgeted versus actual expenditures).

The Brinson report argues that NTA found ‘considerable disarray’ and among the issues that created problems were: the fact that significant audience catchment areas were not being served; the problem of timetabling clashes between touring productions. ‘*A lack of forward planning has characterised the marketing of many companies*’ (Brinson, 1989; 37). Subsequently, the NTA hired its own PR and Marketing professional to ensure that the venues would also be assisted. This function insisted that all marketing be cleared centrally

to avoid disruption of working and inter-organisational relationships and provided the following services:

- National publicity via media PR, photos, posters, flyers, programmes;
- Local PR was the roles of the venues nonetheless, but, it had to be done in conjunction with the NTA;
- Provided detailed guidelines on all aspects of print, presentation, photos, press release writing;
- Met with producers and venues to discuss conceptual and audience basis of marketing plan (it appears implicit in the archival material that this was also carefully discussed before the NTA supported the producer).

See Appendix VIII for an account of *The Touring Experiment's* study on Audience Behaviour and Attitudes in relation to Touring.

The NTA wanted to change its funding application procedure so that venues, companies and the local infrastructure could work together to formulate an annual touring policy that would consolidate the scheduling and marketing issues common to all the partners (Brinson, 1989; 37). However, there is no evidence that this strategy was developed. If a professional company wanted to tour it had to apply to the NTA for a funding subsidy. The NTA charged touring producers a small fee in exchange for its comprehensive touring support to theatre and dance and some music events. Activity levels were high; in its first year NTA assisted 41 tours.

The establishment of the NTA was a fundamental shift in touring policy; the working assumption was that touring activity could come from any part of the sector - that value for money was not located in specialist touring companies but spread across the full spectrum of companies and venues. Some companies toured with NTA because they wanted to take one play / event on the road - other companies, like Druid, Rough Magic, Field Day, The Abbey / National Theatre Society, Red Kettle, KITE, Playwrights & Actors, Smock Alley, Cork Theatre Company made a commitment to touring as implicit in all their work.

But there was still considerable uncertainty for the companies involved in touring. The NTA was perceived as 'the inside track to funding'.⁹ And because the NTA regarded every touring application as unique, i.e. each was judged without reference to the past or future, the applicant / company experienced a great deal of uncertainty about future funding opportunities.

Overtime, however, an apparent culture of secrecy and lack of transparency developed. An archival document relating a sectoral consultation one year after the NTA had been established reveals a number of issues, central to this was a lack of coherence and inadequate levels of 'working together' between the NTA, the venues and the producers,

9 Interview in April 2007 with Phelim Donlon

- Producer and venue managers were concerned about changing audience attitudes and an apparent reluctance or financial disincentive amongst audience to attend touring theatre;
- That audiences were falling because there was a lack of regular touring product;
- Venue managers said they did not have enough curatorial input;
- There was a lack of trained production staff in the sector, hampering efforts at efficiency and effectiveness;
- There was a view that the NTA did not 'know' the local audience and that the NTA method may not be the correct marketing approach.

In 1986, The Arts Council received a large cut in its funding. In response, the Arts Council spread the shock by openly cutting funding across all artists' schemes, festivals and the NTA. By 1986, funding was so depleted it was impossible for NTA to continue operating;

'[The Arts Council], in an attempt to minimise the harsh effects of under-funding on clients, discontinued funding some of its own schemes. In Drama, this meant that the Council's Theatre Touring Scheme was suspended from March with unfortunate implications for the National Touring Agency (Arts Council, 1986; 18).

The NTA had changed the touring landscape because 'it set the ambitions' – those companies who were really committed to touring had developed skills, confidence and organisation capacity. In some respects the NTA also 'traded itself out of existence' but because it existed for such a short time, its full impact cannot be properly assessed.

The ACTTS continued operation after the NTA closed and activity levels through the 1980s were high given the financial situation. Over the entire 1982-2000 period, the most consistent measure of activity was the number of production companies 'on the road' (See Table 1 below). The average number of theatre companies 'on the road' between 1982 and 1999 was 9.5. Most activity in terms of production companies is 1999 with 19 companies. The lowest level of activity is 1992 with 4 companies. However, the numbers of production companies does not appear to change in proportion to changes in touring resources. As can be seen in Table 1 below, other measures – like the number of weeks and the number of venues and local authorities in receipt of various touring grants – were used intermittently. The 1980s was a period of huge change and transformation for theatre in Ireland; the emergence of companies such as Druid and Red Kettle with stated commitments to serving their own local audiences, the establishment of Rough Magic who toured consistently, and the extensive programme of venue development under the CDIS, and ACCESS schemes referred to above, are indicative of change. The funding level of the ACTTS was maintained at just above 4% until the 1990s when the concomitant increases in overall arts expenditure appeared to impact on touring. In 1991 the level fell to 3.6% meanwhile the numbers of venues and local authorities accessing touring

grants (as a means to undercut guarantees and to support programming) increased steadily. For example, those in receipt of funding: 4 venues/Local Authorities in 1988, 11 in 1991, 18 in 1992 and 21 in 1994 (see Table 1 below). A quote from 1992 Annual Report captures the explicit and implicit components of this strategy:

“In line with the Council’s overall commitment to redress the imbalance of expenditure as between Dublin and the rest of the country, the budget for the Council’s Theatre Touring Scheme was maintained at the 1991 level, with significantly more money being spent within that budget to provide programming funds to a number of established professionally managed venues around the country. The successful operation of this aspect of the scheme which was initiated last year has enabled the venue managements concerned to enhance their own programme and maximize the amount of professional touring which they promote. Of necessity this meant that the number of touring grants to production companies was reduced, and whilst it is regrettable that this was the case it was also pleasing to record that the tours which were funded were extremely successful and were well received by audiences” (1992; 28).

