



**Trinity College Dublin**  
Coláiste na Tríonóide, Baile Átha Cliath  
The University of Dublin

## Value for Money Applies Also to State Expenditure on the Arts

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'Places Matter'  
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# Introduction

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- **Political** demands for value for money (VFM)
- But usual metrics **not** possible
- More like evidence for a court case: circumstantial, narrative and bits of ‘hard’ facts
- Funding agencies though usually concerned with outputs and **not** societal outcomes
- **Societal v personal** benefit; only former linked to state expenditure: private benefits from the arts but also from skiing, gardening, etc.
- Besides only the arts areas with **large state expenditure (central and local)** require VFM studies



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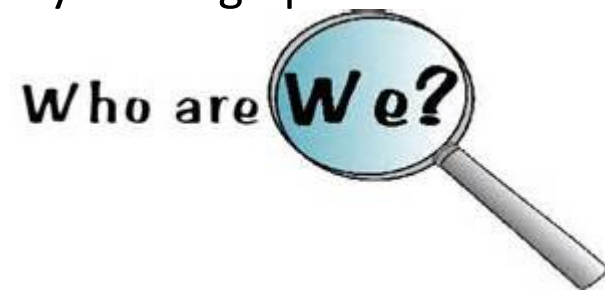
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## Societal Outcome 1

# ***Identity and Social Cohesion***

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- Neil MacGregor for example chooses to ‘define’ Germany more through the works of cultural figures – such as Beethoven Dürer, Goethe, Luther and members of the Bauhuas movement – and important historical cultural monuments and artefacts, than through political figures and events. (McGregor, 2015)
- Same for Ireland? For example, Joyce, Yeats, Hill of Tara or Rock of Cashel, National Museum, traditional music
- Cultural context for and influence on identity coming up to 1916 striking
- Identity and social cohesion **linked**
- Social cohesion essential for stability



## Societal Outcome 2

# ***Experimental/Innovative Work***

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- Analogous to R & D in the sciences and engineering
- **Social** returns much greater than **private** returns
- **Films, TV and commercial theatre** draw on ideas and talent developed in subsidised theatre sector:
- **Industrial design** and success influenced by the subsidised visual arts
- Does it matter that **few if any** read our state-subsidised research if one in a hundred papers lead to major benefits for the wider society? Likewise with funding of experimental work in the arts.
- Does it matter therefore that **few** attend experimental work in the arts?
- Would Bach, or Wagner or Velázquez or Joyce and many other 'greats' ever have emerged if they had to rely on the market?



## Societal Outcome 3

# ***Economic Spill-over Effects***

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- **Direct** employment from **any** state expenditure
- **Spill-over** employment the key. For example, magnet for **tourists** visiting an area: Mona Lisa in Louvre, Book of Kells in Trinity College, Blarney and Bunratty Castles, Newgrange
- **Cultural infrastructure** as factor in industrial location decisions



## Societal Outcome 4

# ***International Reputation and Prestige***

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- **Related** to national identity
- Can be huge **national pride** resulting from international recognition in the arts: e.g. well preserved built heritage and historical artefacts, Joyce, Wexford Opera Festival and many other similar local festivals
- **International Prestige** for a nation, as for an individual, in having a reputable arts sector and historical artefacts. Baumol (1966): ‘Few people would be happy if their country became known abroad as a cultural wasteland, a nation in which Mammon had put beauty and art to rout’



# Mapping Goals/Objectives to Societal Benefits 1

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**Done by very few funding agencies of the arts: take for example the Arts Council of England.**

- **Excellence** is thriving and celebrated in the arts, museums and libraries.
- **Everyone** has the opportunity to experience and to be inspired by the arts, museums and libraries.
- The arts, museums and libraries are resilient and **environmentally sustainable**.
- The **leadership** and workforce in the arts, museums and libraries are diverse and appropriately skilled.
- **Every child and young person** has the opportunity to experience the richness of the arts, museums and libraries

## Mapping Goals/Objectives to Societal Benefits 2

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- Apart from the **goals overlapping**, the third and fourth goals relate to **operational issues** not societal outcomes, whereas the second and third relate to a more even participation in the arts sector (see later)
- All could apply to any private business
- Much clearer connection for example in NZ and especially Australia





# More Equal Access to the Arts: A Misplaced Objective?

## 1

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- **Very uneven attendance** by income and educational level at the arts with large public funding: nothing new here
- Lack of interest or **preferences** the key reason though, not price
- Why lack of interest: possibly due to **high cognitive capacity** to appreciate the publicly subsidised arts
- **A policy concern?** Not necessarily given the earlier discussion on societal outcomes

# More Equal Access to the Arts: A Misplaced Objective?

## 2

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- May be no subsidy at all to attendees if social benefit large
- **Why should innovative works of art have a high and even attendance by socioeconomic group?** That is not the point of the subsidy.
- Likewise in relation to economic spin-offs (tourism/investment)



# Concluding Comments 1

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- **Personal** and/or intrinsic benefits of the arts **not relevant** for this debate: just societal benefits
- Almost impossible to provide any reliable quantitative value of societal benefits
- But it is possible to provide patches of evidence, arguments and case studies
- Besides, it is useful to assess arts funding agencies in terms of governance, decision making, programmes, and objectives: **if these are not good then good societal outcomes very unlikely.**
- **Identity and social cohesion** can be explored through survey and case study work: applies in particular to local arts festivals

## Concluding Comments 2

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- **Evidence on innovation** can be got from tracking the progress of artists and artistic productions from the subsidised to the commercial sector (West End ‘story’)
- Culture as a **magnet for tourists** and industrialists can be tracked through surveys, but these must relate **only** to the subsidised sector and not the commercial sector to be meaningful (which is almost never the case)
- Arguments must **precede** evidence, but evidence must be sought
- Otherwise the state arts sector’s future is in jeopardy
- **The task is not impossible**; just similar to justifying expenditure on the police, education and health!

## Concluding Comments 3

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- Or convincing a jury!

