**[SHORT CLIPS]**

**Sinéad Hargan**: *“Because. who am I to change? What? Like, what am I changing about? People? Who gave me that right to or the audacity to go in and be like, “Ah, you need to change not me?”*

**Asha Trivedy**: *“Okay, great. Like, you know, I would like my voice to be amplified. Sounds good, you know. But then, you know, thinking a little bit more about what does it mean, who's amplifying who? Who has the power in that situation?”*

**Arusa Quershi**: *“I think funders should really, really pay attention to organisations and companies are contributing to that bad behavior in the creative industries and I feel like time and time again, I just think certain things and maybe called out that everyone knows, and that you'll discover that the same company and organisation whatever will get regular funding, what message does that give to people who are looking to get started or get involved in the industries.”*

**[END OF SHORT CLIPS]**

**Morvern Cunningham**: This is the Future Culture podcast. In 2021, the Culture Collective programme was created and established a network of 26 participatory arts projects, shaped by local communities alongside artists and creative organisations, funded by Creative Scotland. Since then, they have embarked upon an event series entitled Starting Points, that explored pertinent themes to community-based art projects within the network. This podcast will explore what comes next! What does the future hold for creatives and their importance for communities across Scotland as we go forward?

In each Future Culture episode, we will consider different themes which mirror those of our initial Starting Points events. In this episode, Amplify, we focus on the subject of minoritised voices.

This week we explore:

* How can we protect communities engaging in creative projects, particularly those from minoritised groups?
* What are some of the more radical ways to amplify voices, or different kinds of organising, that takes place outside of current power structures in the arts?
* AND
* How do we go about the creation of safe spaces?

**Part 1: How can we protect communities engaging in creative projects, particularly minoritised groups?**

**MC:** We start this week’s journey in the Highlands of Scotland. Highland Culture Collective is made up of a number of partners including Eden Court, Fèis Rois, Highland Print Studio, Highland Third Sector Interface, Lyth Arts Centre and North Lands Creative.

These artists, communities and organisations have five full-time artists in residence who will work creatively and collaboratively with some of the communities hardest hit by the pandemic. These include women and young people who have experienced domestic violence; people impacted by the criminal justice system; older people; people with learning disabilities; and Gaelic speakers/learners.

Whilst “minority” may represent the smaller number or part - representing less than half of the whole - it can often be stereotyped, and used in racial, or in ethnicity contexts of society. It can however, also be used to discuss the underrepresented, and those in need of more assistance, more spaces to make their own, greater justice or simply, safety.

A lot of people who fall into the latter of this underrepresentation have been highlighted by the pandemic. This was a discussion point that came up in our last podcast ‘Nourish’, and Highland Culture Collective are collaborating with those impacted communities.

Hector McInnes is an artist in residence working with Highland Culture Collective and works with people impacted by the justice system. He is a sound artist, musician and producer from Skye.

Hector took part in our third Starting Points event, Amplify, and introduced his practice by way of diary entries he has taken from his project so far. Here is a clip from what he calls *“Excerpts from the diary of an amplifier*”.

[CLIP] **Hector McInnes:** *“November The 10th: I had a discussion group today with six inmates and to prison staff about what their voice might be, whether it was minoritised, and whether or how it could or even should be amplified. Someone in the room said to someone else, “you're part of a minority now, whether you like it or not”. And my gut reaction was I’m not sure that's entirely what I meant, but I guess maybe it should have been. “Branded”, one of them said, and then expanded: “what people don't know about you, they'll make up”. This particular problem is not unique to prisoners. But the normal solution, to amplify the truth, to fill that knowledge gap with the truth leaving less headroom for the making up, was not up for consideration. Instead, they are expecting, at best, to have their world listened to them by shrinking their worlds. keeping only the people that matter, close enough that they can whisper. One of the man prisoners said, “I speak to three or four people now”. I asked if they want to try we experiment and say that if there's one thing they might want the wider world to hear, they can write it down, stick it in a box and I'll read it out in Edinburgh. We spend the rest of the morning jamming on Ableton Live and when I pack up the box has two pieces of paper in it.*

*November The 12th: I'm sitting on the train from Inverness to Edinburgh. Thinking about how my own run-ins with the law have panned out. At some point in the early 2000s, my brother and I left Skye after dinner with the intention of getting to Glasgow in time to put a cdr of something he'd been working on into the hands of a DJ at Alaska. Driving at high speed towards Fort William, with a broken stereo and Toto blaring out of the ghetto blaster at my feet, we overtook an unmarked police car in a 30 zone and by the time we reached the next roundabout, the road was blocked by two patrol vehicles. As an officer walked towards us, I reached down desperately trying to find the stop button on the now deafening music. “Keep your hands where I can see them’ yelled the officer. “I'm just trying to make the Toto stop”. I yelled back. 20 minutes later, I was left in the station cell with the door open a crack while they took some details off my brother and then said “you know what we call the random five and the force shed on wheels”. And then they let us go on their way to well-spoken Skye boys from a good family. a wee bit late. That's all. As I walked from the station to the southside centre, I take the first of the two pieces of paper that the prisoners wrote, out of my bag. It says: “it's a common misconception that people who end up in jail come from broken homes, poor family background or lack of structure. Things happen in life which can lead you down a path, good upbringing from wealthy family can still end up in trouble.” And as I walk up the steps I take out the other it says “prison ain't as bad as it's made out to be”.”*