In 1993, the programme for partnership with government began and the Arts Council began to plan in detail over 3 year periods. The cash value of the ACTTS continued to increase exponentially as the Arts Council’s budget grew, but fell relative to overall arts expenditure; 2.9% in 1995, 3.1% in 1997, 2.9% in 1998. In 1996 the annual report supports a strategy of co-production between touring partners and urges participants to look at opportunities. By 1999 the funding level had fallen to 2.7% with some 19 companies funded to tour and 16 venues in receipt of touring funds. The ACTTS ended in 1999 during a period of re-strategising and restructuring in the Arts Council.

The evidence suggests that, throughout the entire period, there was a consistent tension between, 1. Deregulating the knowledge, skills and abilities involved in touring away from the specialist ‘touring’ companies – although the benefits and outcomes of these specialties were not specified – and, 2. Moving towards a method of funding that could be used for selecting and supporting certain tours, or initiatives from venues. The evidence suggests that a coherent touring policy capable of synchronizing the needs of the sector, and the needs of the emerging venues was not developed in this period.

1.3.2. Touring classical and contemporary/dance, 1976–2007.

“If theatre dance is to develop into a rich part of Ireland’s cultural heritage, an art that the people of Ireland feels belongs to them in some form or other, then an annual visit to a venue by one of the major companies is inadequate... Only when local people and their children can participate, and feel that they are participating in local dance activity whether by attending a class at a

village hall or by preparing costumes for a community dance production, will dance become really meaningful to them... The Arts Council has realised the importance of localised arts activity for some time, and, over recent years have begun to provide a framework for regional arts development" (The Arts Council, Brinson, 1985).

In 1976 the Arts Council assumed responsibility for funding dance (from the Department of Finance). From 1959 to 1964, Irish Theatre Ballet had toured Ireland but owing to a lack of adequate funding the Company had eventually to be disbanded. However, in 1974 a new fully professional company, the Irish Ballet Company, was established again with a State grant in that year of £40,000, which had risen to £93,000 by 1976.

There were reasonable levels of touring activity throughout the 1970s-2000 period. In 1976, the Dublin Ballet Club was touring (Annual Report, 1976). In 1979 Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre received first funding (£1000) and the Arts Council appointed a Dance and Drama Officer. In 1983 Dance Council of Ireland was established, and in 1985, Peter Brinson's *The Dancer and The Dance* was published.

There was a tension around touring dance in the early 1980s because the Arts Council's strategy was explicitly concerned with developing choreographic skills and abilities and encouraging contemporary music scores for dance. In 1981 two seminars were held to discuss the future of dance in Ireland – this was on foot of suggestions by Peter Brinson who was acting as an adjudicator at that time. The main ballet company receiving money was Irish Ballet Company – which became The Irish National Ballet Company (INB) in 1983. INB had a remit to present dance throughout Ireland, an activity that was viewed by the Arts Council as extremely expensive because of subsistence and travelling costs (see annual report, 1984). The other significant companies were Dublin City Ballet and Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre.

In 1984 the Arts Council's annual report stated that the INB was reported as having a low level of activity and audience attendance and that the subsidy per seat sold by the Company was too high. In 1985 the Arts Council appointed a Dance and Education Officer (until 1990).

In 1988 the INB grant was cut in half and Dublin Contemporary Dance Theatre ceased operations. The Arts Council's strategy was changing towards the support of indigenous development, e.g. Daghdha Dance Company in Limerick, Shawbrook residential International Summer School in Co. Longford – now the LD Dance Trust. The strategy, as it emerged, was to put money into projects and initiatives rather than focus funds on specialist companies that were regarded as cash heavy with unclear or inconsistent outcomes.

The costs of touring were regarded as too expensive and unrewarding in terms of audiences. The lack of dance education, on the other hand was

seen as a fundamental and related problem, hence the strategy towards developmental initiatives. Between 1987 and 1997 a number of dance-in-education, formal training, choreography, residency and studio initiatives were developed whilst a small number of specialist dance companies were funded to develop, present and tour work.

Between 1991 and 1994 the Arts Council was unable to recruit a Dance officer.

In 1993 the strategy returned to the support of specialist companies capable of developing and maintaining dancers. In 1995 a part-time position was established and filled. In 1997 the Arts Council initiated a more proactive policy with funding commitments to Daghdha, Irish Modern Dance Theatre, Dance Theatre of Ireland (see Dance Tour Case Study, Appendix III) and Cois Céim as part of their strategy for the Second Arts Plan (1999 to 2001). 1995 was a critical year. With a dance officer in place, additional funding available and a growing list of high quality client companies and resource organisations, the sector was in a position to develop touring. In 1996 a full time dance officer was hired for first time. An increase in the budget in 1997 meant that funding for touring was increased significantly.

Since 1997, the sector has consolidated around support for five companies that now tour regularly, not including irregular touring companies. One of these regularly tours *Ballet* – a genre not included in the final sample of TTE (see Appendix IX, Dance analysis for further details). In light of the Arts Council's strategic focus on contemporary dance, a report was commissioned in 2006. The Purnell Report (2007) highlights the significance of the international dimension in securing legitimacy for both ballet and contemporary dance with the finding that ballet in Ireland does not have a significant international profile.

Despite good potential with audiences it appears that this is related to the quality of the repertory and dancers and to the lack of development funding (2007), the Purnell Report observes that,

'Knowledge of dance audiences is very limited. Companies report an appetite for ballet amongst their audiences together with ease in securing dates and touring venues. However, there is a marked absence of any statistical evidence to support this claim as the companies and most venues do not maintain an accurate record of box office returns either in terms of financial results or attendances...

Outside of the subsidised sector, some international ballet companies perform in Ireland, most regularly in The Point in Dublin. It is encouraging that with the 'right' company and repertory, commercial producers have confidence that ballet can attract audiences. This supports the view that quality product, if marketed well to a targeted audience, will attract support. The need to support this view with sufficient data to make informed decisions is vital' (Arts Council, 2007).

