

[00:01:11.670] - Kayt Hughes

Hello to everyone joining. We're going to start in a couple of minutes. Just want to give everyone a chance to join the session.

[00:02:22.700] - Kayt Hughes

Feel free to have your cameras on or off. But please, everyone, just keep on mute for now.

[00:02:22.830] - Kayt Hughes

I'm just going to give one more minute for everyone to join the session. I think we've got a couple more people joining.

[00:02:59.770] - Kayt Hughes

I think we'll get started. There might be a couple more people joining, but I think we'll start now.

[00:03:08.110] - Kayt Hughes

Welcome to the first of our Framework for Exchange sessions. This is Accounting and Accountability. I'm Kayt Hughes, I'm a Public Programme Producer at FACT. I'm just going to audio describe myself. I'm a white woman in my late 20s with brown hair. I'm sat in front of a yellowish wall. I'm going to hand over to our Head of Programme, Maitreyi Maheshwari, to introduce the session and our guest. I just want to cover some housekeeping notices before we start.

[00:03:36.900] - Kayt Hughes

We have live captions available. They can be accessed by clicking the Live Transcript button at the bottom of the window. Then you can either select Show Subtitles or you can view the full transcript and that will appear in the chat box. You're welcome to have your camera turned on or off, whatever you feel comfortable with. But we do ask that everyone can keep the microphone off while other people are speaking. Just to let you know that the session is being recorded, if you choose to have your camera on.

[00:04:05.650] - Kayt Hughes

We will welcome questions in the chat and comments at any point. You can write them in the chat, but we'll answer them at the end of the session. We'll also have a chance for people to turn the microphone on and ask questions in person if you want to do that.

[00:04:20.830] - Kayt Hughes

This session is going to be a space for sharing of knowledge and ideas and we want everyone to be respectful of others. Anyone who behaves in a way that compromises this will be removed from the session. If you require any technical assistance throughout the session, you can contact me at the bottom-right of your zoom window. This session has been supported by Artsformation. You can find out more information at fact.co.uk. I'm going to hand over to Maitreyi now.

[00:04:50.830] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Hi, everyone. Good evening. Thank you for joining us for the first event in our currency series, Framework for Exchange. My name is Maitreyi Maheshwari and I'm the Head of Programmes at FACT. For those of you who are listening rather than watching, I'm a woman in her 40s with brown skin, black hair, with a faded streak of blue at the front. I'm sitting in my living room in Liverpool, framed by a large plant, strategically positioned to save you all from seeing my kitchen.

[00:05:20.650] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

This is the third in our series of Framework for Events, which began in February 2021 with Framework for Resilience and followed in September by Framework for Trust, framework for our discussion events that explore the processes of learning and exchange between artists and institutions and how they transform practise and legacy.

[00:05:43.270] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Framework for Exchange looks at how we hold those in power to account and how we might redistribute roles and exchange responsibilities. The series will also explore how we can develop other ways of working that allow for mutual exchanges of knowledge.

[00:05:58.450] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Over the coming weeks, we will be hosting a conversation on how artworks created in collaboration with participants can influence decision-making, particularly in relation to the criminal justice system, and a workshop on how to deliver our experiences that facilitate collective decision-making with audiences in digital spaces. Full details of these future sessions can be found on our website fact.co.uk/framework-for-exchange.

[00:06:27.850] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Tonight's conversation is the second event organised in relation to Jack Tan's year-long artist residency within FACT Board of Trustees. The residency exists within, but alongside, the board with the artists given the freedom and scope to approach that forum and questions of governance from their own perspective. Through this residency, Jack has participated in FACT's quarterly board meetings, inviting the Board of Trustees to consider how we might shift the performance and functions of governments to become a creative and inclusive platform.

[00:06:59.650] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Following on from a conversation in September on how trust is exchanged and enacted within the organisation between staff, trustees, funders, artists, and audiences, this conversation looks at the counterpart to trust. Accountability. Without accountability, can we have trust? The rolling headlines of the last few months, culminating in the obfuscation of the last week, have demonstrated how poor leadership and a lack of accountability erodes trust in general, but particularly in the mechanisms of government and governance.

[00:07:31.990] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

In our technologically mediated daily lives, where we are more likely to encounter a bot on the other end of the line than a person, how can we trust services and institutions that are there to serve us when the structures and individuals that maintain them are hidden or frustratingly inaccessible?

[00:07:48.790] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Institutional accountability is also closely related to questions of accounting, financial and strategic in the form of key performance indicators. Much of what organisations do for their trustees, funders, and stakeholders is report on how well they are meeting their budget and targets.

