

**PHF / CARNEGIE INITIATIVE TO  
ENGAGE YOUNG PEOPLE IN  
EXPLORING THE FUTURE OF CIVIL  
SOCIETY THROUGH THE ARTS:**

**SUPPLEMENTARY REPORT TO THE PAUL  
HAMLYN FOUNDATION**

**Report by  
Jane Pitcher**

**September 2007**

**Contact details:**

Jane Pitcher  
Independent research consultant  
Tel: 07944 970151

E-mail: [jepitcher@btinternet.com](mailto:jepitcher@btinternet.com)

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

Very many thanks to all the project staff, partner organisations, artists and young people who contributed their enthusiasm, ideas and energy to this exciting initiative. Your input and help is greatly appreciated. Thanks are also due to Susan Blishen and Carol Stone from the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and Lenka Setkova from the Carnegie UK Trust, who provided helpful advice on the initiative throughout; and to Hardin Tibbs for initial suggestions concerning possible process and questions for consideration.

A full list of project participants is included in Appendix I at the end of this report.

Photographs of activities at Seven Stories are the property of Seven Stories. The digital stories and photographic material from the 'Moving Lives' and 'Transparency' projects used in the PhotoVoice project description are copyright of Dilroshi, Jadsun and Onesmus /Transparency/PhotoVoice. The text from the DVD 'In the future you will see...' used in the project description for Spike Island is courtesy of Nathan Hughes and Spike Island (in association with The Meriton School, Creative Partnerships, the Paul Hamlyn Foundation, Arts Council England and Bristol City Council).

## CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY .....	i
1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1 Aims and project background.....	1
1.2 Methodology .....	2
2. PROJECT PROCESSES .....	3
2.1 Exploring the concept of civil society.....	4
2.2 Engagement of young people .....	6
2.3 Benefits of the initiative and ongoing developments .....	7
2.4 The value of participatory arts initiatives in exploring issues with young people.....	9
2.5 Challenges and lessons.....	9
2.6 Implications .....	10
For the Paul Hamlyn Foundation.....	11
For the Carnegie UK Trust .....	11
For projects working with young people .....	12
3 CONCLUSIONS.....	13
Appendix I: groups involved in this project .....	14

# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## Background

In 2006 the Carnegie UK Trust (CUKT) launched a ten-year programme to strengthen democracy and 'civil society' in the UK and Ireland. During the first two years of this programme an Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society aims to:

- Explore and increase awareness of the future possible threats to and opportunities for the development of a strong, vibrant and healthy civil society, looking out to 2025.
- Identify and suggest policies, strategies and practices to help strengthen civil society.
- Enhance the ability of civil society associations to prepare for the future.

The Paul Hamlyn Foundation strand to the Inquiry discussed here aimed to provide children and young people from within the UK with the opportunity to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the future of civil society, working with participatory arts projects. The initiative took place between April and August 2007 and involved six projects:

- Barbican Education (working with children in year 5 in Bangabandhu Primary School in Tower Hamlets);
- New Lodge Arts and the Old Museum Arts Centre (working with two groups of young people in north Belfast);
- Seven Stories (the Centre for Children's Books in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, working with year 5 pupils in Byker primary school);
- Spike Island (working with Meriton school in Bristol, which provides education and support to young mothers); and
- PhotoVoice (an international charity working with refugee and asylum seeker young people).

The final piece of work produced by the participating projects will be made available to the Inquiry team and to the wider public via the Inquiry website and will help to inform the Inquiry Team's recommendations. The organisations were also invited to present their work at a youth-focused event organised by the Carnegie UK Trust.

This supplementary report to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation explores the processes involved in the initiative, the extent to which projects engaged with young people and the lessons for future practice.

## **Exploring the concept of civil society**

Following discussions with staff and CUKT and PHF, a set of possible issues and processes to consider was sent to projects. The questions and methods to be used were left open to projects to decide, ideally with the young people.

Projects explained the concept of civil society to young people by linking it in with issues that had relevance for their own lives and communities. This included exploring issues relating to the young people's immediate environment, asking them to think about what made a place good for them and explaining civil society in terms of "a society in which you would want to live".