**MC**: One of the main takeaways from Hector’s reading is assumption. When Hector reveals one of the notes from a prisoner, it mentions misconceptions. These misconceptions also lead to society’s opinions of prisoners. Some may question, ‘should they be given a platform to amplify their voices?’ ‘What about the many complicated things to consider, including how victims feel at this thought?’ But sometimes, we have to consider WHY some of these people ended up in prison - What led to this? And that’s when we may have a different outlook in terms of how they are amplified and also treated.

Two further artists working with the collective are Artair Donald and Sinéad Hargan. Artair is an actor and drama facilitator, originally from Tiree. Over the last 30 years, he has worked in theatre, radio, TV and film, and led workshops and directed plays with schools and communities, and is working with Gaelic-speaking communities across the Highlands.

Sinéad is co-hosted by North Lands Creative & Lyth Arts Centre, and is exploring our environment & coastlines with communities in Caithness. She primarily works with live performance, dance and moving image, and is a graduate of the Royal Conservatoire of Scotland in Contemporary Performance Practice.

Based on so many of the subjects brought up here, we wanted to explore a bit further and asked Artair and Sinéad: How can we protect communities engaging in creative projects, particularly minoritised groups?

[CLIP] **Artair Donald:** *“Yeah, history tells us about the clearances and things and how Gaelic was looked down upon. My mother told me that she would get belted in school for speaking Gaelic. But thankfully the world is growing up and getting wiser. And we see now that Gaelic, or any other language that you have, if you have two languages, it's a good thing, you're using different parts of your brain. So I always encourage and tell that to the young people. Generally, when I go in, it’s primary school, secondary schools and community things I will be organising and working with. So it's the adults that have the problem with Gaelic, not the kids, they seem to have some kind of fear, some adults so for example, some of the areas I'm working with within Highland, one area just now is it's got to that stage where there's going to be more Gaelic speaking pupils in the school than English pupils, so people learning Gaelic so, and that caused the problems in the community because then the number sway and the English classes will have a teacher or half a teacher or at least less. And this displeases adults and parents and I can understand that. But that causes angst and anxiety in the community and disagreement. So what I try and encourage is, you know, the use of the language. For example, last term, we did a panto to work with two pantos, one of the schools, but the thing is you can't just go out and get a panto in Gaelic. We don't have those resources. But what we did was I said, Well, let's do our own panto. And I guess I was facilitating it. But the thing is, they came up with a story, I was helping them obviously it was a structure and stuff. But so they created their own story, and therefore, I think they have more ownership on it. And then it feels like you've been more part of it rather than just being handed something. And I think what they got from that was a script writing process. It helped the Gaelic writing and then they'd done it themselves. So it wasn't And to do with me their story, and then we filmed it. And then it was put out on a YouTube platform from the school for the adults, the parents to watch. But also, where I am just now where there is a bit of sparring between some community members, I will also be doing community events with the adults too, we can bring them together. So we bring the young people and their adults together doing that they kind of see the fun, and the use of language that their children have. And I think it's useful for them to see that and to spread that message.”*

[CLIP] **Sinéad Hargan:** *“My biggest fear maybe on this residencies is having, having worked with people for a long time and just being like, Oh, that was fine. I think like, I don't know how we protect against that, I guess the steps that I am trying to take to do that is starting off with like really clear intentions. When entering a space with a community or a group of people that you're working with being really honest and open about what it is you're asking of them, how long you're going to be here for, what your expectations are, and opening a space to set for them to like interrogate you, as well, for me as an artist, like what their expectations of me are, and what they want to ask of me. I think when it comes to like leaving a legacy, I think, how do you record that as well, I'm not a visual artist. So I don't often come away with like an object or a thing that can often maybe be considered as a legacy, even if it isn't, or there's no like care for afterwards. And it kind of rots away. I guess it can be different ways of what of trying to leave a legacy. But again, I think it's for me is asking those communities, what kind of legacy they want, as well, what we both want from it, I don't think I have any of the answers to those things. And I think that's probably what I'm trying to figure out. I don't know, if any of the work that I'm doing is going to make great change. That's a bit of an unrealistic expectation. Because what who am I to change? What, like, what am I changing about people. Who gave me that, right to, or the audacity to go in and be like, “Ah, you need to change not me”. Working together so that their voice is part of the project and it's not theirs. It's not like a ready formed structure and project and then just you drop that into some place or some people and they do that. If people want to be part of the process of developing the structure of the project, then that's really important. But that can also be a really big ask of people I've noticed or I've tripped up or failed, and in moments of realising that ideas are in co-design are actually are hard to do when when there's an imbalance like I'm the person going in there this paid and I'm asking them to to do the same work as me but unpaid. And then that you know, that's bringing it down to economical value in art and and that's not the only value that either, yeah, that's there I guess. I think involving people a lot really helps.”*