[00:08:06.970] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

In his initial provocations for this discussion shared at our last board meeting, which Kayt can send you a link in the chat, Jack drew our attention not only to the ways in which our current systems of accounting are indebted to concepts developed in other parts of the world, namely Mesopotamia and India, but also that are modern methods of accounting hide or erase much of the context and narrative from which that data is derived.

[00:08:34.520] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

But nevertheless, they do tell us particular kind of story. Who or what is left out? How might we develop forms of accounting that are inclusive of those without a voice? From non-human species and the natural world to those who are marginalised within our legal and social systems, such as young people who cannot vote, or undocumented workers, and other [inaudible 00:08:57] groups.

[00:08:58.280] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

To consider these and many other questions this evening, I'm delighted and honoured that Jack and I are joined by Matthew Balnaves, who, amongst many other things, is also the Vice-Chair of FACT's Board of Trustees. And by Lauren Craig, who, amongst other things, is a cultural futurist.

[00:09:14.410] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I'd like to start by asking each of our speakers to introduce themselves and briefly describe their appearance and location. Then I'll kick us off with a few questions. As Kayt mentioned, there's a chat in the live stream, so please do share your thoughts and questions as you go. We'll aim to talk for around 45 minutes and then take questions from all of you. We would also really welcome people to ask us questions with their voice. If you would be open to talking with us, please use the Raise Hand button. When we're taking questions, I'll invite you to join.

[00:09:50.520] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I'm going to turn over to Jack. Do you want to introduce yourself?

[00:09:57.130] - Jack Tan

Hello, everyone. My name is Jack Tan. As Maitreyi has indicated, I'm the current artist in residence on the Board of Trustees of FACT. I'm an artist who works at the intersection of law and art. My approach really is to take law as a medium of art, as if it was clay, and then to start playing with it. This year, and the last couple of years, the aspect of the law that I've been working with has mainly been governance and policy.

[00:10:40.150] - Jack Tan

Audio describe myself, I present as a cis man of East Asian descent. I am wearing a black top and I'm sitting in my studio. In the background, it's just tools, equipment, and artwork. That's me.

[00:11:04.070] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I'm going to hand over to Lauren.

[00:11:08.150] - Lauren Craig

Hi, everybody. I'm Lauren Craig. I'm an artist, curator, and cultural futurist based in London. I moved slowly between London and Central Italy. I'm a brown woman with red lips tonight. I've got a silver streak in low cropped, black, Afro hair. That's me.

[00:11:36.330] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

And last but not least, Matthew.

[00:11:38.970] - Matthew Balnaves

Thank you, Maitreyi. Good evening, everyone. Wonderful to see so many people in the meeting as well. I'm so glad to share the evening with you. My name is Matthew Balnaves, I'm the Vice-Chair of the Board here at FACT Liverpool. I've been a trustee for just over two and a half years now, quite a while.

[00:11:57.940] - Matthew Balnaves

To describe myself, I'm male in my mid-30s. I've got dark hair and I've got blue eyes. I'm currently in my kitchen dining room hoping that the children won't disturb me in the next couple of hours. I'm based on the Wirral on Merseyside, not too far from Liverpool.

[00:12:18.570] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Wonderful. I guess with introductions out of the way, I wanted to start by asking us to lay the groundwork a little bit. Perhaps this is maybe drawing a little bit too much as a reflection on the state of the nation, but one could say that we've seen a decline in accountability, particularly amongst public figures in the last 20 years. I want to start by asking each of you in turn, why do you feel accountability matters? Either to you personally, professionally, socially?

[00:12:52.220] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Maybe, Jack, I'm going to start you off on this because this was something that was really important to you, that we talk about. Jack, why does accountability matter?

[00:13:07.960] - Jack Tan

Actually, that's a hard question. Why does accountability matter? For me, it just makes the world more solid. When things are accountable, it's like you can rely on them. From an artist's point of view, if I can't rely on my clay, or I can't rely on this tool, or I can't rely on this chair that I'm sitting on, I feel like then it's not solid and things start falling apart. Then I don't know where I am in relation to everything around me either.

[00:13:52.720] - Jack Tan

If I can't rely on my tools and if my hammer doesn't do what a hammer does, and one day I pick it up and I'm in this Alice in Wonderland world, and I pick up a hammer and it turns into a flamingo, then I'm like, "I don't know what to do." I think on that really visceral level, that's why I think accountability matters. I'll leave that just for now as an opening statement.

[00:14:22.830] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Lauren, do you want to add your personal thoughts on why accountability matters to you?