1.3.3. Position paper on theatre and dance touring by Jane Daly¹⁰, April 2005.

In response to a request to help support the Arts Council's decision-making process in respect of theatre and dance Touring, Jane Daly researched and wrote a position paper in 2005. The themes addressed in that document are implicit to *The Touring Experiment*, in particular, methods of touring, suitability of work in venues and the issues of scale and cost / expenditure. Daly identified four key issues:

1. The provision of capital investment for training and capacity building in both venues and producing companies to support touring partnerships, to train and develop personnel in the knowledge, skills and abilities that go towards supporting high quality production, technical, marketing and other audience related services;
2. The provision of funding mechanisms to meet the needs of touring in terms of reviving work, incentivising marketing and programming / curating activities (e.g. building audiences by using non-typical venues, to encourage venue consortia to work together, to present work for children and young adults, to go and see work at major European festivals etc.); developing special projects (e.g. site specific productions); supporting lightfoot¹¹ touring (e.g. low cost solo or two-hander productions); providing minor capital investment (e.g. upgrading technical – sound and lighting, for example -facilities in smaller venues outside of Dublin).
3. Addressing structural practices in order to build audiences for professional theatre and dance. Daly identified that international Arts Councils emphasise the need for touring partners to have viable methods of marketing to, and building relationships with, new and existing audiences whilst on tour. Daly's observation and experience of the Irish situation identified a number of structural problems that run counter to this desire. Companies rarely get 'runs' long enough to take advantage of word-of-mouth because the venues are understandably reluctant to split up audiences. Because the producing companies are reliant on annual funding, it is not always possible to schedule ahead of the financial year. As a result, venues frequently miss out on the very productions most likely to secure repeat audiences, and the companies are not able to increase the number of performances, secure higher financial guarantees and build the audience base for their work. Daly suggests that incentives should also be provided for those companies and venues that can use workshops and outreach programmes and, critically, she identifies the importance of incentivising networks of venues that come together as co-producers, through for instance, special project funding or marketing schemes, (see Appendix V, Theatre Tour Case Study for example).

10 'Touring Position Paper for The Arts Council', April 2005 – Jane Daly Arts Management Services. Jane Daly is Co-Director of the Irish Theatre Institute.

11 A phrase coined by Donal O'Kelly (Irish playwright, author, actor and stage director) as a description of his touring work.

4. To address the consequences of the hidden subsidy attached to touring and arrest the decline in touring activity. Daly identified that ‘companies feel they must apply a significant portion of their funding to cover the direct costs of touring’ and, as a result, – ‘touring ceases to be a key element of their annual activities’.

1.3.4. Touring classical and contemporary music and musicians, 1970s-2007.

In the 1970s, the Arts Council’s strategy was to contribute relatively small amounts to musical promoters and societies and, thereby, provide a reasonable guarantee against loss, enable programming and a limited form of touring among promoters. The affect of this was to make viable increasing levels of concert activity, improve the quality of advance planning and optimize advance booking and venue opportunities whilst recognizing that a significant proportion of the cost of the concert was recoverable from box office.

The Music Association of Ireland (MAI) Country Concert Scheme promoted classical, contemporary, choral concerts outside of Dublin and the Council supported a wide range of festivals (Arts Council, 1974). In 1978, the MAI hired a Music Organiser to support promoters and coordinate programming choices. The Arts Council was aware that the real cost of concert promotion was subsidized by voluntary work. There was also a shortage of professional organizers during this period.

In 1982, the Arts Council continued its strategy and increased grant aid to out-of-Dublin concert promotion with most funds going to the MAI. Some of the societies worked closely together to create effective touring ‘circuits’. For example, in 1983, there was a circuit for touring music in Waterford, Cork, Limerick and Galway. In 1984, the Arts Council’s annual report signaled operational problems in the MAI with the demise of the Soundpost music magazine. In 1985 general problems regarding concert promotion outside of Dublin continued to be highlighted. A special seminar on Regional Concert Promotion was held in October 1985. Regional music promoters and arts administrators identified inadequate resources (financial and material) and the poverty of the education system (lack of specialist training opportunities or musicians) as the major problems. Other issues highlighted were the need for regular and updated information about venues and artists and the constant problem of coordination between promoters was signaled alongside the desire that non-specialist promoters have access to advice, possibly from a centralized source.

As a direct result of the Seminar, Music Network was established in 1986 and former Mid-West arts officer, Robert O’Byrne, was appointed as Director. O’Byrne immediately produced a consultative paper (Music Network, 1986) and supported the establishment of Music Network with a series of conclusions:

- There is a fundamental problem with marketing classical music – a lack of or poor quality – sometimes based on the assumption that ‘we know our audiences and they know all about us’. Regional promoters underestimate the potential of marketing; well-planned, cost effective marketing could encourage ‘a more relaxed and enjoyable approach to music promotion and the active pursuit of new audiences outside the traditional social groups’. Music Network will offer new approaches and will actively support those promoters who want to engage with audiences in new ways;
- Develop the amount and variety of concert work available to well known and lesser known musicians who have limited opportunities and, of whom, there is little knowledge outside Dublin;
- Music Network should enhance and support the role of musical societies which are essentially conservative in their programming and marketing;
- Music Network should act as a ‘catalyst’ by providing venues with a financially supported programme, some of the risks for venues – which lack curatorial expertise in classical music and, in some cases, essential equipment – is removed. This is based on the assumption that, venue managers/arts officers will, gradually begin to schedule their own programme and attend to equipment deficits (Music Network, 1986).
- Music Network’s services were modeled on The Arts Council of Great Britain’s Contemporary Music Network and the ACNI’s Touring Concert Programme. In 1986, O’Byrne described its role as providing an advisory service to existing and potential promoters, acting as an information resource for musicians and promoters – it planned to act as an agent for a limited number of musicians – and promoting its own concert tours in association with selected venues around the country. As with theatre, the strategy of devolving decisions locally to regional organizations was a central thrust of the Arts Council. The Music Network and regional music associations were seen as a method of doing this. Whilst the consultative paper suggests that Music Network was established to provide a classical touring programme, since its establishment, its remit includes, traditional Irish Music and Jazz.