**MC:** Artair and Sinead both offer two very different, yet fascinating sides to our question. Artair’s dedication to the Gaelic language and how he has managed to keep it alive and introduce it to new people within communities, thanks to creative projects, is a clever means to try and address the discourse he mentions. Through creativity and the arts, we are often able to give insight to cultures effortlessly in vibrant, accessible and interesting ways. It’s also his approach in letting the community be at the heart of these projects, and to give them ownership that stands out.

Sinead highlights a lot of the vulnerabilities we have as creative practitioners going into communities and starting projects. There is a potential risk with short-term projects that practitioners can enter a community with the aim to either create change, introduce something new or even provide a legacy but it can often be impossible based on the life of that project. We often have to live and breathe communities in order to understand them but as Sinead says, it’s about setting out clear intentions. Being honest, gaining trust and not placing your own expectation of change on others. That engagement between both parties and even being given the option to take part or not is vital. Sinead therefore prompts our first provocation of this episode and that is: *What ways can we perhaps record a legacy through the creative projects we deliver?*

**Part 2: What are some of the radical ways to amplify voices or different kinds of organising, that takes place outside of current power structures in the arts?**

**MC:** We continue our journey to South Edinburgh and visit Art27 Scotland, a community interest company and non-profit making organisation based in the Southside Community Centre. Their focus is to explore the powerful and sometimes conflicting relationship between shared human and cultural rights.Their aim is to celebrate connectedness to the rest of the world, and develop empathy, listening and learning from others’ lived experience. They want to share this exchange through art in order to stimulate broader democratic discussion and exchange relating to the rights of artistic expression, cultural participation and cultural democracy.

The key word from this podcast title and it’s accompanying Starting Points event is *‘Amplify’* along with its subsequent focus *“minoritised voices*”. The meaning behind these terms and words can shift dramatically from community to community. Two people who unpacked this in a thought-provoking way are Yuke Huang and Asha Trivedy.

Both part of Art27 Scotland, Yuke conducted a community consultation to get a snapshot of different communities living in the Southside area of Edinburgh. She is also project-planning and managing the cultural and artistic events for the Southside Community Centre.

Asha works on community engagement as well as working with one of Art27 Scotland’s Artists in Residence, Ghazi Hussein, on his project ‘Poetry for Survival’. Ghazi will also be appearing in one of our future podcasts on the power of language.

Let’s hear from Yuke and Asha on some of their thoughts surrounding the terms “*amplify*” and “*minoritised*”....

**STING**

[CLIP] **Yuke Huang & Asha Trivedy:**

**Asha**: *“Thinking a little bit more about these power structures, right? When we hear this word “amplify”, at first, I think we all feel it's a really good thing like Okay, great, like, you know, I would like my voice to be amplified. Sounds good, you know, but then, you know, thinking a little bit more about well, what does it mean? Who's Who's amplifying who? Who has the power in that situation? I start to question it a little bit.”*

**Yuke***: “Yeah. And for me, when I first hear about this theme, I just have this vivid imagery of someone else handing me a mic and and tell me to like talk louder. So like this act itself, kind of assume a power dynamic with like someone having more resources and greater power, and tell me and give permission for me to talk and but like, instead, I mean, I don't think the purpose is to amplify but to recognise the equal agency in the conversation is not just to make anyone louder. And and I think we also need to be extra careful, careful about not parading the minority groups to fulfil the agenda of multiculturalism or cultural diversity, languages, like be careful to not be too self congratulatory about it. And in the preparation process, when we're discussing within the group, our team member Azza, who's from the Sudanese community bring up things like she doesn't feel the need to be amplified, because within her own community, people can already hear her loud and clear. So this is really, you know, think about like the word amplify, like what actually needed to be amplified, and whether we are imposing our assumptions and power structures onto other voices who are already being here heard in the community? And maybe we just need to listen, not amplify.”*

**Asha***: “Yeah, like, I think someone else touched on this concept of listening. Rather than amplifying always. And I think it's really interesting. And then it kind of, we think about this a little more, we kind of start to think about minoritised. What does it mean to be minoritised? If we, if we kind of label groups as minoritised, are we homogenising their experiences? Are we grouping them all into the same experience, right? We kind of felt a bit like minoritised, it's more, maybe it should be broken up and looking at these individual identities rather than something as a whole.”*

