

CS Lab #5, Keynote #3: Advocacy for change (Transcript)

This is the transcript of the live **Keynote #3: Advocacy for change session** that took place on June 5, 2020 as part of CS Lab # 5, co-organised by XTRAX and Circostrada.

Speaker: **Michael Hoar**, Independent Consultant

Chaired by **Maggie Clarke**, Director of XTRAX

Transcript:

LAURA: Hello, everyone, and a warm welcome to all of you on this third and final day of the fifth edition of the CS Lab. I'm Laura Jude and I am the international projects officer of Circostrada talent network. Today it is finally my turn to open one of the keynote sessions after my colleagues, Stephane and Laura. And I am really excited and happy to do so and learn with you through what is our very first digital experience.

I don't know how many of you attended the first two sessions, but I did, and it was really inspiring so I am very much looking forward to today's conference, which will address the issue of advocacy for change. After four editions hosted between France, Italy and Latvia for the most recent one, we were supposed to go to Manchester in April to enjoy the famous warm and beautiful weather of England but due to the COVID-19 pandemic, we were forced to adjust our initial plans. So together with XTRAX, who is a member of the Circostrada Network and also the co-organiser of this year's Lab, we decided to reframe it and to adapt it to the current situation, hence the following thread on leadership in times of crisis.

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I also want to take this opportunity and express my gratitude to Michael Hoar for being so understanding, flexible, receptive with regards to all the changes we have asked him to make when we took that decision. The process of adapting the CS Lab, we decided we would strive to achieve the same objectives which are first to encourage self-critical assessment, to propose a forward-thinking approach to become change-makers, to reconnect with our own creativity, to question what is stopping us from becoming a fully inclusive sector and how to make sure everyone is included and last but not least to advocate effectively for our work.

Before I give the microphone to Anaïs from XTRAX I want to take a few more seconds to either refresh your memory or get you up to speed on what Circostrada Network is. So Circostrada is the European network for circus and street arts and it is supported by the created Europe programme of the European Commission and the French minister of culture. It is co-ordinated by the French National Centre for Circus and Street Art Theatre based in Paris and the network is made out of more than 120 members across 35 countries in Europe and beyond. The main goals of the network are to build sustainable futures for circus and street arts, to support professionals, to create content internationally and to spur innovative ideas and projects within these two communities.

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If you are interested in knowing more about who we are and what we do, you can obviously check our website, and you can also follow us on social media. We have Facebook, Twitter and a brand-new Instagram. You can also register to our newsletter, or simply write us an email, or even call us. So I wish you a really fantastic session, and I give now the floor to Anaïs from XTRAX.

ANAÏS : Thank you, Laura, thank you. And hello, everyone. Thank you so much for joining us in this final keynote session on the topic of advocacy. I hope that you managed to attend our other two keynote sessions which addressed the topics of leadership in times of crisis and developing inclusive leadership practices. The recording for the discussion on leadership is now available online, so you can check the Circostrada and XTRAX social media, and we'll also pop the link in the chat, and the recording for yesterday's keynote will be made available today.

My name is Anaïs Biaux is I am the Creative Development and Partnerships Manager at XTRAX. We are a Manchester-based development organisation for outdoor arts and our main three areas of work include - we are the managers of Without Walls. Without Walls is the largest outdoor arts consortium in the UK and we work alongside 36 partners and festivals. Our second focus is on international relations, and we do this through Platform for UK, which is a strategic programme designed to support the international promotion and

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export of UK outdoor artists. Finally, we offer services in event programming and we also deliver a range of training opportunities for artists and festivals.

We are also the managers and producers of As The World Tips by Wired Aerial Theatre. We would like to thank the Arts Council of England for their ongoing support.

I'm pleased to say that we have 75 people joining us today and before introducing today's speakers I would like to remind you of a few practicalities. First, the session will last 45 minutes. Please feel free to use the chat to say hello, who you are and where you are from. For access purposes, and also acknowledging that English is not the first language for many of our listeners today, we have enabled captions for this keynote. So to activate your captions you can click on the 'closed captions' button there should be at the bottom of your screen. If you would like to ask questions to the panellists - and we encourage you to do so - please use the Q&A function. Please feel free to comment, post or tweet using the hashtag #CSlab5 and follow XTRAX and Circostrada on our social media channels as we will be sharing links to the recordings as well as publications and other resources.