In its first year, Music Network promoted 4 tours to 8 venues giving 28 concerts. In 1987 it achieved full capacity audiences during its tours of traditional Irish, unaccompanied, musicians. It also provided other music tours to Sligo, Castlebar, Limerick, Ennis, Tralee, Cork, Wexford and Dublin. Meanwhile, established voluntary concert promoters continued to receive Arts Council assistance to organise events in Galway, Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Dublin, with some smaller regional venues serviced by the Music Association of Ireland’s country concert scheme.

In 1989, the Irish Chamber Orchestra (est. 1970) toured to regions after

changes to its structure that allowed for the employment of musicians to develop a core ensemble. Music Network toured 32 performances around the country and added 8 new venues to its circuit. There were 9 arts officers nationwide at this point. In 1990 Music Network delivered 75 performances in 15 venues. The ICO was identified as an international and national standard with high quality management and a core number of ensemble players.

Meanwhile, the Music Network's grant was increasing rapidly. By 1991, the grant had doubled to £71,000. The Arts Council was supporting the ICO as an independent, professional touring and performance ensemble. In 1992, a new director of Music Network; Niall Doyle was appointed and the level of activity and services developed rapidly alongside long-term development plans and organization restructuring. In 1993 the ICO toured nationally and internationally, raised substantial sponsorship and recorded albums.

The Improvised Music Company (IMC) was established in 1991 by Irish jazz musicians to promote jazz and related music (e.g. electronica). IMC promoted concerts and tours and also commissioned new works and assisted the creation of improvised music generally. Newpark Music Centre, Blackrock, County Dublin was established in 1979 to provide a training facility for jazz and jazz related education (1000 students in 2008) had been receiving funds from the arts for many years. Since 1994 the ICO¹² and Music Network have consistently developed and strategised to increase the range of programmes and impact on audiences.

Since 1999 Music Network has developed a number of case studies and plans that explore different approaches to developing audiences – a core aim under its wide remit - 'a cohesive concept involving marketing, outreach and programming to generate sustained and progressive audience awareness, attendance and appreciation of high quality live music performances' (www.musicnetwork.ie). Music Network's audience development programme, has 3 components - Marketing, Outreach and Programming and is designed:

- To build audiences for music, across a range of genres;
- To foster and develop high quality concert promotion within Ireland;
- To provide enhanced performance and professional development opportunities for highly skilled musicians within Ireland;
- To encourage wider participation in and accessibility to music.

In its recent programme (2006), Music Network provides an audience development model of practice and basic criteria for choosing promoters (e.g. subsidized arts centre and musical societies). Chosen promoters can access a wide-ranging training and support programme with long-term strategic benefits. The training includes the running of successful outreach workshops / interactive sessions with musicians and audience and the development of a practical music policy in conjunction with specialist music

12 In 1994 the ICO relocated to a new home in The University of Limerick and expanded its activities to include outreach and education.

organizations / individuals. An evaluation of its 2006 audience development programme found that if audience attend a well-run, well thought out workshop, they are more likely to attend a concert (see *The Touring Experiment Report* for conflicting findings of *The Touring Experiment*). And, it found that attendance rate increases if the audience attends more than one workshop. The evaluation shows that a dedicated programme of this type improves the quality of the relationships, communications and understanding between all the parties, between Music Network, the promoter, the artists and the audience. Tour promoters most likely to succeed in delivering audience development components have 4 attributes:

- Access to Music Network supports and resources - including promotional materials, instruments, on-going support;
- Informed / effective promoters with a commitment to audience, to marketing and to outreach needs - promoters had good local contacts, a commitment to and ingenuity in using the marketing tools and in developing new contacts;
- Skilled musicians participated;
- Participant focused workshops with appropriate numbers;
- A clear link between the workshops and the concert programme.

By outsourcing its touring remit to the Music Network and others (e.g. IMC), the Arts Council's strategy between 1986 and 2000 focused on the artistic (e.g. supporting composition, performance training, basic instrument resources), infrastructural (e.g. supporting societies, venues, delivering regular music concerts/events) and institutional (e.g. supporting The Irish Chamber Orchestra) basis for music. These strategies were balanced against a desire to improve (or advocate for improvements) in educational and training opportunities for young musicians. In contrast to most European countries, The Department of Education and Science does not regard the training of musicians as within its remit.

1.3.5. Touring traditional arts (dealing predominantly with music), 1981-2000

In 1981, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Éireann (CCE), with 40 venues and an extensive nationwide performance programme (320 performances in 1981) was the Arts Council's biggest grant recipient. The Arts Council priorities for supporting traditional music developed with an emphasis on establishing a national archive for traditional music to make it more available generally and to focus on educational events that would promote appreciation, understanding and technical accomplishment. Supporting annual traditional music festivals was another spoke to Arts Council strategy at this time. An ongoing financial crisis with CCE resulted in the strategy of the Arts Council shifting away from that support and directing it towards Music Network. Thereafter, the Arts Council did not directly fund traditional music

performance, touring or otherwise until 1987 when it agreed to fund Music Network's proposal to tour solo unaccompanied traditional musicians. From 1988 Music Network appear to have been the principle grant-aided source of traditional music tours outside of festivals and the private / commercial traditional music tours.

The Arts Council had concerns about maintaining and sustaining standards of music and musicianship in the mid 1980s. A strategy emerged to focus on broadly educational events and approaches and to fund a number of organisations that would provide good practices in encouraging the public to develop an informed and appreciative interest in folk music and song. Na Píobairí Uilleann (est. 1968) received funding in 1983 and whilst the organisation is a critical resource, it has not been a touring organisation. In fact, under The Touring Experiment, Na Píobairí Uilleann undertook its first tour (see Appendix IX, Traditional Arts analysis for further details). The other source was to fund the use of regional arts structures (Mid-West Arts Organisation and South East Arts – see note on differences between regional and county arts above) to promote the art form. Another source was the development of long-standing and new summer schools in traditional music and arts. This describes the Arts Council's three part strategy for traditional music: (a) funding high quality solo performer tours and emphasising the role of the soloist in the development and transmission of traditional music, (b) supporting summer schools and educational events and (c) funding and developing resource organisations for traditional music. These strategies were now understood at Arts Council level as delivering a legacy in terms of general public appreciation and understanding the music and standards of performance.