**Yuke***: “Exactly. Because like, usually, when people think about minoritised voices, they will like, identify and locate into certain communities and groups. That's why we have term like BAME or BIPOC. You know, when people are think about like, person of colour, they will think they are the minoritised voices. And I think actually, this understanding of the word minority is pretty static. And it's a it's a really homogenising words, because, you know, we can't just assume every Black person had the exact same same experience. And instead, I would promote a more dynamic understanding of it, and are using the word like intersectionality. And the reason that I want to use this word is not to promote any identitarianism, or like have a oppression olympic, but to really investigate the crossroad of, of where oppression take place, and how different factors interact with each other and shape each individual experiences. And we, like just take me as an example. I'm Chinese in China I’m the majority, and when I come here, I am being minoritised. So you know, it's really a it's a very dynamic concept. And we also need to look at how these global hierarchy specifically like gender, racial or like ableism agenda are being manifested differently on each individuals or community.”*

**MC:** This clip is taken from the Starting Points event entitled ‘Amplify’, which you can watch in full via the Culture Collective website. Asha and Yuke expertly offer an intelligent and compelling debate within their presentation here. One of the key aspects of this is the dissection of terms, the questioning of how we use language but more so how it’s applied.

Power has been identified as a talking point. Who holds the power? And by that, who holds the power when it comes to culture within communities? There are so many facets to this line of questioning. Community power is without a doubt a main driver and has been proven time and again. This is especially when pushing for change and pulling together in times of adversity but, are communities in Scotland’s cultural community still having to waste too much time fighting against higher echelons?

Asha’s comments about the importance of listening rather than amplifying is a strong theme not only within this podcast but across our series.

Yuke puts it in a simple yet effective way, she is Chinese in China and part of the majority, but is minoritised once in Scotland. This highlights the dynamics of how we think and position things but also is vital in how we take these discussions forward.

*We therefore have two provocations in this section and the first is what does it mean to be minoritised and is it an appropriate term?*

One of the artists in residence at Art27 is Robert Motyka. Originally from Poland, he has dual British-Polish citizenship and has lived in Edinburgh’s Southside for around 15 years. He is entrenched in local initiatives, is a video maker and runs the company Wee Dog Media with his brother. He is also a projection artist and a lecturer. One of his deep passions is video projections but also the use of urban spaces and how nature informs all of this.

Based on Robert’s wide-ranging experience both conventional and unconventional, we were keen to ask him what kind of radical ways to amplify voices or different kinds of organising, that could take place outside of current power structures in the arts?

[CLIP] **Robert Motyka: *“****Over many years, Edinburgh cultural scene has been shrinking, many cultural spaces and initiatives closing because of lack of financial support. Small and midsize venues are salt or turning to places aiming to bring profit. Many places are left abandoned for years. At the same time when creative people struggle to find affordable rehearsal space, a place to bring audience to collaborate and to create. So I would convert dead retail spaces into art and craft studios, and I would support them financially.*

*Around like three years ago, I visited Porto in Portugal. And I was amazed how many places of craft and art I spotted in the city centre. And I had a chat with a local guide, “Why is that?'' and he said that the city council in Porto supports local art and crafts to preserve local culture and heritage. And I wish Edinburgh would also support local arts and crafts. So we could collaborate and produce art here, not only import arts from abroad. I think there is a general rules in the universe. When you create a space, the space will fill up. If you build a pond in your garden, you will have frogs. If you build a wide street, the street will be full of traffic. And I think the same rule is about art opportunities. If younger people will be offered to take leading positions they will be mentored by more experienced colleagues that will be taking leading roles. When I was a young artist, my biggest problem was lack of understanding how to charge for my work, how to apply for funds. I wanted to experiment with projections, but I couldn't afford projection equipment and rehearsal spaces. I've been a member of Scottish Artists Union. And I find very useful to know what are the current rates to know how to budget mine and other artists' work involved.*

*I feel that providing free of charge spaces of practice, technical and mentoring support and how to apply for grants and residences would be a very beneficial move. So artists and leaders could channel the energy, creative energy into art rather than into struggle and frustration”*

**MC:** Sometimes we don’t need to break down or analyse something someone has said. It’s put plain and simply in a way that feels tangible and Robert does so when relaying his passion and idea for future culture in Edinburgh.

His ideas for ‘dead retail spaces’ are similar to what we recall from Mark Bleakley who is part of Govanhill Community Baths project Occupy! in Episode 1 of this podcast. His idea to convert retail spaces into art and craft studios may be something of a no-brainer for many. BUT, once we dissect and look at the costs surrounding this, including hidden ones such as rent, heating, electricity, council tax and more, how is this sustainable? Robert however highlights his trip to Porto and how their council support this. One question may be, why is it so difficult to gain support from our local authorities when it comes to culture?

And whilst that is perhaps a complex one, we have to look towards our future generations and the way they address these questions in order to provide real and sustainable change. So, our next provocation is: *What can better support younger or less experienced voices in cultural areas so that they are able to take more of a lead?*

**Part 3: How do we go about the creation of safe spaces?**

**MC:** We shift focus now to the North of Edinburgh, to visit Restless Creatives led by Intercultural Youth Scotland also known as IYS. The project brought together six BPOC (Black people and people of colour) artists to find new expressive pathways and support the community to co-create. This culminated in the 2021 Scotland in Colour Festival on 4th September, which showcased a variety of young talent who have developed through IYS’ youth groups. They are now working towards their next festival in 2022.