## **Engagement of young people**

All the projects took a participatory approach to their work with young people, although it was not always possible within the relatively short timescale to engage potential participants in discussions prior to the workshops. In some instances there were some last-minute changes to the groups, which meant that not all participants were briefed as fully as others. The projects had previously worked with the young people in other settings, however, and thus were already familiar with their interests through consulting them on other issues.

During the workshop sessions, each of the projects was very responsive to the suggestions and concerns of the young people involved. There were evaluation sessions at the end of some of the workshops, which were presented in a form which the young people found enjoyable.

## **Benefits of the initiative and ongoing developments**

One of the main benefits for projects was having the scope to explore a range of issues with little prescription on the format or content (apart from the overall brief). This gave young people whose voices are often not heard the space to consider issues they would not normally think about and express their views.

The initiative also gave projects an opportunity to experiment with different formats and media. For some projects, this initiative became part of an ongoing process, linking in with other activities, or creating the opportunity to develop new initiatives. All the projects saw the opportunity to use the art work and ideas developed by young people in a range of settings.

## **Challenges and lessons**

Much of the learning from this initiative can be drawn upon to inform the development of future projects. There are implications for the funding organisations and also for projects working with young people:

### ***For the Paul Hamlyn Foundation:***

- A longer term initiative might have enabled greater participation from young people and the opportunity for projects to spend longer preparing for the workshops and work through any problems arising. It is important that projects can link shorter term initiatives with their other activities to ensure some continuity;
- There were benefits from having an open brief, particularly in terms of allowing projects to experiment with different media and ideas;
- While having an open brief is helpful to projects, it can also present challenges and it is useful to have some guidelines and examples that projects can draw upon;
- The feedback from project partners also emphasised the benefits of engaging in participatory arts projects, which allow young people to take risks and develop their own ideas within a supportive setting.

### ***For the Carnegie UK Trust:***

- A project over a longer time period might enable facilitators to work more closely with young people to draw out their ideas about the future and build more extensive scenarios;
- Clearer information from the start of the initiative about how it would fit into the overall Inquiry and what the end results might be would have been helpful;
- Having a website or web pages aimed more at young people might provide a forum in which project participants can see their work presented and contribute further ideas. It is also important that the young people who participated have feedback on how their ideas have contributed to the Inquiry.

### ***For projects working with young people:***

- It is useful when working on a shorter-term initiative to involve young people who have already participated in other activities with the project. This can help to establish some continuity and also inform future events;
- Prior discussions with project partners to establish ground rules might help to address potential problems such as spasmodic attendance;
- It is also important to agree ground rules with participants at the beginning of activities, so that the young people can be reminded of these at different stages;
- The participatory approach used in the workshops was important in enabling young people to develop ideas and materials in their own way. The creative feedback sessions at the end were also helpful for assessing the value of the workshops and areas for future improvement.

# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 *Aims and project background*

In 2006 the Carnegie UK Trust (CUKT) launched a ten-year programme to strengthen democracy and 'civil society' in the UK and Ireland. During the first two years of this programme an Inquiry into the Future of Civil Society aims to:

- Explore and increase awareness of the future possible threats to and opportunities for the development of a strong, vibrant and healthy civil society, looking out to 2025.
- Identify and suggest policies, strategies and practices to help strengthen civil society.
- Enhance the ability of civil society associations to prepare for the future.

The idea of a Paul Hamlyn Foundation (PHF) strand to the Inquiry was to ensure that the views of young people were included in the research, using the arts to capture their hopes and fears about the future. The PHF has provided long-standing support for the arts and young people.

This initiative aimed to provide children and young people from different locations in the UK and Northern Ireland with the chance to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the future of civil society. Working with a variety of media, from video to creative writing, projects currently, or recently funded by the PHF, were invited to share with the Inquiry a piece of work that articulates the children's or young people's thoughts and feelings about the future of civil society. This might be a new piece of work, or might draw on work that had already been produced or was in the process of being produced. The final piece of work would be made available to the Inquiry team and to the wider public via the Inquiry website and would help to inform the Inquiry Team's recommendations. The organisations were also invited to present their work at a youth-focused event organised by the Carnegie UK Trust.