I would now like to introduce you to today's topic which is on advocacy for change and how to advocate effectively for greater recognition and support. So to address this session, and this topic, we're joined by Michael Hoar, an independent consultant with 25 years' experience in the arts and cultural

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sectors, and Maggie Clarke, director of XTRAX, will be chairing the session. A warm welcome to you both. Thank you so much for taking part. I will now hand over to Maggie to kickstart the conversation and I hope that you find this session to be very useful. Thank you.

MAGGIE: Thank you, Anaïs , and hello, everybody. My name is Maggie Clarke and I am the director of XTRAX and I am delighted to introduce you to this session with Michael Hoar. Michael is an independent consultant with 25 years' experience working in the arts and cultural sectors and his experience combines academic knowledge with an understanding of real-world practice in the arts, cultural and creative industries. He has substantial experience of lecturing at several British universities, as well as the University of Cairo, and has delivered many learning and cultural strategy programmes working with local, regional and national government bodies, as well as Arts Council England.

He works with a portfolio of clients, including arts and cultural organisations, universities, local government, charities, and independent professionals, delivering bespoke responses to organisational and strategic development challenges, including business planning, strategy development, fundraising, board development, and advocacy and influencing, which is the topic of our discussion today. Michael, you are very welcome, and you have the floor.

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MICHAEL: Thank you, Maggie, thank you, Anaïs, and thank you, Laura. Yes, hello to everyone. I'm going to now switch to sharing my screen, so if you just bear with me a moment. Hopefully you can now see my slides. Well, yes, I'm talking about the topic of advocacy. I think that, right now, a lot of organisations - probably many who are listening here today - are thinking about how they make the case for their art form and their organisation. We might feel that we struggle to have street arts and circus arts taken seriously and recognised at an institutional level or a governmental level, and we might feel that we're going to fall further behind as a consequence of the fallout from the virus. So how do we lead, how do we get ourselves in the driver's seat, and get more leverage so we maintain, and hopefully advance, the position of our sector and our organisations?

But how to do it - because the context is hard - and what do we want to communicate and express right now? Now, I recognise that there is lots of different organisations here today listening in, with different needs, different sizes, different contexts. So some of what I say perhaps will be familiar to some of you, and some will be new. But I hope I'll provide an interesting perspective to people whose activities are advanced in advocacy. I won't provide hard and fast answers, but I will offer a way of thinking and a perspective on how you can do this.

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I would just say at the beginning that advocacy, to me, is a little like looking after and tending a garden - it takes nurture and care, and it can overgrow, and sometimes it'll feel that it's not delivering the results that you want at the speed you want. Rather, it's delivering on its own timetable. But if you apply some of the lessons I'm going to talk about today, you will get results - I guarantee, you will get some results.

So, first of all, on my first slide here, you can see I'm trying to draw a distinction between advocacy, activism, advising and lobbying. And advocacy takes place on the outside and is often seen as more evidence and science-based. Activisms can be more confrontational. Again, it's from the outside, but it can involve more direct acting. And then lobbying, which is sometimes confused with advocacy, but they're certainly close bedfellows but it often takes place more on the inside, as does advising over here. But advocacy, literally, its origins as a word go back to the old French and to Latin, being called to the aid of one another, or being called to the aid of another. Literally, 'to advocate' - 'ad' is 'to' and 'vocare' is 'to call'. Or it might be a verb - to plead in favour of. But it is a deliberate strategic effort to create and bring about social and policy change through support for a particular course of action. I'll repeat that - the deliberate strategic effort to bring about social and policy change through a particular course of action.

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I tend to find, in arts organisations, this is just something we're often expected to just get on with, without much - perhaps without much training and without much thought. It's often rolled into the day job. But I've seen in my work really good advocacy carefully planned yield big results on a local, national and - on a national and international level, when it is backed up by evidence. But we are probably all doing it at different times and in different ways. I'm going to put forward a simple system for you to kind of draw upon and hopefully get into action with quite quickly.

So, how to think about advocacy? Well, it's many activities - it's organising, campaigning, trying to influence people's thoughts and perspectives, gathering and commissioning research, calling on powerful agents, and calling and co-hosting meetings with other agencies and organisations, developing joint plans and strategies, and capacity-building a family of advocates, as well as engaging the media and newer forms of media like social media. It is a continuous process when it works well. The advocacy stream is always running - I would always say that the game is always on. And national through to local results are achieved on an ongoing basis all of the time.