Two of IYS’s key team are Blair Wycherley, the organisation’s Youth Work Manager and one of their Culture Collective practitioners, and also Chidera David Chukwujekwu who is Head of Media and Communications.

Both have a very inspiring, clear and forward-thinking approach within their roles and are very much at the forefront when it comes to young people-led community engagement within the cultural sector.

Intercultural Youth Scotland is providing the tools, space and nurturing environment for young people to take their lives and passions forward, and based on this, we were keen to ask: How do we go about the creation of safe spaces?

[CLIP] **Blair Wycherley**: *“It's a two way thing. So you've got to understand what it is that the the group that you're looking to assist, what are their needs, what are their desires, what would be a rational, safe space, you know, if you are looking for a safe space for a group of young people, five of them who are really keen on demonstrating their voices and singing, and they're all very shy, let's say, for example, it's really not, doesn't make sense to do it in a open library where you know, you can have 10, 20 people listening from another site. So it's all just about being really rational. And being able to understand exactly what the young people need and trying to create that space if possible. Now, I think everyone understands that, you know, not everything comes super easily. You know, we have to do as well as you can in order to create those spaces. And I'm sure that if you are seeming to be doing as much as you can to try and provide this a suitable space that the the young person or the group are interested in, then I think, you know, that you can only do what you can do. But of course, you've just got to have that consultation with the young people or or group I don't I keep referring to young people, because that's my silo. But whatever group or community that you're working with, you just got to really understand exactly what are the parameters that they're looking for when it comes to safe spaces? And then helping guide that conversation? And asking them what it is do you? What level of support do you need? What type of space? Is it? Is it a physical space? Is it you know, digital space, is it a calendar or schedule that you want to help with, I mean, there's a million things that you can do to help create safe spaces, and I think just the discussion with the direct community is, is absolutely paramount. And then from there, you will start to spiral ideas. And hopefully, if you're doing this in consultation with the group that you're working with, then they can also assist you in creating those safe spaces themselves.*

*Young people are incredibly capable. And often we, as adults, sounds funny to say, but take that for granted and think, you know, we must, our agendas are more professional or have clear outcomes, or, you know, we love to professionalise things in our, in our jobs. Whereas as a young person, you are, you know, you kind of move on touch, you move on feel, and that feel and touch is actually what I think we need to hold on to. And that's what we need to kind of amplify, for lack of a better word, is that that feeling of, you know, belonging, and creativity and all those things. So, I guess, believing in the youth, for all its irony, and all this kind of cliché, is probably what I've taken from it because they're very, very capable and often more talented and yet more talented and capable than the people that are, you know, running big organisations. So yeah, listening to the youth is probably the the main thing that I've taken away, which I can't help but saying it sounds clichéd, but but there you go.”*

[CLIP] **Chidera David Chukwujekwu**: *“From our kind of like staff base, like all our staff members are young people of colour. And we kind of consult with other groups of young people of colour whenever we're about to take a big move or make a big statement and like as far as advocacy goes. So essentially, we've always been about the youth and amplifying voices has always been essentially the core of everything we do from all our programmes. With the Culture Collective, we’ve been working on what we call Scotland In Colour. It's a yearly festival that we run and we've been trying to upscale it year on year to kind of get more voices out and in front of these kind of major stages. Our last event that took place in September. And during that event we had, we specifically wanted to make sure that while we're looking to upscale this and involve other partners, involve bigger venues and like, you know, bigger acts and stuff, we also don't, we also want to make sure that the last thing we do is forget the young people. So we created a steering group of people from like, our kind of pure networks, but then created a kind of like shadow version of that of just the young people to programme a part of the festival. So it was like two parts. The first part was a day festival. And that was entirely programmed by young people. And we kind of gave them almost executive power. Because you know, with young people, it's difficult to give them like full executive power. But yeah, so we gave them kind of almost executive power and gave them the chance to kind of like make this event, what they wanted to, and that was led by our kind of like youth work team. And what ended up happening was on the day, I think I looked around the room a lot of the times, and there were things where I was like, you know, what, I probably wouldn't have programmed that, or maybe I wouldn't have, I wouldn't have found them or I wouldn't have booked that. But then at the end of the day, I realised it's not about me. And I think that's the difficulty when we work to amplify voices of a group, we can sometimes forget that it's not about what we think is best for the group. But more about what what the group thinks is best for the group essentially. Kind of sticking with that idea of amplifying voices as well is one of our programmes is called Block Beats. And it's like music access studio, we're actually launching our free studio on the 16th. So essentially, through that programme, we expose young people to kind of more technology, we bring them into studio space, help them create a beat that's like tailored towards them, and then kind of like perform their song and record it professionally. And what we do, what we don't want to do then is then be like, Okay, well, great, here you go. So Scotland in Colour gives us a great chance to have a lot of the young people, the ones who are comfortable and are in a space that they feel like, I've got something to say or I feel like my performance is worth hearing. We give them that space. And that's essentially how the we like that's essentially how the chain goes. If we kind of linearise it, that's a weird word. If we make it linear, it goes from what do the young people think? How does that fit with the things that we can do? Who can we can we partner up with contact to make what the young people want happen, and then eventually, it's just a case of like, leaving them to it. And I think that's been a lot of learning when it comes to amplifying voices. And also, I think a companion part to that is just like mitigating risk. Because it's something that can happen when you amplify a voice that you expose a person you expose a voice you expose a group. And a big part of what we have to do as facilitators or amplifiers in this situation is to protect the groups that we're working with and mitigate the risk to them. So just to give a bit of like an example of how that works. We were while programming or festival, there's the kind of like as a race or race equality organisation, there is a very slight risk of backlash or pushback from groups that may not share the same viewpoints. You need to listen to the voices to know what they actually want to say in the first place. There's no point amplifying what you think is best. It's important to amplify what is actually necessary. And it's important to make sure that in amplifying you don't expose.”*