[00:14:30.390] - Lauren Craig

Yeah, I think the first thing that pops up for me is, of recent, I've started to ask people, friends, people I work with to hold me accountable for certain things. I don't know if you have accountability partners. That could be for anything. You say to a friend, "I'm not eating dairy for a month. Can you just keep me in check? Can you make sure when I'm craving that ice cream, you tell me, 'Do you remember you said that you're not going to eat ice cream?'"

[00:15:05.500] - Lauren Craig

I think for me personally, at the moment, accountability means that you can have someone to keep you in check to make sure that the vows you've made, that the promises you've made, that the declarations you've made are kept. If they're not kept, there's also space for a conversation as to why? What's changed? So I feel that accountability can be less of a telling-off word in some ways and more of an opportunity for transformation.

[00:15:52.330] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Matt, what do you think?

[00:15:54.850] - Matthew Balnaves

Yeah, I think what Lauren just said actually really chimes with me. I quite often will invite people to be my accountability partner, whether it's going for a run or whether it's something far more substantial professionally. Otherwise, I tend to let things slip.

[00:16:12.790] - Matthew Balnaves

I think when I was trying to prepare for tonight and this question, why is it important to me? It's hard not to think about how you framed it, Maitreyi, in terms of what's going on in society right now. It's hard not to think about politics.

[00:16:27.280] - Matthew Balnaves

One of the thoughts I've had in preparation for tonight is, I drive my son to school most mornings and we listen to the radio. I tend to have 5 Live on or LBC or whatever, and every morning my son says, "He's not going to resign today, is he?" When he listens to the... He's nine. It's like he's hit upon this cynicism that this person who's at the top can mistruth, lie, whatever you want to call it, and there is no sense of accountability.

[00:17:10.800] - Matthew Balnaves

When you talk about that erosion you talk about, what you mentioned there, Jack, about the implement that you use actually being something that you suddenly can't trust anymore. Well, if that starts at the highest seat of government, or organisationally, it's the chief executive or it's the board, then what can you have faith in?

[00:17:34.330] - Matthew Balnaves

We mention the word visceral. It actually creates for me that kind of real visceral unease. What can you trust anymore? I have not really known how to answer my son yet other than to just nod along and say, "No, I don't think so. Not today, kid. Not today." So that's why it's important to me at the minute because I'm trying to model it for my boy and he can't see it in society.

[00:18:03.470] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Wow, that's quite a profound realisation that this isn't just about the here and now or the past, but it is about how we prime ourselves for the future as well. That accountability, it sets precedents for where we might be going in the future. I suppose this leads very nicely into the next question, which when we talk about accountability, and maybe for this context, it's simpler to focus on cultural organisations such as FACT.

[00:18:42.090] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I guess my question is who or what are we accountable to? There is obviously legal requirements for trustees who have a legal standing within the organisation. There's funding requirements, a sense of a social contract, pervasive cultural norms, the people that we collaborate with, our artists, contributors, audiences. I suppose I'd be really interested to think about in the cultural context, who do you think we are accountable to? Matt, do you want to start as our trustee?

[00:19:21.560] - Matthew Balnaves

Of course, yeah. I think we're really practical perspective. It's our funders and it's our sponsors. If we're not accountable to the KPIs that Arts Council England give us, that Liverpool Council give us, for example, within the context of FACT Liverpool, we've got a problem. We can fastly support.

[00:19:51.100] - Matthew Balnaves

Again, I call on a previous experience as a trustee at Everyman & Playhouse Theatres where we had some real challenges that we are facing. Again, our key stakeholder is the funder, at the end of the day, from a really practical level of keeping the lights on and the doors open. So I think when we think about accountability, we've also got to think about the practicality of funding and how we keep the lights on.

[00:20:19.230] - Matthew Balnaves

Then I think there's a more broader accountability to the public, to audiences, to being bodies, to being institutions that tell stories. If you think about some of the topics that we've had in our programme matrix around radical ancestry, around the environment, the climate, the kind of stories that we're even telling now about corporate governance, which we can see so many failures of corporate governance, not just in the arts, but in sport and politics right now, I think there's an accountability that we have to tell those stories. But to do that, we have to survive and we have to hit those KPIs of our funders quite often.

[00:21:11.470] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Jack, do you want to jump in with what you think? As someone who had a lot of experience recently with other cultural organisations, who do you think cultural organisations are accountable to?

[00:21:31.190] - Jack Tan

I tend to think of it as... Well, I ask the first question which is, what are cultural organisations for? What are they there for? That helps me understand who are they accountable to. I think on a very broad level, cultural organisations are there to create, maintain, and develop culture. They're there to create British culture. In a way, for me, there's this very big accountability, which is British culture is in their hands, British culture is in our hands.