A consultant was appointed to co-ordinate the project, working closely with PHF and CUKT, in order to:

- a. help translate the key questions and issues which the Inquiry seeks to address into language that is meaningful to young people and project staff (with assistance from CUKT's futures consultant and scenario thinking expert);

- b. provide ongoing support to the selected projects to make sure the expectations were understood and realised and young people fully engaged;
- c. help young people and staff prepare outputs for the Carnegie Inquiry;
- d. document how the organisations and the young people responded to this challenge, highlighting lessons learned;
- e. produce a final report for the Carnegie UK Trust, giving an account of the process involved in engaging the young people, analysing findings and summarising the young people's views about the future of civil society.

This additional report to the Paul Hamlyn Foundation focuses on the processes involved during the initiative, in order to explore:

- f. the extent to which projects it has funded are genuinely engaging with young people. We intend to use what we learn to inform our own grant making and will share the findings with others.

Outline details are given below of the methodology used for the initiative and of the projects involved. A full description of the workshops and outcomes for each project is given in the report to the Carnegie UK Trust. The focus of this supplementary report is on the processes involved in engaging with young people and the lessons learned through this initiative.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The project commenced in March 2007. Initially the possibility had been discussed of the PHF commissioning a range of arts activities to enable young people to express their views. In the end, however, it was agreed that it might be more useful to the Foundation to work with projects currently or recently funded by the Foundation, to inform their learning about their effectiveness in encouraging young people's participation. Time constraints were another factor in the decision. This initiative is thus not intended to be representative of the views of young people, but is indicative of some of the issues expressed by particular groups of young people in specific settings, using participatory arts<sup>1</sup> to draw out their hopes and fears for the future.

A planning meeting with Susan Blishen, the consultant, Jane Pitcher, Lenka Setkova and staff from Carnegie's Young People's Initiative, took place in January. The group agreed the outline framework for the initiative and

---

<sup>1</sup> Participatory arts projects are user-led and give the opportunity for people to represent themselves through a range of art forms, which helps them to contribute to how they are identified and to give them a voice.

selected ten PHF projects that might be suitable partners, out of which up to six would be selected according to their interest and on the basis of how well the organisation responded to the idea, its capacity to deliver within a tight timeframe and the potential for young people's involvement. The PHF then tested the idea with partner projects. At the end of the consultation process, six projects had expressed interest. These were:

- Barbican Education (based in London and already working with children in year 5 in schools in Islington, Tower Hamlets and the City);
- New Lodge Arts and the Old Museum Arts Centre (both based in north Belfast, working with groups of young people aged 12-18 in different communities in north Belfast: a consultant from Northern Associates co-ordinated the project for this initiative);
- Seven Stories (the Centre for Children's Books in Newcastle-upon-Tyne, working in partnership with a local primary school);
- Spike Island (based in Bristol and facilitating artists' residencies in a local school which provides education and support to young mothers); and
- PhotoVoice (an international charity based in London, working with refugee and asylum seeker young people and other groups and in partnership with a local community centre in East London).

The projects were in a range of regions and with different communities of young people. The first five projects all arranged new arts activities with groups of young people to contribute to the Inquiry, as well as sharing previously completed or ongoing work. As PhotoVoice now works primarily with newly-arrived asylum seekers, it was decided it was inappropriate to involve current project participants in a specific initiative exploring civil society in the UK. The project thus drew on the substantial archive of photographic and other materials, with a member of staff discussing the background to these and other issues with the co-ordinating consultant for this initiative.

The consultant visited projects during April and May, to clarify expectations and meet project staff and potential participants where possible. Telephone and email contact was maintained with projects during May and June to obtain updates on progress, discuss any problems encountered and means of addressing them. The consultant then visited each of the projects during late June and July, to preview and document activities and discuss them with staff and participants. Follow-up discussions were held over the telephone or via email with project staff to review their activities and explore any problems and issues arising.

## **2. PROJECT PROCESSES**

This section of the report focuses on the findings from observation of project

processes, initial, ongoing and follow-up discussions with project staff and discussions with workshop facilitators and participants. While no new projects with young people were observed at PhotoVoice, discussions were held with project staff on issues concerning effective practice in engaging asylum seeker and refugee young people and these also inform the section on project practice.