**MC:** Blair comments on being able to understand the people you are working with, using consultation effectively, looking at parameters and thinking about one particularly crucial question: what support is actually needed? Blair’s commitment and willingness to constantly evolve within his role and this organisation firmly places these young people first, and it’s thanks to people like Blair being in leadership roles, that pave the way in terms of visibility and representation.

Similarly, it’s easy to see why Chidera is in his role. His clarity when it comes to understanding what needs to be put in place for young people to thrive, makes it easy to understand why IYS are pioneers in their field. The fine balance in their approach to safe spaces, shadowing in order to make space for learning and growth, but also the freedom for these young people to have ‘almost executive power’ is a model to be admired.

It’s also a model that arguably provides a greater level of sustainability with it’s ‘pay it forward’ approach. And this leads to our final provocation of this podcast: how can we improve diversification in the top tier of organisations?

**Part 4: Host Round-Up: Morvern & Arusa**

**MC:** At the end of each episode I like to have a debrief with a guest to discuss the themes raised each week with someone who is connected directly to the episode theme. This week our guest is Arusa Qureshi - Arusa is a writer and editor based in Edinburgh, and a passionate advocate for diversity and accessibility within arts and culture. She is the former Editor of The List and writes mostly about music, most recently Flip the Script – a book about women in UK hip hop, published by 404 Ink. Her work has appeared in the Scotsman, Clash, The Guardian, GoldFlakePaint, Time Out, NME and more. In 2017, she was shortlisted for PPA Scotland's Young Journalist of the Year award, and was also the winner of the Allen Wright Award for quality writing in arts journalism. She is on the board of the Scottish Music Centre and is a Trustee of the Saltire Society.

Here, I catch up in conversation with Arusa about the provocations in this episode and take a look at the future.

[CLIP] **Morvern Cunningham & Arusa Qureshi**:

**MC**: *“Hi Arusa, how are you?”*

**AQ**: *“I am good thanks, how are you?”*

**MC**: *“I'm good. I'm glad to be here. Let's look at the questions that have been raised during this amplify episode. So Arusa, what in your mind, does it mean to be minoritised? And is that even correct terminology or words that we should be using?”*

**AQ**: *“I think being minoritised means that your, your voice exists on the margins, but not through your doing or through your choice. It's a kind of a type of social oppression. And I think minoritised groups can face things like prejudice and discrimination. And, you know, economically and socially, they can be in possession of less power overall. And there's also less representation in all aspects of society, which, again, goes back to the idea of existing on the margins. But I don't like being minoritised mean, same things. Same thing as being a minority, because I think has a lot to do with experience. So, for example, this example somebody else gave me a while ago, there was a white woman who is a millionaire might be a minority, but her experience has not been minoritised because we're status. So he's not disenfranchised. Because despite being one of maybe very few millionaire women, it's not a minoritised experience.*

*On a personal level, I think that being part of a minoritised group means a need to kind of prove yourself in ways that maybe others wouldn’t consider and also like, lack of opportunity to fail, because there are so few opportunities to begin with.”*

**MC**: *“Yeah, I mean, I think I think definitely what you were saying there was around questions of power. And that's definitely come up in this podcast episode as well about who holds the power? Who has the power to speak, who has the power to take up space?*

*Just thinking a little bit about the legacy of projects, and maybe some of the challenges that come with short term projects, as opposed to long term projects? What ways could we potentially record legacy through the creative projects that we deliver?”*