In 1987 Music Network toured a selection of high quality solo performers of traditional music and song for the first time using arts centre, theatres and libraries throughout the country. This tour achieved 100% audience attendance at some of the events. And, in 1988 the Music Network toured a variety of recitals to over 12 arts and music centres. By 1990 the Music Network solo performer national tour continued to increase its audience attendance. The Council also introduced a programme of masterclasses at this time.

In 1991, the Arts Council increased the traditional music budget by 20%. The emergent strategy was made explicit for first time; organisation support for the delivery of key services and legacy related resources for practitioners and audience alike, plus practitioner supports through solo performance. Increased investment from County Councils around the country affirmed the Council's strategy. In 1992 the Arts Council reduced the traditional music budget. Music Network delivered 70 tours in 19 venues and summer school organizers were urged to find additional sources of funding, especially from local businesses that could benefit from involvement with these events.

Between 1993 and 2000 this strategy was consolidated and gradually

improved but there were no particular departures or changes in thinking. The only significant aspect was the strategic treatment of Traditional Music and Arts as an artform when, at various times the artform was accommodated within Music generally.

The Arts Council's publication in 2004 of *Towards a Policy for the Traditional Arts* and in 2005 of *Strategy for the Development of arts in the Gaeltacht 2005-2009* set out new and clearer policy targets and commitments that aim to improve the creative and working environment within Ireland and internationally for traditional musicians. However these policy documents do not contain provision for specific budgeted schemes, although it is clear that traditional music is understood and appreciated as an artform like any other.

1.4. An analysis of touring policies in the visual arts, 1970s-2007¹³

Up to this point the review has been concerned with performance based events that require immediate audience engagement and generally function to large groups of people for short periods of time (a couple of nights to a week per venue). Contemporary visual arts events are best experienced by individuals or small groups over a period of time. Ideally, these events require a particular relationship between the work displayed and the space in which this is done. For that reason touring contemporary art in Ireland has historically taken second place to making the work and showing it in once-off exhibitions.

From the 1950s, the Arts Council supported visual art through grants to artists for materials and catalogues, to build studios and by buying their work. Touring exhibitions were a rarity in the 50s and 60s.

Since the mid 1970s the Council has given aid to an initially small, but rapidly expanding number of exhibition venues. At the same time the Council worked to develop audiences by promoting a similarly growing number of touring exhibitions. There were few galleries and virtually no professionals around the country to receive or show artwork so tours were invariably limited to 3 or 4 venues. It was not until the late 1970s that a ground swell of demand led to more active touring programmes.

The Butler Gallery in Kilkenny was one of the few galleries to organise its own touring exhibitions with assistance from the Arts Council. The practice there was to put money into a special exhibition to coincide with the Kilkenny Arts Festival and to try to maximise its effect by touring it to Limerick or Cork. While this began to change during the 1980s, there were few formal touring arrangements apart from those initiated by the Arts

¹³ This Section was researched and written by Catherine Marshall, and edited by Belinda Moller.

Council. In the mid 1990s Allied Irish Banks (AIB) delivered a nationwide tour of its collection in conjunction with local arts offices. Costs were shared by the Banks, the local authority and indirectly by the Arts Council through its support to venues.

In 1996 the Irish Museum of Modern Art launched its National Programme to share the assets of the Museum (its curatorial and technical expertise, and its collection) with the country at large. Funding for this was modest, the Museum paid the salary of the co-ordinator and the installation crew but the receiving venue paid the costs of transport, insurance, publicity, and installation costs. Despite a modest budget of £25,000 or €30,000 the National Programme put on approximately 20 exhibitions from the Collection annually for nearly a decade. There is a regular waiting list for these tailor-made exhibitions.

During the 70s the Arts Council took the lead, initiating several strands of touring exhibitions. The most sophisticated of these resulted from a partnership with the ACNI through which, every second year, retrospective exhibitions of the work of established artists were initiated by one or other of the councils and toured to a small number of venues. (Examples of these were Patrick Scott, Tom Carr, Tony O'Malley, William Scott, Louis Le Brocquy and others, which generally travelled to such venues as The Hugh Lane Gallery, or the Douglas Hyde Gallery in Dublin, the Ulster Museum in Belfast, the Crawford Gallery in Cork and the Limerick City Gallery). The Arts Council jointly took responsibility for curation, catalogue production, transport, insurance and installation of the exhibitions and frequently subsidised the opening events and publicity. So successful were these schemes, that George McClelland, acting as agent for Tony O'Malley in 1978/9 made it one of his key promotional strategies to secure a slot for an O'Malley touring retrospective.

Another strand of touring was tours of exhibitions initiated by the Arts Council; exhibits such as The Bursary Show, and shows of younger artists e.g. Jacinta Feeney, Brian Bourke, Martin Gale, travelled to a number of smaller venues such as the Bank of Ireland Art Centre, Baggot Street, Wexford Arts Centre, The Butler Gallery, Education Centre, Castlebar. And, from the early 1980s onwards, to The Belltable, Triskel, Tuam Art Gallery, DeValera Library in Ennis, Clonmel Museum or Council Chamber and Garter Lane (1983/4).

Until the early 1980s there were very few venues capable of receiving a sizable exhibition, apart from the Butler Gallery in Kilkenny, the Wexford Arts Centre, the Sligo Art Gallery and the Education Centre in Castlebar and the Project Arts Centre in Dublin. These were joined in the early 1980s by the Belltable and Triskel Arts Centre, and the provision of venues began to gain momentum in the late 80s and throughout the 90s. ACCESS funding helped to provide the capital for the building but the venues generally lacked revenue (grant-aid, earned income and sponsorship, for example) and

lacked trained curatorial staff. One outcome of this was that many of the new venues had good theatre spaces but failed to deliver adequate provision for visual arts.