## **2.1 Exploring the concept of civil society**

'Civil society' was generally not a concept that had been explored previously by project staff and workshop facilitators, but for staff this became clearer through discussions prior to holding the workshops. The consultant worked with CUKT's futures consultant, Lenka Setkova at CUKT and Susan Blishen and Carol Stone at PHF to discuss how to 'translate' the concepts in the leaflet and other documentation about the Carnegie Inquiry into a language that would be more accessible to project staff and participants. A set of possible questions that might be explored was sent to all the projects participating in this initiative, with suggestions about possible processes for consideration.

As the initiative would need to fit into other work the projects were doing with young people and be applicable to the local context, the precise questions to be explored and methods to be used were left open to projects to decide, ideally in consultation with young people. For the young people, the concept of civil society was explained by linking it in with issues that were real to them, discussing the notions in the context of their own lives and communities.

For the Barbican groups at Bangabandhu School, this was achieved through exploring issues that related to the young people's immediate environment, using a map of the borough of Tower Hamlets (where they live and go to school) to visualise future change (thinking about 'what would you like your world to be?'). Civil society was seen to be a very topical subject at the moment and there were many issues that staff could pick up within that, such as how to make society better for communities and considering a future environment. Initially, project leaders from the Barbican sat down with the teachers and artists and gave them a copy of the documents about the Carnegie initiative and the notes from the consultant and talked about what the concept meant for them and what they thought civil society would mean in the context of the school, the borough and London. The artist and poet had previously worked with the Barbican on their 'Can I Have a Word' project and had both worked in the borough before, so what all the participants had in common was that they all have knowledge of the area and care about its future. For the young people, envisaging what the area would be like in 2025 represented a massive challenge for them, as they would by then be adults, possibly with children of their own. At the workshop, the young people

themselves came up with many of the ideas and needed less prompting than anticipated. It was evident to project staff that the teachers had talked to the young people about the workshop before it took place, explaining that they were going to do something with poetry and animation and that it was a real treat but also the opportunity to do something new.

The two groups from Belfast, the Two Parks project in Newington (working with New Lodge Arts) and the Upper North Belfast Community Empowerment Partnership (Vine group, working with the Old Museum Arts Centre) had previously worked in projects looking at the spaces within their areas, so the concept was not entirely new to them. Civil society was explained to young people in terms of a “good society” or “a society in which you would want to live”. Discussions took place between project leaders and the youth and community workers involved in the projects to consider how to best to broach the concept with young people and meet the project’s aims and at the same time allow the young people to get something out of it. Two projects were initially mapped out and then discarded because they were not right for one reason or another. The final agreed programme for the day tied in with work ongoing in north Belfast to engage young people in thinking about their environment and their space.

Seven Stories, who worked with a group at Byker School, based their project on the themes from the children’s novel “Lion Boy” by Zizou Corder, which concerns a future society where there have been substantial environmental changes and medical developments. They developed forum theatre techniques (a method of theatre where the audience can be active in making decisions about how the future can be played out) and also used art to make a collective view of the future. Initially, staff found the concept of civil society quite challenging to relate to, partly because they were unclear as to how the work would be used. Once they began to think about the different options and decide on the specific areas they would focus on, the process became easier. It was also helpful to discuss different options with the consultant prior to the workshops and also to have a fairly open brief rather than being restricted by specific aims. It was felt that children have their own ideas that they might want to pursue and this process could allow them to develop on their own, without there being any right or wrong answers. The workshop leaders explained civil society in terms of what the young people thought made a nice place to live in, for example in Byker, where they live and go to school; in Newcastle; elsewhere in the UK; or globally. It was about the relationship with people that they live with and share the world with. This led to discussions about being understanding and appreciating differences.