**AQ**: *“I think it's often quite a shame when creative projects seem to kind of make an impact, but for a really short amount of time, and then they kind of disappear. I'd like to see the you know, what happens next bit built into things like applications for funding and in general, like mission statements, anything that could be something as simple as projects, you know, that the projects tend to run multiple times, or annually, and after each iteration, there's a real effort made to see what could work better, and what could change so that any work done isn't just fleeting. I'm a big fan of data as well. So I'd like to see more people involved with creative projects, maybe harnessing data from the work they do with the intention of using in the future. So you know, data around, like if it's an event, people who attended or engaged or participate, etc. And I think this can contribute to the idea of legacy. Because if you have the data that you can then back up any claims of why this particular project was useful, and why it should continue, which could be helpful just not just for you, but for the wider community that might engage in similar projects in the future.”*

**MC**: *“Cool. And suppose going back to that question of power, and we were talking about power just a second ago, and thinking about who holds the power, how in your mind, can we improve diversification, and its wider sense in the top tier of organisations.”*

**AQ**: *“First of all, people that are at the top of organisations, they need to kind of recognise that and acknowledge as well, that there's a problem. And once they do that, they need to then be okay with the fact that they might be part of the problem. And if so that they need to be able to give up some of their space of their power. And it's always hard to do. But I think that's an important first step, only, then we'll see people moving into those top tier positions, once people in power, kind of step back and let and give up some of their space. I think people low down need to feel supported and know their space to kind of manoeuvre and move up. And then what they when they do that it's going to be a total battle. And I think once we have more people of diverse backgrounds at the top, it will naturally kind of trickle down. And then people that are currently at the top tier, I think we could all do with investing and things like anti-racism training, and making that kind of training normal, because if it be set a precedent and it becomes normal, then it could contribute to shifting attitudes generally at the top. So I think things like that are really useful.”*

**MC**: *“Yeah, and I think that in the kind of wake of the Black Lives Matter movement, and a lot of institutions, you know, putting black squares on their Instagram or wherever. And then there was a real push, I suppose, that I observed to include more people of colour in particular, in programming. However, like the change is not really happening in an organisational sense, so although you're maybe putting people of colour more front and centre, in a programming sense, it's still kind of white-led behind.”*

**AQ**: *“Yeah, and it's, that's the thing, it's so important to change things at all levels of structures. And yeah, it's great to get more people of diverse backgrounds involved, but if the people that are making decisions aren't diverse to begin with, and that's where the problem begins, I think. And that's where we need to start, really.”*

**MC**: *“Umm, and that's where you're talking about kind of recognising that there is a problem. But it feels almost like it's easier said than done, or in some ways, kind of like a bit of a no brainer, if you're of that mindset anyway. I don't know if there's any tips or suggestions that you could have about actually kind of awakening to the problem?”*

**AQ**: *“Yeah, first of all, people that are in an organisation that aren't at that very top tier, they should be listened to more, because often it's those people that are conducive in doing the work and making changes. And I think that they should have more of a voice in organisations generally, because if they did, then there might be more of an awakening at the top.”*

**MC**: *“And I think that point, you mentioned about kind of giving up space, I think that it's something that maybe a lot of folk from minoritised communities recognise and recognise the importance of platforming other people like themselves. But I think the notion of giving up space or sharing space for other folk who have traditionally been in power can be a little bit more difficult. Again, I'm just making statements here but…”*

**AQ**: *“You're totally right though.”*

**MC**: *“It kind of feels like like folk from minoritised backgrounds, know the importance of platforming, other folk like themselves?”*

**AQ**: *“Yeah, it's that whole thing of like, putting a ladder down behind you and letting people come up. And I just feel like people that have been through those kind of minoritised experience naturally have that in them to want to bring people up. And that's maybe not something that everyone in the world naturally has.”*

**MC**: *“I mean, well, I suppose like the last thing I was gonna say, and I could talk about this all day, but it's also when we were talking about organisational structures and programming versus kind of how the organisation is made up. Organisations are often also made up of kind of Board of Trustees and folk that aren't really seen by kind of the general public as being kind of part of the organisational structure. And one of my things is also about how can we can diversify boards as well.”*

**AQ**: “*Yeah, and I think a lot of that is actually to do with demystifying what it means to be able to word and it's kind of explaining to people, you know, how you can join a board, because sometimes it feels very out of reach, and something that only certain people can do. And that's obviously not the case. So I think that's a big thing that a lot of organisations should be doing, just making it more accessible to be on the board.”*

**MC**: *“Cool. Okay. Oh, actually, this was like, we've kind of been talking about this a little bit when it comes to platforming. But what can better support younger or less experienced voices in cultural areas, so that they're able to take more of a lead going forward.”*

**AQ**: *“So I really, really think that the mentors are very, very important for younger or like less experienced people that are involved in cultural areas in the crative landscape. Because sometimes, confidence can be such an issue when you're starting out. And sometimes having a mentor can help just by being the extra kind of voice of support or encouragement. And I think that we should all collectively make more of an effort in the creative industries to, first of all, become mentors, if we're at the right stage. And we feel like we could do it to kind of pay it forward. But secondly, also encourage and even like fund mentorship programs, like match people up with mentors. And then, out of that, I think funding for programs that centre, or in skills development is always really important. But sometimes I find that they're not specific enough. So it would be great if there were more kind of like workshops, events, etc, that, first of all, catered to people who are starting from the very beginning, but then also, were for people that were maybe a bit further ahead, and that could just give them a boost needed to take the next step to that eventually lead. And another big thing that I think in industry is for those that are further and further on, in their career, they need to be able to make, call out bad behaviour. And I know that sounds like a really simple thing. But I think it's so important because calling it a bad behaviour means that we can ensure this, you know, accountability, and we should care about protecting the next generation and want them to stay and if they if they are to lead in these cultural areas, and we should make sure that that is the place that they want to be in.”*