[00:22:10.570] - Jack Tan

We're responsible. We're tasked to formulate what is British culture, to remember and to learn how to remember and archive it, to keep it going now and to keep it going for the future. I think there's this very broad duty we have and I think that's what we're accountable to.

[00:22:35.160] - Jack Tan

Then, like what Matthew says, there are different stakeholders involved in getting that particular task done. That would be funders, audiences, workers, artists. I think we're all involved in a work net together of creating that, of achieving that thing called British culture.

[00:22:57.940] - Jack Tan

That's why I think there's a sense of how that accountability isn't siloed, but we're all in a dynamic, all the stakeholders are dynamically creating the culture. Therefore the accountability has to be intersectional in that way also because sometimes I can be a trustee and an audience and an artist, or I'm wearing so many different hats.

[00:23:30.020] - Jack Tan

Then the second thing that I want to think about also is what happens when accountability fails at the top. We've seen that now with Parliament and with Westminster, but also with organisations that I've

campaigned against in the last year. There's been a failure at the top, at board level, failure at the top, at senior management level, everything's imploded.

[00:23:58.190] - Jack Tan

When that implodes at the top, what's left? Well, the audiences are still left. The artists are still left, artwork-ing is still left, the bottom is still left. Now we find ourselves in this weird situation where the top has exploded, the bottom is still left, so we have to still lead. The bottom has to lead then. Therefore how do we create bottom-up leadership where the bottom has to maintain the standards of accountability, not the top?

[00:24:30.030] - Jack Tan

I'm not talking about FACT, I'm talking about another organisation or other organisations that have failed. Before, I think Matthew, we talked about Cricket Club, Yorkshire Cricket Club, and other places, other instances where the top has imploded. Well then, the bottom has to then hold the standards.

[00:24:48.510] - Jack Tan

I think there's a way now, I think, of developing a bottom-up methodology of accountability and maybe the two will meet. If the top is good and the bottom is good, we meet and we create this accountability sandwich.

[00:25:08.170] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

It's interesting because I remember when we had our preliminary chat about this, one of the things that occurred to me was how much actually, throughout all of the last 20 months of lockdowns, actually the general public has maintained a degree of accountability in respect to the rules and the imposition of the rules where it becomes obvious that the people in the top have flagrantly ignored the rules.

[00:25:42.090] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

You get a sense that there is a very strong continued social contract somehow, or the fabric of society still seems to hold each other to account and model behaviours and perhaps that is the key that we're accountable to each other to some extent.

[00:26:06.570] - Jack Tan

It makes me think that leadership is in crisis or the following may not be in crisis, but leadership is in crisis. The followers are actually doing a good job.

[00:26:16.230] - Lauren Craig

Yeah. I think it goes back to the accountability partner in a sense because in that notion there's a shared power. No one is above each other. I think in that horizontalisation of hierarchy, there's less of a dominant bearer of rules. I feel like if we're to see different ways of creating futures, that we're able to be more accountable, then we need to be able to see each other in circle and to face each other with being able then to be honest about your shortcomings, honest about misunderstandings, honest about targets that haven't been met.

[00:27:09.900] - Lauren Craig

There's a way then to build embedded systems of how to allow feedback loops to come back and to bring new knowledge and new information back as to how to do things next time, how to do things better next time, how to build new networks. I think when you can see each other and there's no power dynamics that are blocking you from communicating, it's a new start for embedded systems within organisational structures and a new opportunity to build cultures that allow for failure to be healthy. I think within the cultural sector, we ignore innovation as a resource for looking at new ways to build.

[00:28:13.240] - Lauren Craig

I mentioned innovation because within business, it's often a place where failure is very healthy, and there are different ways of assessing and evaluating how failures can become new or radical ways to move forward.

[00:28:39.390] - Matthew Balnaves

Maybe if I could just grab that point. In my day job, I work for a multinational construction suppliers organisation, power tools. We celebrate failure constantly. I know this whole idea of getting those little inches, those tiny little failures, all add on to real successes. It's the same, you see, with the aviation industry. They always learn from the black box. Don't they have those? Every time there's some horrendous failure in their industry, they learn from it so that you've got this outright success at the end of the process.

[00:29:21.090] - Matthew Balnaves

From my observations being in boards currently, I just don't see that we hold each other to the same level of accounts and often because we're volunteers and it's relatively unregulated. This idea that the "trustees must know best" or the "trustees are right to challenge a certain point", it often goes totally unregulated. Maybe even a board isn't allowed to fail because then they're seen as the experts. Well, we're all just people muddling along, you know?