Many of us are doing it with greater or lesser degrees of focus and strategic planning. Someone said to me recently that they couldn't do advocacy because they felt it was an obscure art, a dark art of some sort, going on behind the scenes, but I think we can bring advocacy into the light and I think with a few

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kind of core lessons, we can all do it and adopt it. Your leadership style and your personality, perhaps relating back to some of the things Hilary talked to us about earlier in the Lab, are really, really important. Some people's personality styles and leadership styles naturally lend themselves to advocacy and others have to apply more thought and apply different tactics and learn these skills.

Some people talk about reactive and proactive advocacy. Proactive advocacy would be something that's deliberately planned, maybe aligned or shaped within a strategy, and perhaps rolled out over a longer period of time - maybe one, two or three years. Reactive advocacy, which often does take place in crises - and I've seen examples of it in the current crisis - takes place when people kind of react very rapidly to a particular set of events, and these things can be successful - sometimes they can be unsuccessful and have more unpredictable results. But I'll talk more about that later on.

There are in terms of the context, I think it's really, really important to make sure there are lots of nationalities represented in the participants today. It's really important to make sure you understand your national context, your government plans to unlock after the lockdown. What are the national arts and cultural sector priorities in your country, or in your place? Are they things that you want to align with, or are they things that you want to challenge?

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But I think there is a powerful narrative that the outdoor arts, circus arts, street arts sector can mobilise, because the outdoor arts sector has a unique power to mobilise and to help people celebrate, and also it'll take place in, often in outdoor spaces, usually in outdoor spaces. So the potential for kind of social distancing and reconfiguring how events take place is great. But also there may be a very significant role in helping people come to terms with this crisis, and also reimagine what the future could be like in local places, and there is a unique power for outdoor arts in doing this.

I think there is a narrative there that we can draw upon and your organisations can draw upon. Clearly, there's also playing a significant role in economic recovery and social and community reconstruction. There will be a role to help places come to terms with what has happened, but also to help restart and kickstart the economy in local places, as outdoor arts pulls people into places and helps boost prosperity. There's a lot of sensitive timing that will need to be thought through. There's lots of uncertainty. So your advocacy plans will need updating regularly and you will need a very flexible strategy at this time and also you'll need a mix of platforms, because at the moment a lot of advocacy will take place online.

But what I've learned is that we can all do it. I've been involved in lots of advocacy actions over the years, and it's something that, like I say, with a few simple lessons, it is something we can all adapt and begin to do. We don't need

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to be frightened of it or embarrassed about it - it is a normal part of democracy. It is a democratic function or a function of democracy. It is a normal and legitimate part of that work. And politicians and officials in public organisations and in businesses, they expect it, and they're just people trying to do a job, like we are, and we need to present them the case and the evidence and the story.

We also need to be flexible - being influential in advocacy often means, to me, being open to being influenced as much as it means being influential. Good advocates are flexible and dynamic and can shift and move across agendas rapidly and they aren't dogmatic. Like I say, most people who I've worked with in other organisations are really happy to meet with me, or meet with you, especially if you are expressing how what you are doing will help them deliver their plans. I'll say that again - especially if you're expressing how what you are doing with your organisation will help them deliver their plans. The art of advocacy is positioning yourself as a resource to others. It doesn't matter if you've done a lot or a little of advocacy - start where you are. Begin with the resources and the contacts and the partnerships and relationships you have.

But one thing you will need to do, if you are working with partners in different sectors - say, in economic development, health and wellbeing, planning, local government, business or with partners in place and place-making, is that you need to become familiar with the policies and the concerns of those partners. You are not trying to put one over, or get an advantage, on somebody -

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advocacy for me is based on showing the partner, or the person you are trying to influence, the win-win - the thing that they can do that you can do with them that's going to provide a win for both of you.

It really helps to know that person's policy area, but also, if they are politicians, their particular interests and political views - how they've voted in certain elections. Knowing the facts about their work is important. You'll also need to craft a story and know what it is that you're effectively trying to communicate about your work and your organisation. And also, crucially, what you need from them and from that advocacy engagement. And then your planning will need to be very dynamic - I find that advocacy planning needs to be much more dynamic than many other areas of planning. Because once you enter into an advocacy activity, event or engagement, frequently quite unpredictable opportunities can emerge to extend that advocacy and grow it and stretch it and develop it further. So you need to be ready to respond. And it's about building real long-term relationships. It is about connecting with people. You need to find consultations that are taking place in your local area, or within your sector, that might have a bearing on what you do.