**MC**: *“What do you mean exactly when you refer to bad behaviour?”*

**AQ**: *“When I say bad behaviour, I mean bad behaviour in terms of employment practices in terms of pay discrepancy, bullying in the workplace, that kind of thing. I think that over the pandemic In particular, there's been or before the pandemic, there was a lot of this happening. And sometimes it feels to me that people have kind of just forgotten what happened over the past two years. And so a lot of the bad behaviour that did take place, it's like, people don't really care about it anymore. I think that's so damaging. And I think that we should all be working more to really call it out when we see it doesn't have to be in a very like public forum. But I think just for the future generations, for the people who are starting out, just to show that, you know, this is not going to be tolerated in the future is really, really important.”*

**MC**: *“Definitely, as you mentioned, during the pandemic, there was a lot of aspirational kind of thinking and language. And in some ways, there has been some kind of shift. But there feels like there's a push to go back to normal, and that the things that were not going well, before are kind of tried to be reinstated now as we start to open up again.”*

**AQ**: *“Yeah, I just want people to remember all those things that they said they were going to do, basically, which is, I know a thing that everyone wants, but especially in the Scottish creative industry, that feels very much because it's maybe smaller, and everyone knows each other, that people are just willing to kind of brush things aside. And I really don't want that for even for like minoritised voice in creative industries. It's often minoritised voices that are the ones that are affected worst by all the kind of bad behaviour. So, you know, for for the sake of the feature of the creative landscape, I think is important to think about.”*

**MC**: *“Cool, in your opinion, what should funders be considering going forward to create a more sustainable and representative creative landscape?”*

**AQ**: *“Going back to what I just said about behaviour and stuff? I think funders should really, really pay attention to organisations that companies are contributing to that bad behaviour in the creative industries. And I feel like time and time again, I just think certain things are maybe called out that everyone knows, and that you'll discover that the same company and organisation, whatever will get regular funding, and what message does that give to people who are looking to get started or get involved in the industries? And you know, it's kind of like all about that bad bad behaviour is excused because they've, they're getting money. And out of that, I really, truly believe that the idea that a company or an organisation deserves to be funded, because it's been around for a long time is rubbish, I think they're the ones that should be pressured to make the creative industry in the creep landscape more representative. But often, it's actually the grassroots communities that are doing the work, and that they really deserve more support. So that whole mindset, I think, is one of these to change. And I'm all for the mentality of burn it down and start again, honestly, and if that means getting more money to lesser known or newer groups, then cool, we should do that.*

*And another point, actually, funders should be really wary of people that say they're attempting to improve diversity representation suddenly, when they'd have no kind of evidence of doing that in history. And so sometimes I worry about this idea of like people jumping on the bandwagon, just to try and get money in bonders, when certain organisations have absolutely no intention of making a difference ever. So I think that's just something to keep in mind.”*

**MC**: *“Yeah. There's so much there isn't the I think there's definitely something about legacy of funding. So it's just like, well, we give these people this money all the time. And there's almost like no room for anyone else to get in on those conversations.”*

**AQ**: *“Yep. And the other thing about you were saying about, like legacy companies, organisations, you know, it's maybe a harsh thing to say, but it's okay to let a company die out, if it's not making a difference, not it's not doing what it set out to do. It's been around for a long time. And it's just here for the sake of it. And I think the problem with funders is that, you know, you keep giving money to organisations that are not going to never do anything, what's what's the point?”*

**MC**: *“And that's a hugely kind of radical approach. Just to close Arusa, do you have a provocation, you've kind of already given us a provocation, but I wonder if there's a wording that we can maybe take forward?*”

**AQ**: *“You know, we should be aiming to provide more support and encouragement to grassroots companies, organisations that are doing the work.”*

**MC:** It’s the end of another episode, but we do want to leave you with one big provocation courtesy of Arusa to take forward. And that is:In what ways can we provide more support and encouragement to grassroots companies and organisations who are doing the work?

In our next episode, Spotlight, we focus on one core aspect of all the projects that are part of Culture Collective and that’s Creative Freelancers. In the meantime, why not head over to our Miro board, an online space that’s been created to invite you to join the conversation. Add your thoughts, insights, experiences and questions here, and we'll include your perspectives in our future conversations. You can find the link in the show notes to accompany this podcast or on the Culture Collective website. You can view videos of the original Starting Points events there too.

**Credits:**

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**[END]**