[00:29:58.480] - Matthew Balnaves

Then we get to those elements of role play where people go onto a board and behave like they think they're meant to behave on a board, which knows an idea that we've really talked about but can lead to these institutional failures that we see time and time again.

[00:30:17.250] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I think, Matt, that's such an important point. There's two things that I want to follow up with, but maybe just sticking with this question of the performing of certain types of behaviours. It ties back in a little bit to Lauren, your point around culture and institutional culture. I suppose we can see that learned behaviours that you're performing.

[00:30:43.150] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

If you join a board new, you start to perform like all the other board members to some extent. We adopt these learned behaviours. To what extent? Who is responsible for setting those learned behaviours? Who is responsible for how those learned behaviours impact the establishment of an institutional culture and what that institutional culture represents in terms of the vision and values of an organisation or how important that culture becomes in terms of holding the organisation or the individuals within it to account?

[00:31:21.150] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Again, because I'm obsessed with the news cycle at the moment, you read these reports about the police, like institutional culture of misogyny and racism. You just think, "Does that absolve the people in it from their own behaviours?" How do we take responsibility for the types of culture that are allowed to develop within an organisation?

[00:31:53.530] - Jack Tan

There are two things in my head. One is that, Matthew, you're absolutely right. People join the board thinking that there is this idea of a trustee that they have to live up to and that they have to perform. It's a very bad drag, really, because it's like you're not doing it properly. You're pretending to be a management consultant, you're pretending to be an MBA, but you don't have an MBA. It's that kind of thing.

[00:32:34.730] - Jack Tan

That also then complicates things when a board needs to do a skills audit in terms of what the board has or can't, what the skills are. So you need the full set of skills. Whereas everyone's pretending and assuming that each other has the skills. And there's always the finance guy or the finance girl, just because they might have done a job at some point in time doing some accounts work, suddenly gets dumped and becomes the accounts person and it's just overwhelming as well.

[00:33:13.570] - Jack Tan

All these archetypes, I think, is quite interesting. It's almost a theatre that these archetypes are great. I think that doesn't help. Then the other thing I think also is how... We know performance in one sense is that we as individual subjects do a performance, but there's a flip side of performance, which is that the structures perform you. So the performance that you give is always a combination of you performing an archetype, but also that the structure is performing you.

[00:33:59.170] - Jack Tan

One of the problems about trustees is that the structure of the charity set up, or the limited company set up, is that the limited company-ness of it and the charity-ness of it creates these trustees who are performing in this way, in this weird drag. I think there's something about the very structure of a charity that makes us put these hats on without us knowing.

[00:34:30.770] - Jack Tan

It's totally unwitting. It's like the way gender is performed. Gender is performed on you as much as you are performing it. I think we need to address also the usefulness of certain legal organisational structures and the inherent optics that they have.

[00:34:55.150] - Lauren Craig

Yeah, Jack, you just reminded me. I think I remember you talking about the charity structure as a ghost at some point, that reference. I think that just sits really nicely with how out of date these government structures are now and how unrepresentative they are of our current needs.

[00:35:25.350] - Jack Tan

Earlier you talked about horizontal accountability as something that would be really useful. Well, our current structures don't allow horizontal, they allow hierarchical only. How do we reform these structures to allow the horizontal to allow accountability structures that might be inspired from non-human or post-human relationalities as well?

[00:35:48.570] - Lauren Craig

Yeah, absolutely. I think from my experience, that it's been almost nightmare-ish on board to the extent where the performativity of it is detrimental. I stopped participating in boards and just invited people that would challenge me to be on the boards of my own organisation simply because not only is it a waste of time and resource, but it's hard work on your body to be behaving like someone else when actually what you bring to the table from your own self and your own—I don't want to say authentic because it always feels authentic—but your own inner leadership from bringing your own lived experience on the board.

[00:36:43.940] - Lauren Craig

Being able to be that is where the magic happens because you're then in a position where you're actually able to share your gifts and to be powerful through that.

[00:36:54.420] - Lauren Craig

I think I started to miss it after a while because I think for the first time in my life, I'm not running my own organisation. I think that's been good for me because now, on board, I think I'm able just to speak from the ground up as you spoke, speak as the artist and speak in a way that breaks down the barrier of language, the barrier of constitution, of memorandum.