I can't underestimate the importance of being proactive and calling meetings with partners and putting yourself in the driver's seat and in a leadership position. It depends on who you are encountering but it is good to put together what I call 'set piece' one-off events where you can kind of leverage a

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relationship with a powerful agent or partner and stretch that leverage and what you can get from that event as far as you can. Being part of a coalition, or a collective, of people influencing against a single goal is good, and there are many at the moment, national and international, for instance, campaigns and hashtags I've noticed. But particularly if you are a small organisation or an individual, you might want to think about if your interests are best served by joining with or triggering the formation of a partnership.

The other thing I would say is, like, make it core. When you are doing your business planning, alongside your marketing plan and your financial plan and your risk assessments and your equalities plan, either produce a separate advocacy plan or have specific advocacy actions in your main action plan. Make it second nature. I'm surprised how often organisations don't do this. And then the other thing that's important is sensitive language and communication. It's really, really important to make sure that you are thinking really carefully, especially as you make initial approaches to organisations and individuals, that you use sensitive language.

You are sharing the idea of how we can look at something, how we can come together to make a case about something, how we can contribute to the local community and the place. I'd like to come together with you in a meeting to think about how we explore that together and look at what we can do to build that role, perhaps of outdoor arts or the arts in a local strategy or plan, or in a

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regional strategy or plan, or even a national one. But sensitive language and communication - I spend hours and hours of my time redrafting communication and emails with potential people I want to influence or work with an organisation to influence. I think there is a huge amount written about advocacy online and I took this opportunity to read some of that and there's a lot written about advocacy, and there's quite a lot written about arts advocacy. Some of it's good, some of it's less helpful. But what I've tried to do here for your situation is draw together what I would all six steps to advocacy, really. And if you try and follow these steps, I think you'll get ahead.

The first step is to prepare a plan of some sort. Now, this can either be a full strategy, if you are a larger organisation or in a partnership working on a bigger campaign. So this would be typical for a campaign with a national impact. And that would have an overarching goal, it would have strategic objectives - and you can find all sorts of strategic advocacy planning canvass and all sorts of things to help you with that and there are examples of this online. You might have strategic objectives for kind of 1-3 years. Or you might just do something much more simple, if you are thinking about, you've got more limited resources, you are a smaller organisation, you might be working on your own in place but you might just have a simple plan which has a simple action plan with some simple objectives to it. But don't be fazed by that.

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The next thing you need to do, really, is what I would describe as assemble your team. Who are the advocates? And the first thing - it might be just you as an individual. I think most advocacy actions are perhaps best taken forward in partnerships and groupings, but if you are an individual and you've kind of got to do certain things for your organisation, perhaps, more than for a sector, then you might just be working on your own. However, I think it's more likely that you will want to work with what I would call an organisational team and this could be quite broad - it might be you, it might be your staff, it might be board members, it might be volunteers or friends of the organisation, or it could be other powerful agents like patrons. But it's important to assign roles to everybody.

The next thing you could do to assemble your team, really, is either join or form a wider partnership, which I've talked about already. I think a lot of arts organisations really benefit from doing this and I've seen frequently partners beyond the arts take the arts more seriously when a collection of six, seven, eight, nine, ten organisations come together in a local place, for instance, and then are able to express that, collectively, we have this economic and social impact. Whereas I think it's more difficult for some of the smaller organisations to get the ear of perhaps a politician or an economic development agency or a business.

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Once you've created your plan and assembled your team, your next thing to do really is to map your influence. And I'm surprised how often people fail to do this systematically, and you want to be thinking in terms of, who do you know or have contact with in local government or national government, whether that be politicians and elected officials or it might be civil servants. It might be, who have you got contact with in the arts sector in your place or nationally or internationally? It might be the broader public sector - again, in economic development, health and wellbeing, planning, regeneration, local government. It might be in local businesses who could support your case and cause. And then it also might be in the voluntary and community sector. But also remember, when you are mapping your influence, think about the six degrees of separation that people often talk about - who do you know that knows that person that would help introduce you, or help you reach that person? Or have a conversation with that person? And this is where your powerful board members or patrons or perhaps friends of the organisation could come in to help because very frequently, I find, when you are working in partnerships, somebody always knows somebody who can get to that senior person.