Spike Island, working with young women from the Meriton School, focused their project on issues that were particularly topical to the young women’s lives, particularly the notion of civility and how different behaviour affects others. This also linked in with ongoing development of an animation film

considering how to behave in employment interviews; and also continued debates previously held as part of a project with the artist Nathan Hughes (resulting in a DVD 'In the Future You Will See...'). Discussions were held initially between the consultant, the Director of Spike Island, the Head teacher and Head of Art at Meriton School, to consider how to approach the concepts and what could also be brought in to relate to the civil society initiative. The questions that could be considered included: how you learn to behave (and behave differently with different groups you come across); learning from your mistakes; how to respond to others (even if you don't agree with them); when it is better to keep quiet; and what you think of the other person/people and how they think about you. These linked in nicely with other work already going on with the young women looking at relationships with different people in their world and life.

## **2.2 Engagement of young people**

All the projects took a participatory approach to their work with young people, although it was not always possible within the relatively short timescale, and in some cases with the size of the groups involved, to engage potential participants in discussions prior to the workshops. In some instances, for example with the groups in Belfast, there were some last-minute changes with one of the groups of young people pulling out at the last minute. An alternative group of young people was contacted (all had been involved in a previous initiative with the lead organisation) and they were able to participate in the workshop, but due to their late involvement they were not as familiar with the initiative and the concepts as the other group. Nonetheless, the groups got on well together at the workshop, even though they had not met before and some were younger than the others. Some of the young people involved in the Spike Island and Seven Stories workshops were not involved in the entire process and thus there were some problems of continuity (which is not uncommon when working with groups of young people).

All the groups of young people involved in this initiative had previously worked with the lead organisation on other projects. The projects consult young people they work with on an ongoing basis to evaluate their work and develop future activities and thus were already familiar with their interests.

All the projects established some ground rules for the workshops. In two of the projects, the Barbican and Seven Stories, contracts were agreed with the young people before the workshops began and written up on flipcharts. The contracts included issues such as respect for one another's views, as well as listening to other people, appreciating their work and generally having fun.

During the workshop sessions, each of the projects was very responsive to the suggestions and concerns of the young people involved. Most of the

projects spent some time on warm-up activities at the beginning of the session, which gave the young people an opportunity to relax with one another and with the facilitators and, in cases where they did not all know each other, to learn about the others. Where possible, participants were given options about what activities they wanted to do or what to focus on (in some instances part of the format for the day had been prepared, for example in the Spike Island workshop, where the drama facilitators had prepared a script before running the workshop and thus there were some set lines, but there were also plenty of spaces where the young people could fill in their own ideas).

There were also some evaluation sessions at the end of some of the workshops. For example, the poet and artist working with the children at Bangabandhu School sought their views on the events of the day. The evaluation with the children at Byker School took the form of a game, with children being invited to indicate what they liked most and least by standing as close as possible to or as far away from a chair in the centre of the room. Thus, for example, they were asked initially about whether they liked football, or chips, progressing on to whether they had liked the book (this was least popular), thinking about the future (some were less keen on this than others) or acting (everyone was very enthusiastic about this and this had come over clearly during the session). In the workshop with the two groups from Belfast, initially the facilitator had asked the young people to select a colour that matched what they wanted in their space and to explain why they had selected this. Some selected colours that represented the way they felt about their space now, for example grey to symbolise dull, red to express sadness: “everyone in the area is sad”. This exercise was then repeated at the end of the workshop and the colours selected were more positive, with some of the young people describing their space now as safe or happy. One of the workshops had to conclude quickly because participants had to leave for other appointments and thus it was not possible to do a full assessment on the day of how they felt the workshop had gone.

As this initiative was part of an ongoing process for all the projects, however, there will also be future opportunities for project staff to get feedback from the young people. From observations of the sessions, young people were generally very engaged in the workshops throughout and contributed plenty of ideas, even though the events were sometimes quite long.

### **2.3 *Benefits of the initiative and ongoing developments***

One of the main benefits of the initiative for some projects was having the scope to explore a range of issues with little prescription on the format or content (apart from the overall brief). This had led to some very interesting and exciting discussions and gave young people who are often not consulted

the opportunity to consider issues they would not normally think about and express their views. As one project worker remarked: “the project got them thinking about the issues and the future. It’s a tall order thinking about these issues. It’s about looking at what’s going on for them socially in their area...and they got lots of benefits through thinking about the political and social issues”. In all the projects, the young people were very engaged and enthusiastic and came up with some impressive work and ideas within a short time, despite sometimes having little time to prepare and learn new techniques. It was clear from the observations that they thoroughly enjoyed the sessions and having the opportunity to express themselves creatively.