[00:37:28.410] - Lauren Craig

These languages almost become like prisons because decisions and actions can't be made within them. The decisions and actions that are relevant and are fruitful for the current needs cannot be met by these conditions. I'm yet to see a legal structure that is attractive for the holding and nourishing of future business or future organisation, I think. Because even the ones that existed, like the community interest company designed by the legal architect Stephen Lloyd, hasn't been able to go further enough, sadly, because he's passed away.

[00:38:29.700] - Lauren Craig

But since that, even the B Corp, I believe, has been co-opted and has already gone into a corporate lockdown, whereby even the nature of the ethical structure of giving back and charitable purposes has already started to feed back into the large organisations that are detrimental to the environmental sustainability which includes us.

[00:39:03.330] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I think this idea that you mentioned, Lauren, about the ghost is interesting because I think when we've talked previously on this subject, this idea that the procedures of the board meeting, in some ways, are designed to kick decision-making further and further down the road until they fall into a sort of obsolescence, you forget about them. I think, Jack, maybe you'd mentioned Sarah Ahmed as someone who describes committees and board meetings as a place where equality goes to die.

[00:39:43.050] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I'm quite interested in this idea of also how equality is almost an impossibility in the voluntary structure of the board in part because it precludes people. It only includes people with a certain degree of financial freedom, who can volunteer that amount of time that a board demands. So you end up, to some extent, with quite a homogenous group of people sitting on boards. And it makes me wonder about the structure of the charity.

[00:40:27.810] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Jack, you just mentioned that it feels that the very structure of the charity model is a problem. We can see that it's a product of an invention of the Victorian colonial era. To what extent is it, in and of itself, simply outmoded, and outdated? How do we rethink the ways in which we can perform the cheques and balances that a board does, without necessarily demanding that commitment of volunteers who are...

[00:41:08.490] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Their voluntary position deems them uninterested to have no financial interest in the decisions that they take in the organisation, and yet they come with certain types of expertise and skills that then help to shape the organisation itself. I'm curious about the structure of this model that is there to hold us to account, but how does it work? How might we do it differently?

[00:41:39.300] - Jack Tan

I think to be a volunteer, you already have to have a huge amount of social capital and confidence, to be able to volunteer in the first place. We're looking at already a reduced number of sectional population who can actually volunteer. Then the feeling that once you're there on the board, because they're volunteers, you don't want to stress them out too much, don't want to take up too much of their time.

[00:42:21.350] - Jack Tan

Generally, let's just stick it to four board meetings, once every three months. Fine, I think that's fine. If they are volunteers, they're just meant to come in, tidy the garden or help out or help couple of the visitors. But no, these volunteers actually own the organisation. They're responsible, fully responsible legally for the organisation. It feels like the structure is such that it's onerous for a set of volunteers to own such a large organisation.

[00:43:00.230] - Jack Tan

There are some things that's begin to not work, I feel. And that's, I think, reform work that we need to do with the Charity Commission, that there needs to be a conversation between all arts organisations and Charity Commission to solve this problem.

[00:43:18.530] - Matthew Balnaves

Yeah, I couldn't agree more. If it's okay just to come in Maitreyi as well I am. Maybe just a quick personal reflection on a couple of the points. My mother is the font of all knowledge for me. She's a single parent, brought me up on her own. We were in a council house. She worked always two jobs at all times, usually nights. Real hero of mine.

[00:43:46.590] - Matthew Balnaves

And when I told her that we were doing this this evening, she said, "God, I wish I'd been able to do that. I wish I had the time to do that. I wish I'd have had the CV, the qualifications." She's got one O level. She's really proud of that one O level. That's what she's got. But she's got something to say. We had 10 minutes on the phone today just talking around synonyms for accountability. Wow. She's got a voice, but it's totally silenced. Now, I think she would invest as much time as she possibly could into a board if she had the opportunity.

[00:44:28.910] - Matthew Balnaves

What I do see from my peer group, people I've studied with, is a lot of people who are on boards because it looks great on the LinkedIn profile. By the way, I'm quite guilty of that. It's on my banner. I'm not exempt. But there's a lot of people who... Because there's only four board meetings a year like you say, Jack, they might only turn up to two of them, but we're not going to sack them because they're a volunteer.

[00:44:56.860] - Matthew Balnaves

They might not read the papers. How many times you get the feeling people haven't read the papers? How can they know what's going on in the organisation? There might be systemic racism, sexism, whatever it might be within the organisation, but they'll never know because they aren't there. They don't know the people. They haven't got a sense of what's going on. Do we need to form 100%? Yes.