There were very few people capable of transporting and installing an exhibition to professional standards throughout the period of this survey. John Hunt and Ruairi O’Cuiv, set up Art and Exhibition Services (still running as Magennis Art Transport) in the early 80s, and Seamus Slevin operated out of Belfast. Despite the presence of a small number of professional handlers, inevitably artworks were damaged and some exhibitions badly installed. Insurance claims led County Managers to pull back from the exhibition process. But change was afoot, Patrick Murphy, visual arts officer to the Arts Council, wrote in 1982 ‘Council agreed that R.A.O.S {Regional Arts Officers} should be provided with a screen system for use in their area. I would envisage that a basic unit that would provide 48 ft. of hanging space should be first provided; these units can be added to in subsequent years’. In 1987, the annual report notes that £1,000 was spent on exhibition equipment in that year.

By the early 1980s a boom in cultural activity led to a series of Council schemes, tried out initially as early as 1982 and 1983 but formally launched in 1985. A letter in 1982 from Patrick Murphy reads, *‘At the Dec. meeting the arts council adopted a new approach to its exhibition policy. This will necessitate the reduction of the Council’s own direct promotions and the introduction of a number of new schemes that will encourage exhibition making and exchange amongst existing institutions, societies and art centres’* (Arts Council Archive, Ref: D 7105/9.0000/1).

The schemes that directly and indirectly supported touring were:

- **The Touring Exhibition Scheme** which enabled galleries and art centres to mount a self-organised exhibition and tour it to other venues;
- **The Exhibition Transport Scheme** enabled galleries to receive exhibitions by covering cost of transport;
- **The Exhibition Hire Scheme** which subsidised up to 50% cost available to offset cost of hiring a self-organised tour from another venue within the republic;
- **The Catalogue Research Scheme** enabled arts centre to commission text for catalogues to accompany self-organised exhibitions;
- **The Schools Touring Scheme** which enabled 8 different, curated exhibitions, tailor made for easy delivery and installation. Artists were commissioned to create new work specifically for a young audience and the exhibitions were presented all over the country under the auspices of the Council in partnership with the VECs. The aims of the scheme were interesting; to promote contemporary art, to show a range and quality of visual art, and to give artists a chance to work with children (see Drury, 1988 ‘Heads’).

The aims of the new strategies were manifold. The Arts Council wanted to promote widespread access, but most of all to encourage venues to organise their own shows. The schemes were well received in the press but there were limitations to their effectiveness. The emphasis in the schemes was on the encouragement of self-initiated tours, partly in response to the increasingly burdensome workload of the Visual Arts Officer. But, without experienced curators around the country the dream of self-organised exhibitions could not be realised.

The mid-1980s was, perhaps, the heyday of visual arts touring. In 1984, the Arts Council appointed an Exhibitions Officer to administer the new schemes and to oversee the Council's own exhibition programme which continued for another few years. By 1985 the Council's annual report reported that 400,000 visited exhibitions in galleries and arts centres and that 6 Arts Council shows toured the country while the Council also subsidised the tour of the annual Oireachtas exhibition. The 1986 annual report noted that demand for touring exhibitions now exceeded supply while 1987 boasted more touring exhibitions than in any previous year. The Exhibitions Officer resigned in 1987 and the post has not been refilled.

The 1988 annual report makes no reference at all to touring. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the schemes were difficult to oversee, especially in relation to accounting for double funding where clients of the Arts Council received revenue funds and funds from various schemes.

The Arts Plans - 1999 -2001 recommended touring as "a way of encouraging audiences", and expresses its intention to "create a touring circuit". However the 2002-2006 Arts Plan is not specific about the role of visual arts touring amongst its strategies. Partnership for the Arts in practice, 2006 -2008, however, announced "a new system of touring high quality exhibitions". Anecdotally, there is now - in 2007-08 - a view that the number of venues capable of taking good programmes of historical and new works has increased and there are more informed curators. This benefits both artists and audiences.

This brief Review identifies that focussed strategies with unambiguous intentions and verifiable outcomes increased the quantity of touring exhibitions with the effect of attracting large numbers of the public. The hiatus in strategy since 1988 set against the explicit intentions of the current Arts Council suggests that the past provides a solid testament: there are advantages in developing and supporting clear, focussed strategies.

1.5. An analysis of policies in literature with reference to touring, 1974-1998.

This review of touring policy in literature refers to various strategic supports for Irish and international writers writing in Irish and English and covering the main genres of prose, fiction, poetry. This review describes what can best be described as minimal or coincidental activities that could be described either as structured touring or as clear policy for touring in literature. Indeed the concept of 'touring' seems to be alien from most discourse about writing, reading, writers and readers; the clear exception here is promotional commercially-driven tours promoted by publishers and retailers.

It is not clear whether the touring of literature has ever been an explicit strategy of the Arts Council and it is not clear that the level of development with the artform (including understanding of readership behaviour and preferences, the 'soft' infrastructure of capacity and capability to produce, manage, implement and receive literary writers) is sufficiently developed to support a touring scheme as conventionally understood.

Given these caveats, this section refers to those writers who have been published or want to be published and promoted by publicly subsidized publishing houses. It also refers to those organizations, individuals and arts centres who require support in order to make literature available to audiences who may not get access to books or to the opportunity to become familiar with literature. It is unclear if the objectives here are to do with literacy or critical appreciation of literature.

Touring literature generally seems to refer to touring writers who undertake a range of activities as part of a tour; reading from their work to an audience in an arts centre, a library, a book shop or other venue; taking questions from an audience in any number of settings; servicing and participating in writing workshops with small groups and using these and other opportunities to sell their books and promote their work.