Once you've done that mapping of your influence, it's useful just to think about what are the gaps, and, as I said, how you can plug some of those gaps using contacts of your contacts. The next thing you need to do, really, then, and everybody talks about this in all the toolkits and guides online, is really about creating the case, and I think there's several elements to this. I think the first one is, a lot of advocacy is about facts and figures and data and evidence, and

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we've become better and better at this in the cultural sector over the last sort of 10-15 years, and this might be research that you've commissioned, but it might be research that you're gathering from other places, or it might be research you are co-commissioning with other organisations. But I think it's critical to start a resource bank or an information bank within your organisation. It might just be a folder or file on your shared drive where you gather relevant facts and figures, evidence, data and information, and also reports and policy documents in one place.

Your case also needs to have qualitative elements. This is the story or the narrative or the symbolic value of what you do and this could be something where you start to perhaps talk about the human interest, what your organisation achieves for a place or for a set of people or a community group, or for the economy. Then also you might want to think about, crucially, how your work aligns with economic and social and cultural policy locally, regionally or nationally. And you want to be able to express that and articulate how what you do meets the broader agendas of the partners you want to influence in a place. And then crucially, you perhaps want to think about your ambition for your organisation. I think it's really important, when you're going into thinking about advocacy, that you clarify where you want to take your organisation to and how you express that in the case that you make. Because you might want to articulate and express your ambition in the context of how you want to deliver in the future for other organisations. And you'll need that case to have different versions - you need a long version, you might want a case study version, you

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might want a really short version so if you meet somebody unexpectedly who's important you can kind of tell them about your organisation and its work, just in a few sentences.

But you might have - you might be creating, as I say, case studies, it might be an infographic, which is a sort of diagram with facts and figures nicely presented on one page. It might be it's a video. It might be - it might include photography. It might even include artistic work and be creative. It might have narrative prose in it. It could be a creative act. And then, once you've created your case, probably working with your partners, perhaps on your own or with your organisation, you then want to get into action and there's probably three areas, really, that it's helpful to think about when you are thinking about advocacy.

One of them, which is probably the area that I've done the most work in is kind of direct contact with politicians, public bodies, and public servants and officials, funding bodies, businesses, faith leaders, the education sector, the health sector, initiating direct contact. And I think you can be doing this through online, through online letters and emails, but also organising and co-hosting and hosting 'set piece' meetings or one-to-one meetings. It might even be commissioning research together. Commissioning activity together. And you can really be creative here and take this as far as you want, but if you have perhaps a visit from someone senior from another organisation that others might be interested in meeting, it's a really, really good way of attracting the

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attention of local politicians, public officials at senior levels, businesspeople, and you can perhaps co-host a roundtable discussion about the role arts and culture can play in the kind of post-COVID-19 world and talk about how you might want to work on that together. It is a very kind of favourite technique of mine and it can go very far and you can kind of stretch and lever as much as you can from that visit from that particular person. But there's lots of ways of doing this, and as I say, you can be as creative as you are able to. You will also want to engage with their consultations of those kinds of people. So have they got public consultations and town hall events that you can go to and make the case? Perhaps speak at some of those events, or just at least turn up and make contact with senior people - make yourself visible.

Also, obviously, social media can be important there in terms of engaging with those officials and we've seen that happening a lot during the lockdown. And of course this work right now can be face-to-face, as well as - it can be online as well as face-to-face. There's nothing to stop you organising Zoom meetings with local partners or local partners in the place to talk about how we can kind of build support for and build the impact of outdoor arts in the post-COVID world.

The second area of activity which I think you would probably want to think about is how you mobilise what I would call a family of supporters. So this would be the public, board members, it might be friends of the organisation through

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friends schemes, champions, advocates, volunteers and patrons, and perhaps it would be very typical for you to bring groups of people together and ask people what they want so that they can better advocate for your organisation and the area of work that you represent. And there's lots of ways of doing that - you can do group meetings, you can do it online, you can form newsletters and so on. But it is very, very helpful to mobilise a family of advocates, especially if you are a smaller organisation. And then the third area of activity which I think is really, really important is just connecting to a wider audience, which you can do through social media and through traditional media. OK, and then clearly you just need to do, learn and adjust, change tactic as you need to, horizon scan for new consultations, and review your activities monthly, at the moment, because it's going to be a very dynamic scenario as you start to advocate - new opportunities will be presented to you - and you will probably need to refresh the message, too.