[00:45:21.080] - Matthew Balnaves

I remember... One last thing. When I started at the Everyman & Playhouse, it became quickly apparent that organisationally, we were in a bit of trouble. There was a real context of theatres going on there. Every week across the country, real financial pressures, government cuts in terms of arts, and especially theatre.

[00:45:43.520] - Matthew Balnaves

I'm sitting in that board meeting, in the finance committee meeting, thinking, "I don't want to ask a silly question here because I don't want to look daft." And decisions were being made on people's jobs, with my name on them. Groupthink, really, because I just agree with everyone else. I've got no training and people are just grateful that I'm there because I'm a volunteer.

[00:46:06.810] - Matthew Balnaves

That can't be the right way. Everyone is on this call now. I imagine you're here because you're either interested in the topic or really maybe passionate about FACT as well. So your trust is in me and the board team, to make sure that we call FACT accountable and that we develop this great organisation. But how can you trust me if potentially I'm just in the room playing a role when actually my mum could be far best placed to give that input?

[00:46:38.290] - Jack Tan

I also wanted to add that also due to the lack of time I feel that often organisations then think that accountability is like troubleshooting. Basically, as long as we've got the systems in place to troubleshoot, it means we're accountable. Whereas what we're talking about is a more positive, and progressive version of accountability. Which is to dream of better standards and to go for it, rather than to wait for something to go wrong.

[00:47:13.800] - Jack Tan

Don't worry. We've got complaints process in place for racism. That already makes us accountable. We've got whistle-blowing processes. We've got risk assessment. But okay, great, that's like making sure your house is watertight and windproof, but you've not made a good quality of life in it. You've not put any decorations or furniture in it.

[00:47:38.920] - Jack Tan

It's a really poor version of accountability a lot of organisations do. That actually has been what we've been trying to... With a few organisation, I've been trying to say to them about complaints. Just because you've got a good complaints procedure really doesn't mean you're accountable. Just means you've got a good complaints procedure.

[00:48:02.090] - Lauren Craig

Thanks, Jack. Yes. I just want to go back to something major you brought in, in terms of obsolescence. I'm obsessed, basically, with this. When you said that, I was like, "Yes." I think I [inaudible 00:48:19] Jack today. But it's a big thing and it's a massive place for where I start. In terms of the question, how can we rebuild models of governance?

[00:48:34.460] - Lauren Craig

I'm not actually interested in rebuilding models of governance, but I'm interested in redirecting organisations to look at their waste, to look at the residual, to look at what is obsolete within their organisation. That can be from actual organic matter to intellectual property, that can be time. And actually, that's where I start with the systems thinking, that I've implemented in many other organisations, including being the catalyst for starting my own, start at the end. They start at the waste, what is it that is not being used, and then work back from there as to how we create, how do we design.

[00:49:22.460] - Lauren Craig

I think what I also encourage is an invitation for people to look within, in terms of how to build things. What is it that you need? Because, like Matthew's saying, talking about his mum, I think that asking

people generally what they need within an organisation is a first place to start because people will be embedded and connected to nourishing something that feeds what they need and helps them grow.

[00:49:56.010] - Lauren Craig

And that can simply happen from things that are wasted within organisations. I think it's actually these principles that govern the way systems work within organisations and govern the productivity or what can actually be made within that process.

[00:50:16.520] - Lauren Craig

Just quickly, again, talking about your mum, Matthew, reminded me that the oppression of the structures that we work in and the articles that we perform within organisations drain us of time to dream. And within any organisation I've worked in or designed that time for speculative nothingness is where the new things come from. That space to actually not be performing, not be delivering, just to actually speculate, what if, is really where I think we're able to start to build future.

[00:51:07.850] - Jack Tan

Lauren, I would go even further than obsolescence. I would say we should build in death into organisations. Nothing lives forever. Why should organisations live forever? They should have a wonderful youth like we all have, have a middle age, and have an old age, and then say goodbye and close. I think that's just much more healthy. It's a cycle of life. Because I think if we build that in, then everybody can just dissipate and then reform into something else afterwards.

[00:51:47.030] - Lauren Craig

Absolutely.

[00:51:49.430] - Jack Tan

What do you think about that?

[00:51:52.550] - Lauren Craig

Sorry, I'm getting excited now. [crosstalk 00:51:59] I often would start from an exit strategy. I'm starting this organisation because there's some form of social, environmental or cultural altogether, all those things together, impact that I want to make. I want to see this happen at the end of this organisation.

[00:52:14.770] - Lauren Craig

And therefore this organisation will no longer need to exist because these things are happening. Even if it's that the ideas have been co-opted and now commercialised, which we've got countless list of that, but

these things are actually now in the world. This organisation can die, it can close, it doesn't need to be sustained because the purpose of it...