After the closure of the Irish University Press in 1974, the number of Irish publishing houses increased because IUP editors, designers started their own enterprises (Arts Council annual report 1981). In the 1980s the number of publishing houses dedicated to Irish literature continued to expand. There was a concerted effort over a period of 10 years to position these houses so that they could expand and exploit profitable markets in the United States and Europe. In 1982 the Arts Council shifted focus to quality with grant-aid prioritized for publishing drama, fiction and poetry. Other grants were offered on a title-by-title basis through various publication assistance schemes. Small sums were also being given to literary societies and festival events and to Poetry Ireland.

In 1983, the Arts Council changed strategy and decided to give block funds to publishers in the same way that theatre companies received funds,

thereby, giving publishers the freedom to allocate according to their own strategies and objectives, subject to Arts Council approval. The purpose was to improve professional management standards to tackle the export market more effectively. In 1988 the Pick report was published and a small number of publishers were funded to expand. This strategy of small business development emerged and continued with a particular emphasis on the export market.

The Arts Council noted that writers' festivals had started to play a more prominent role towards the end of the 1980's and began to increase its support for these and similar events. These events were an effective way to draw international attention to Irish literature and publishing, helped by the regular inclusion of established international authors in festival programmes. This strategy of support continued. As with other art forms (see traditional music above), the Arts Council began to focus on literary organizations as an emergent strategy. The emphasis was on delivering a legacy and providing quality services that would support and promote the art form. The Dublin writers' museum and Irish writers centre opened in 1991 as the most developed example of an organisation providing resources and services to writers and Irish Literature.

A new strategy began to emerge in 1992 in support of literary translation. The emphasis was placed on the international position of Irish literature and the potential of translation in developing Irish publishing. In 1994, the strategy was made explicit – supporting the international translation of Irish literature and securing / consolidating the main resource and service organizations.

The explicitness of the strategy perhaps provided the Arts Council with the confidence to broaden its strategic horizon. The ambition of the first Arts Plan (1995-1997) contained a proposal to search for strategic partnerships one of which was the Arts Council and The Library Council (An Chomhairle Leabharlanna) to increase public access and involvement through the library system (Kiberd, 1998; 6). Currently, there are 352 libraries in Ireland and a vibrant community of users rely on the local library. The Library Council has explicit strategies to promote the Library as a social and cultural centre for inclusivity (see for instance, <http://www.librarycouncil.ie/LibraryBuildingsExhibition.shtml>).

In 1996 The Public Library and the Arts Committee formed around a critical research project resulting in *'The Arts and The Magic of The Word'* (1998). Chaired by Professor Declan Kiberd, the report found that, even allowing for the limits of suitable space and restricted opening hours, the public library was an extremely suitable venue and location for the practice and enjoyment of the arts and arts related activities. Recommendations to the Arts Council included enlarging the budgets for writers-in-libraries and providing for cross-art form residencies in appropriate libraries. The report found that the second most common arts related use were workshops, writers groups

and readings but that other book related events did not feature highly in reported usage (1998). Finally, the study found that the library has ‘...*multiple values*’ for artists – with reference to touring of literary work in which the author reads to an audience and makes his or her work available for sale to the audience, the library is a venue for the artist to exhibit or present his or her work and it helps to develop the audience for the artist’s work...’ (Arts Council 1998; 28).

From the evidence available, it is unclear how or if the Arts Council responded formally and operationally to this report.

This incomplete Review needs to be read in conjunction with *The Touring Experiment’s* findings and evidence which suggest a number of things: that the idea of touring in literature is alien to venues and audiences; that the public library system represents an underutilised resource for literature events; that conventional arts centres could act as an add-on to the library as a venue for certain events to take account of opening hours, capacity etc; that it is unclear whether working artists, the artform or audiences would benefit clearly or easily from conventional approaches to touring literature.

1.6. Summary and conclusions

Levels of arts activity and funding have gone through unrecognizable changes since the 1970s; in 1981 total arts expenditure (Arts Council only) was £3,600,000 and in 2000 it was £43,429,000. Within that period, many of the names (artists, managers and organizations) remain familiar but the increase in activity (the number of projects, artists organizations making work) and the infrastructural base (the number of venues and resource organizations) has been exponential. However, as the 1999 Arts Plan states, ‘*While this is a most welcome development, it has had the effect of spreading public support ever more thinly...the immediate needs of individuals or individual organizations may be supported but often inadequately*’ (1999; 8).

This Review is very limited in scope. Further, the range of artforms examined is wide and it is debatable whether the issues and circumstances of one artform are easily compared to another. Therefore, any summary of the generic or cross artform issues is likely to be subjective and flawed.

Given those caveats, it is useful to point out a number of indicative patterns that can be supported by the facts summarised above. One observation is that touring has been a recurrent challenge for successive Arts Councils. A clear pattern through the period is the emergent strategy in all artforms to build capacity and specialities through organisation structures. This pattern is not particularly pertinent to touring; rather, it is a central spoke of arts funding generally. However, as a strategy, it has implications for touring, particularly if core-touring capacities are supported over the long term. It is

not clear if this strategy has provided benefits to touring (see *The Touring Experiment Report* for further comment).

In addition, and to complement the above observation, three inherently conflicting and overlapping tensions are discerned,

1. Strategies that were designed to boost levels of touring activity, so that audiences could access a greater spread of high quality work around the country, conflicted with other funding strategies.

This tension produced a specific pattern in funding decisions; strategies designed to boost levels of touring activity, particularly in the performing arts, were not sustained. One explicit reason was the desire to support the touring needs of new venues but this strategy was not maintained consistently (see Table 1). Other reasons are unclear. Anecdotal information of low audience attendance and increased costs in touring, as reported in various annual reports, may have influenced this conflict. Annual reports from the 1980s show a lively interest in audience attendance at touring events, but the strategy in relation to audience or to audience needs was not dealt with explicitly. Other determinants may have been the general increase in costs of the new arts infrastructure and the increased cost of specialist organisations and other permanent resource structures (See also 2 & 3 below).