The initiative also gave projects an opportunity to experiment with different formats and media and to consider how they might use other creative means to explore issues in future. For example, “It opened up more ideas for us about what we can do [in different settings and with different topics]”.

For some of the projects, this initiative slotted in nicely to their other activities and became part of an ongoing process. For others, it also created the opportunity to develop new initiatives. For example, one project worker felt that this initiative might be seen as the start of a process that gets young people thinking creatively about the future, society and relationships between people. In north Belfast, the initiative has been a stepping stone for OMAC in the recruitment of their youth panel (which is engaged in giving views on the development of a new art centre in the area). The initiative also helped to solidify relationships with partner agencies and individuals, such as the artists involved, which could be built on for future events.

All the projects saw the opportunity to use the art work and ideas developed by and with the young people, not only as part of the Inquiry into the future of civil society, but also in other settings. For example, one of the projects felt that it would be good to use this initiative as a basis for the young people to engage with local community workers and representatives from statutory agencies on how they want their neighbourhood to develop. Another is intending to develop a presentation using the art works created in the workshop, which can be made available to schools and also at other events for young people. Being able to present the DVD, for example at the Carnegie young people’s event but also elsewhere “will be a good boost for the confidence and self-esteem of the participants” commented one project worker.

It was felt important that projects, young people and partner agencies get feedback on the progress and outcomes of the Inquiry, so that “there’s some sense of connection with the wider initiative”.

## **2.4 *The value of participatory arts initiatives in exploring issues with young people***

Some of the project staff and project partners commented on the importance of participatory arts initiatives for engaging young people. For teachers, it gave the young people the opportunity to do something different from their usual activities in the school and enables them to explore issues they might not normally consider.

Participatory arts are able to make certain issues or subjects more accessible through play and free expression. They give the young people the opportunity to experiment through play and to take risks, within a supportive environment. They empower young people to come up with their own ideas and to develop self-confidence. Creativity of language, for example through poetry, helps young people to think about things in a different way.

## **2.5 *Challenges and lessons***

Although the workshops generated many ideas and participants were generally very enthusiastic, project staff reflected on some of the difficulties involved in the processes. For example, while it was good to have a fairly open brief, this was quite daunting initially for some projects.

One of the main challenges presented, which everyone commented on, was the relatively short timescale for undertaking the projects, which creates problems in terms of placing the project in the context of the young people's ongoing development. The timescale meant for some that it was not always possible to engage young people beforehand in determining the shape and focus of the workshops. "A longer planning horizon would have enabled more input by young people in the planning stage" was one typical comment. What made it particularly problematic at times was that it was not just the lead project undertaking the work, but they also had to involve staff in partner organisations. For example, one project leader commented that the lead-in time was "a bit worrying at one point, as it was very difficult to get hold of some people in a short time". On the other hand, there was also the question of availability of other partners and in the end, with the need to arrive at a mutually convenient day, a longer planning period might not have been possible for some.

Staff from one of the projects felt that clearer information at an earlier stage about the format and purpose of the Carnegie youth event might have provided a clearer focus when they were planning their activities. In terms of the process of the initiative overall, it was less clear to projects what the intended outcomes of the Inquiry into the future of civil society are and how

this initiative will fit in to the overall Inquiry. A youth-oriented website that could have been accessed by the young people at an earlier stage might also have helped the process.

In the two projects where drama workshops took place, some young people had not previously had any drama experience and thus some of the workshop time was spent coaching and teaching new skills, before it was possible to focus on the issues. Nonetheless, the participants developed their acting skills and confidence very quickly and the end results were impressive.

In some cases it took some time to elicit the views of young people on particular subjects such as the future of the environment, because they were not used to considering these issues and thus needed some prompting. Despite some initial difficulties, however, the young people presented a considerable range of ideas and opinions on the future of civil society as it related to them.