So finally I would just say keep it simple, especially if you are new to it, take small steps. Work online at the moment and think about face-to-face activity and contacts later. You are in this for the long haul. It is a marathon, not a sprint. You are trying to build long-term relationships, and be prepared that the pace of progress may seem uncomfortable at times. Sometimes advocacy doesn't deliver results quickly. And you'll find that you sometimes feel like, "Why am I doing these things, I'm not getting any traction with anybody" and then suddenly you will find that other people are mentioning you in their work, they

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are adding you to their strategies, they are inviting you to their meetings and they are shouting about you in senior levels at work or in the organisation.

And now is the time to think about who your influential contacts are. I'm very surprised people are very careful about when they mobilise their patrons and their influential contacts but think about it because I suspect, probably, for many of you, the time is now. OK, and now I'm going to stop sharing my screen and I'm going to take some questions.

MAGGIE: Well, thank you, Michael, there was an awful lot to think about there but I think you laid out very clearly some steps that we can all take and things that we can all think about in building our own advocacy plans and I did like the sense that you're giving us of, this is something we can all do. It is not mysterious, we can all do it, and that is very empowering, I think, especially as many of us are part of small organisations and, as we know, many of us are sitting alone with our laptops and are away from many of our colleagues.

There's a couple of questions that I think are coming through, but one thing that I just want to ask you - as I'm sure you know, Michael, many organisations in the arts are quite small, and they have very little money and not a lot of resources. What do you think should be our priorities, if we are a small organisation, and what can we do if we have little or no money?

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MICHAEL: Yes, that is a really good question and one that people ask a lot. But I think probably the way to start, I would say, for a smaller organisation, is to look around you to your peers and other organisations in the place. That might be other arts and cultural organisations. They may not be outdoor arts organisations. They may be other types of arts organisations. But to see whether you can form coalitions with other organisations and maybe play a small role in a larger effort. Having said that, there's a role for social media and your digital - your phone is in your hand, and if you want to join campaigns and use social media to make the case to local partners, it doesn't take a lot of time and it can be a daily or weekly discipline to maybe tweet certain politicians or tweet people or certain organisations. So that can be free and not take a huge amount of time. But I would say for smaller organisations it is definitely important to consider what role you can play in a bigger coalition.

MAGGIE: That's great, Michael, and I think it's really interesting that you have talked a lot about how we need to work in partnership with others and maybe that might be local partnerships of different arts organisations or partnerships that span many cities or many countries, such as we have with Circostrada. Do you have any thoughts about whether advocacy is something that you can do by yourself, if you are in that situation where you are alone as an organisation, or as a worker - can you do it on your own and how would you approach that?

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MICHAEL: Yes, I think you can, but I think it's about calibrating the results that you would want to achieve. I suspect that most of the time, unless you can mobilise some powerful patrons or powerful agents on your behalf - and you may be able to do that - then most of the time probably what you can achieve alone will be lower than what you - less than what you can achieve in a bigger grouping. But I think for me, I see it in the arts, is that it is everybody's responsibility to do some of this because the importance of the arts drops off politicians' agendas as administrations change and the Arts Council of England will always say we have to re-present this work, the arts and culture and its importance to the economy and national health and vibrancy, we have to re-present it very frequently. And I think it's just part and parcel of our work and we have to build it in - even if you are an individual, what small effort can you make? And I think it is possible and if you are an individual, you can think about what tactics you employ and you can think about the range of activities, and we can all do something is my view.

MAGGIE: Thanks. Now, there are a couple of questions coming in from the people attending here. One of them is around sector advocacy and I think you've talked a lot about how we can work in partnership with others, but how do you think we herd a whole sector when there may be many people that are part of that sector who have a range of different opinions about exactly how that should be done?

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MICHAEL: Yeah, I mean, that is the million-dollar question! And I've found myself on many occasions in a room full of a sector no local place or in a region trying to do exactly this, and it's not easy. It needs skilful facilitation and conversation. It needs careful planning. You've got to work through each of the partners' challenges and issues. But broadly, I've rarely seen a failure when a group of partners or a sector has set out to create an advocacy plan or create greater impact for itself. But you've just got to be patient and you've got to work through people's problems and challenges and you've got to sit inside other people's shoes, you've got to stand in other people's shoes and look at what their challenges and issues are and just try and find that win-win, the middle of the Venn diagram of a set of priorities and a message that will work for everyone. And my experience is that it can be done, but patience is required. But if you do do that, and invest the time, you will get a bigger result, and you'll get a more substantial embedded result, I would tend to find. That would be my answer there.