With respect to audience attendances, attitudes and behaviours, the lack of baseline data on audience attendance and purchasing patterns was probably fundamental to this tension (See Study on Audience Behaviours and Attitudes, Appendix VIII, and Appendix IX for audience attendance data at Touring Experiment tours). The 2006 Arts Plan is specific in its desire to address this issue in relation to touring – to ‘Provide for audiences’ needs by introducing an effective touring policy” (2006; 59). The Plan also states the desire to support evidence-based audience analysis in venues, and to produce national research on audience attendance to support venues.

2. Local indigenous art versus the national ‘tourable’ brand – strategies that increased the amount and the quality of art being made at the local level and promoted at the national level conflicted with the desire to invest in the development of national, specialist touring brands that were familiar to audiences (artists/organizations/venues/groups/shows/playwrights/musicians/singers/performers/institutions).

An examination of strategies over twenty years reveals that specialist touring or branded companies/artists/organisations/venues have always been at risk of losing funds in favour of the alternate strategy – spreading touring funds thinly across the arts sector. With the exception of stated concerns about audience attendance in the 1980s, the Arts Council’s annual reports do not explain what the conditions/rationales were for shifting funds one way or the other.

So, the principle effect on touring has been the unresolved tension between, 1. 'Decentralising' knowledge, skills and abilities (artistic, management, marketing and production) across the arts sector to increase access and participation as against investing in and, 2. Developing specialist companies and national brands to secure quantifiable audience satisfaction.

Part of this tension is reflected in the desire that galleries, musical societies, theatre companies, venues/networks and individual artists would 'self-organise' national tours. But the rationale for this desire is not clear. Has it been about audiences attending, consuming and purchasing arts on tour or, is the tour, as an example of arts activity, a rationale in and of itself, with the hope that audiences would participate in some way?

Some Arts Council interventions are clear exceptions and specifically about audience attendance - the schools' visual arts exhibition scheme, the Irish Theatre Company, and The Music Network when it was first established. This tension reveals a tendency to confuse audience satisfaction with increased opportunities for performance - for example, in music, there is a tacit assumption that performance opportunities for musicians is the same thing as satisfying audiences; there is evidence of thinking that improving audience satisfaction was partly conditional on building more venues; there is evidence of thinking that audience satisfaction could be achieved by having more companies 'on the road'. And, in theatre, it is not clear if there was simply an imperative to keep some companies and venues in funds and active (See Table 1 below).

3. Risk-taking versus financial security - some strategies/schemes appear to have been created to incentivise risk-taking and examples of these might include giving money to individual artists, artist groups, organizations/companies, local authorities and venues to make art happen and to explore the potential of touring. However, on balance it appears that this 'open' approach conflicted with the desire to manage the affects/consequences of touring-related risks - for example, it is hard to reconcile the elements in a funding model that provides a grant to a venue or local authority to receive touring work that has already been subsidised (origination, production, marginal costs etc.) and then offers a guarantee against any loss incurred in receiving and presenting the work.

And, finally, a critical pattern is the nature of touring as a 'fairweather' activity - as soon as the Arts Council's budget was under threat of cut or indicated stagnancy, touring activities suffered (see *The Touring Experiment Report* for further commentary given *The Touring Experiment's* findings and analysis).

Table 1: Funds allocated to touring theatre and dance from 1982 to 2000

| Year | Total ACTTS* budget (and as a % of total Arts Council expenditure on arts programming) | Dominant measure/s of theatre touring in each year as per Arts Council annual report |
|------|---|--|
| 1982 | £239,768 (6%) | 51 weeks of touring, 16 productions, 11 companies, 11 venues received funding to receive touring shows and guarantee against loss. |
| 1983 | £231,515 (4.9%) | 42 weeks, 19 productions, 12 companies (that venues were not specifically listed under touring does not mean that they did not get direct funding) |
| 1984 | £309,150 (6%) | 51 weeks, 15 productions, 14 companies, 4 venues |
| 1985 | £288,642 (5.6%) | 37 weeks, 9 productions, 8 companies, 3 venues |
| 1986 | £197,037 (3.5%) | 6 companies did some touring, 4 venues - Touring Scheme 'suspended' from March due to cut backs. |
| 1987 | £301,974 (4.6%) | 44 weeks, 8 productions, 7 companies, 7 venues |
| 1988 | £273,000 (4.2%) | 21 weeks - no touring scheme per se, but 13 companies given direct grants to tour, 4 venues |
| 1989 | £323,300 (4.7%) | 9 companies, 3 venues (measure of activity changes) and companies 'on the road' become dominant measure. |
| 1990 | £432,000 | 7 companies |
| 1991 | £367,322 (3.6%) | 6 Companies - number of weeks introduced again for this year only - 22, 11 venues and five local authorities given grants to receive touring and guarantee against loss. |
| 1992 | £280,569 (2.8%) | 4 companies, 18 venues - local authorities (LAs) now become a regular feature of touring activity. |
| 1993 | £511,393 (4.7%) | 13 companies, 17 venues including LAs |
| 1994 | £549,000 (4%) | 10 companies, 14 venues, 7 LAs |
| 1995 | £496,269 (2.9%) | 8 companies, 13 venues, 7 LAs |
| 1996 | £613,688 (3.1%) | 12 companies, 11 venues, 7 LAs |
| 1997 | £629,120 (3.1%) | 11 companies, 12 venues, 10 LAs |
| 1998 | £783,000 (2.9%) | 13 companies, 8 NI companies, 15 venues, 9 LAs |
| 1999 | £775,897 (2.7%) | 19 companies, 16 venues, ? LAs |
| 2000 | | ACTTS finally abandoned but no rationale offered. No money specifically spent on touring - touring funds implicit to monies allocated under awards, projects, schemes and annual grants. |

* The Arts Council Theatre Touring Scheme ACTTS is a useful mechanism to analyse touring data because it is the only discrete touring scheme in the performing arts that operated over a significant timeframe.