Another issue that was observed in two of the projects was the difficulty created when some young people drop in and out of sessions. This resulted in having to go over ground rules and explain some of the issues several times. In one instance, the arrival of a new participant in an afternoon session who had not been there in the earlier session (where the participants had bonded well) created some disharmony and changed the group dynamics significantly. This meant that some of the topics that had been explored in the morning session could not be developed as fully as had been anticipated, due to the need to address issues of conflict. With hard work, conflict between two of the participants was resolved and the day ended on a positive note, but it did mean that the facilitators could not get as far as they wanted in this session with exploring some of the wider issues relating to civil society. Although this is the context in which many of the projects work, it can create difficulties when a project is short-term as it is not possible to develop strong relationships with the participants and thus anticipate or avert such tensions. It should be possible, however, to continue to explore similar issues where other work is ongoing.

Project staff reflected on the process in terms of developing their own future practice. For example, a lesson for Seven Stories was that if they were going to undertake a similar exercise in future, they would base it on a shorter, more straightforward book than the one they had drawn upon for this project.

## **2.6 Implications**

Much of the learning from this initiative can be drawn upon to inform the development of future projects. This section summarises the implications for the funding organisations (the Paul Hamlyn Foundation and the Carnegie UK

Trust) and for projects working with young people.

### **For the Paul Hamlyn Foundation**

A longer-term project might have enabled greater participation from young people and the opportunity for project staff and workshop facilitators to work with them over a longer period of time to build on their ideas. It might also have helped in situations where project staff needed to do some initial work with young people to build up their skills and confidence, before moving on to consider issues relating to civil society. Where some participants were absent for some of the sessions, a project running over a longer period might have helped to ensure greater continuity in attendance and the time to work through problems arising.

There were benefits from having a relatively short project with an 'open' brief, however, particularly in terms of allowing projects to experiment with different media and ideas. Perhaps an important aspect of such an initiative is to ensure that it is able to link in with other work being undertaken, so that young people participating are already involved in consultation and planning with project staff and ideas emerging from the initiative can be taken forward in other settings.

Nonetheless, for future initiatives of this kind, a longer period of time for planning and discussing activities before undertaking workshops would be preferable. While project staff appreciated the value of being able to develop ideas with the young people without there being a pre-defined structure or content to the project, they also found it helpful to have some broad guidance as a prompt for developing activities. It might be useful to put together some general guidelines for similar initiatives in future and consider providing some examples that projects can draw on if required.

The feedback from partner agencies and project staff also emphasised the benefits of engaging in participatory arts projects, which allow young people to participate in activities which take them out of their usual context and enable them to take risks and develop their own ideas within a supportive atmosphere. They also help to give young people a voice, which is particularly important for those young people who do not normally have the opportunity to present their views.

### **For the Carnegie UK Trust**

The initiative highlighted the challenges for young people in projecting into a future where they would be more than twice the age they are now. Again, a project over a longer time period might enable facilitators to work more closely with young people to draw out their hopes and fears about the future and build

more extensive scenarios. This initiative generated many important ideas which can be taken further, however, some of which echoed the concerns arising from the workshops with adult participants.

Clearer information at the start of the initiative about how it would fit into the overall Inquiry and the anticipated end results would have been helpful to participating projects when designing their workshops and informing young people about the aims of the project. Given that many of the young people who contributed to the initiative were unable in the end to participate in the young people's event, on reflection it might have been preferable not to have emphasised this as one of the outputs of the initiative, as hopes were built up that could not be realised in some cases.

Having a website or web pages aimed more at young people might provide a forum in which project participants can see their work presented and contribute further ideas. It is important also that the young people who participated in the initiative have feedback on how their contribution will be used in the Inquiry, as well as how the Inquiry overall will contribute to policy debates.

### **For projects working with young people**

From the experience in this initiative, it is useful when working on a shorter-term project such as this to involve a group of young people who have already participated in other activities with the project. While it may not always be possible to take a fully participatory approach to planning the particular initiative due to time constraints, project staff will nonetheless have an idea of young people's preferences as a result of ongoing consultation processes.