MAGGIE: Thanks, Michael. I think we've got time for a couple more questions that are coming through. Someone has asked whether you could give us an example of a concrete outcome that somebody could reach for when they're setting out to advocate for their organisation?

MICHAEL: Yes, so I mean I suspect that a lot of the work I've done and where I've seen really concrete results and I have been really happy is when I've seen

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the kind of case that I've helped another organisation or a partnership shape, I've seen it appear in another organisation's policy or strategy document. So if you're trying to make a case about arts or outdoor arts, and you're trying to articulate, perhaps, how important that is for - perhaps the importance of it to local economy or to community engagement, or community development, if your work and the value of it and your partner's names appear in somebody else's strategy or policy, and often it might be a regional strategy, but it might be a city strategy or country strategy, if it appears somehow as you would like it to appear in that strategy or policy, somehow that is to me one of the biggest wins because it allows you to go back into that organisation as a place to talk about how you make that feature of their policy a reality.

Then you're in a longer term relationship because you might be built into a three-year strategy with someone and you can co-commission research, you can bring resources to the table, you can match resources with the partner. That, to me, is where you get substantial change happen over a period of time and also you embed the value of the arts in kind of local planning and place-making, and the same principles apply nationally and internationally, too.

MAGGIE: Thanks, Michael. I'm going to try and squeeze in a couple more questions from our attendees today. Liz Pugh has asked whether it is helpful to define our sector, and as you know we're talking here about the street arts and circus sector across the whole the Europe and internationally, or is it better for

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us to look at being part of a larger conversation advocating for the arts more generally, rather than trying to distinguish our sector as special interest sectors. Do you have any thoughts on that?

MICHAEL: Yes, I do. For my part, it's neither one nor the other, it's both things. And I think it depends on the objectives in your advocacy strategy. Because if you're making the case to a national arts council or perhaps the ministry for culture, perhaps you do want to raise the volume on the importance of outdoor arts, because they will already be aware of the importance of the arts because they are the public body or the governmental department for that. So it might be that you are focusing on outdoor arts and the role that it could play in post-COVID-19 reconstruction. It could be a very, very interesting argument to make. It's one I would think about.

But then, more broadly, perhaps if you're thinking about a local place or a region or a city region, it might be that actually it makes more sense to make the case with a series of other parts partners about the importance of arts and culture in city or place-making. Because you might be making the case to economic development agencies, and actually what they're going to be interested in hearing perhaps might be what is your net worth as a sector? And I've seen that happen in a city - a number of arts organisations came together and were able to say to the local economic development agency and the local government, together we generate £25 million over four years, but separately

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it might be a lot less, and it's less likely that you are going to get to have a seat at the table and a conversation at the table at that senior level.

MAGGIE: Again, it is about working together, isn't it? And I've got one last thing and if you could answer very briefly. How would you say - would you have any advice about how we could approach targets and key people in national arts councils who so often change, and often seem less open to changing their views and policies? It can be so hard to approach these figures. Ten seconds!

MICHAEL: Well, sensitive communication. Look for the win-win - what is the thing they want that you can help them deliver through contact. That would be my simple answer.

MAGGIE: Michael, thank you so much. Thank you to all the attendees who have listened to us. I'm afraid we've run out of time and I'm going to invite Laura and Anaïs to return to conclude the session with us.

LAURA: Thank you, Maggie, thank you, Michael, for this really empowering session and for your approach on advocacy. I will definitely keep all the different tools you gave us and, as you just told, we definitely have, as a network, a lot of advocacy for change to do, so, yes, thank you for that. And thanks, Maggie, for the great moderation.

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ANAÏS: I just wanted to thank everyone, all of our listeners, for attending this webinar. You can use the same link to join us for our wrap-up session this afternoon, which is at 4:00pm, Central European Time and I'll also remind you that a few questions will pop up as you exit this webinar so we kindly ask that you take a couple of minutes just to give us some feedback. Obviously that's very important for us in terms of making the case to run more sessions like this, so thank you, again, to everyone, and to our wonderful speakers and we hope that you will join us for our wrap-up session. Thank you.

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