Some of the projects experienced problems with continuity of attendance and this may be averted if prior discussions are held with project partners, including potential workshop facilitators and partner organisations such as schools, in order to establish some basic ground rules before delivering workshops. This links in to the point made earlier about the need for funders to give projects sufficient planning time prior to undertaking workshops and other activities.

It is also important to set ground rules with project participants before workshops, which many of the projects did in this initiative. In some cases a contract was drawn up between workshop facilitators and young people and written up on a flip chart, so when necessary this could be revisited during the workshops to remind participants of the basic rules they had all agreed. This was also a useful tool when new participants came in partway through the workshops.

The projects involved considered how the work would fit into their other activities, rather than seeing it as a one-off initiative. Thus, although the initiative was relatively short-term, they were able to use the ideas and learning emerging to inform other activities. In some instances, the initiative helped them to develop new initiatives and partnerships. While the art work produced during the initiative had the overall aim of informing the CUKT's Inquiry, projects were also considering other opportunities for disseminating the work produced by the young people to inform policy development in their own locality.

Although it was not always possible to involve young people in the early stages of project planning, the participatory approach used in the workshops was important in enabling young people to discuss concepts and develop ideas and materials in their own way. Most projects had feedback sessions at the end of the workshops, often using creative methods that involved activities that the young people enjoyed, rather than paper-based exercises that are often used in conventional project evaluations with adult users.

### **3 CONCLUSIONS**

Although this initiative was relatively short-term and the overall objectives and outcomes were sometimes unclear, it has been a positive experience for the projects and young people involved. While it was not always possible to engage young people in planning the workshops and other activities as much as project staff would have liked, the initiative is seen as contributing to a longer-term process and thus the opportunity to evaluate the process with the young people and plan for future events will continue to present itself.

The art works produced as a result of the initiative will also have much wider application, not only for the Carnegie Inquiry into the future of civil society, but also within the local contexts in which the projects are situated. They can also be presented in a range of other settings, such as with different schools and with other groups of young people, in order to stimulate discussion.

Overall, project staff seemed very pleased with the outcomes of this initiative. The comment below from one of the workers sums up the general feeling:

*Thanks for the opportunity – it was lovely and I really enjoyed it. It is something really worth pushing and could be built on year on year. For example, the idea of civil society, going back to young people in relation to the citizenship part of the curriculum. Using the arts to interpret what they think and present opinions.*

## **Appendix I: groups involved in this project**

### **Belfast:**

Geraldine Wilkins (Northern Associates)  
Clare Lawlor (OMAC/Young at Art)  
Michael Burns (Greater New Lodge CEP)  
Janice Beggs (Upper North Belfast CEP)  
Katrina Newell (New Lodge Arts)  
Hugo Armstrong (Newington Group)  
Julie-Anne McCormick (Workshop facilitator)  
Matt Curry (who authored the DVD)

### Project participants:

Jolene Bunting  
Jacqueline Spence  
William Freeman  
Jamie Scott  
Natalie Patton  
Paul o'Reilly  
Fintan Carson  
Ryan Robinson

Also Harry Murphy, Chris Valente and Kerry Rooney who were involved in earlier discussions.

### **Barbican:**

Project Manager: Sarah Taylor  
Education Assistant: Fiona Alderton

Young Poets and Filmmakers: Bangabandhu Primary School Year 5  
Teachers: Ian Williams, Stephen Oswald

Artist and Filmmaker: Reza Ben Gajra  
Poet: Jacob Sam-La Rose

Also thanks to Lindsay O'Nions at the Barbican, who was involved in earlier discussions on the project.

### **Spike Island**

Lucy Byatt (Director)  
Rachel Connelly (Project manager)

Meriton School: Maggie (Head of Art) and Carol Bowery (Head teacher)  
Year 10 pupils who participated in the workshop

Nina Wyllie (workshop facilitator)  
Lucy Gibbs (workshop facilitator)  
Guy Fowler (sound recordist)

### **Seven Stories**

Jenny Stevenson (Participation Worker and workshop leader)  
Liz Bamber (Participation Co-ordinator)

Linda Bradley, Head Teacher at Byker School  
Year 5 pupils at Byker School.

### **PhotoVoice**

Liz Orton.