[00:52:40.090] - Jack Tan

It might be better. That's why British comedies are better than American comedies, I think. British comedies, good ones, three series. American comedies, 25 series. And then it just starts dying at the end, and it's just irrelevant.

[00:52:58.580] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Just to intervene and play devil's advocate here, Jack. In terms of cultural organisations, where when you said what's the purpose of the cultural organisation. It's there to serve and represent a sense of what British culture is or to build that culture. If you plan in the death of the organisation, are you also planning in the death of that culture, how do you allow something or some way of passing on the battle with that?

[00:53:33.560] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Because culture doesn't die just because an organisation has ceased to operate. And yet these organisations, I suppose the reason why they continue and maybe keep grinding at these old models is because that they're there to serve something that cannot die because whatever form it exists in, it exists, it continues to persist.

[00:53:56.140] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

In a way, maybe what we need to think through is not just the death or the obsolescence, but actually, more positively, how can we bring in some of those things that Lauren was talking about in terms of prioritising environmental sustainability or finding a way of governance that can account for the people who are left out, account for the people who are underrepresented in every aspect of culture.

[00:54:31.650] - Jack Tan

I know I'm half-joking about death thing, but on a more serious note, it's to do with how an organisation ages. It's to do with the weight of its history. It becomes more creaky, and cranky, and inflexible, and it gets to a point where its history is so loud that it cannot tackle what's contemporary, without the loudness of that history affecting it.

[00:55:09.070] - Jack Tan

At that point, I feel it's like, "Okay, maybe it's time to just move on, start again." It's more that, really, the incapacitating entropy of the organisation. And of course, if it can then carry on if it can remake itself, like Madonna that keeps remaking, then carry on. Brilliant.

[00:55:38.690] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I wonder what Madonna's governance model is.

[00:55:43.950] - Jack Tan

The cultural appropriation probably. I don't know.

[00:55:53.540] - Lauren Craig

think the answer is almost in your question Maitreyi. Culture doesn't die. It doesn't need an organisation to continue to propagate. Culture is there, it's live, it's always there. In the knots of Jack's provocation, it's in the invention of the zero. Again, it's there, it's within us that creativity. Doesn't need an organisation to thrive. And it's more about what Jack says, that these structures and the entropy of the organisation can actually be debilitating for culture. I'm not here saying that organisations cannot help develop, and cannot help nourish and grow healthily. They can. Just not within the existing structures that we have.

[00:56:48.050] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I'm really conscious of time, so I want to turn it over to the audience and see if we have anyone who has questions that they want to ask, or either popped questions into the chat already or want to ask live. There's a hand. I'm going to ask Michael O'Connell to unmute.

[00:57:18.390] - Michael O'Connell

Excuse the lighting. It's not perfect. Yes, it's really interesting. Thank you so much for this discussion. It's really been provocative and got me thinking about things. But just a question, to what extent is there... We don't live in an ideal world, so therefore you've got a big picture. Isn't there a danger that accountability can overlap with blame, for example?

[00:57:44.780] - Michael O'Connell

I guess you're talking about institutions, but I wondered as well about artistic accountability. There's various notions of artistic freedom, artistic licence. They go back a long way. Most societies, whether they're totalitarian or liberal, give a little bit of leeway to artists, to do a bit more and to push the boundaries for some reason.

[00:58:10.720] - Michael O'Connell

But if I think of, say, it was Maurice Agis, he had that dream machine inflatable where two women were killed. The provocations of artists like Santiago Sierra which, whether you like it or not, maybe are interesting. The tattoo line on the back of sex workers he paid, the going rate to carry out this action. Do you think accountability is something that everyone has to employ to themselves?

[00:58:41.620] - Michael O'Connell

That's two questions, really. Blame seems a negative thing, whereas accountability seems like something that could lead to that, but is different.

[00:58:56.350] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I don't know if anyone wants to jump in with any thoughts. That's really provocative question, actually. Thank you, Michael.

[00:59:03.730] - Lauren Craig

I could respond quickly. Just one of the links I shared is to a song called *Grow*, and some of the lyrics are something along the lines of, "We are the 99%, we can no longer blame the 1%." I think I talked a little bit about accountability not being a telling-off word, and actually us taking responsibility to find ways within inner leadership to be accountable to ourselves and to one another. I think that also is applicable for artistic responsibility.

[00:59:52.850] - Matthew Balnaves

Maybe if I take it from there... I'm not sure I can answer your question. It is a really great provocation. Maybe if I try to blame aspects, that part of the question... It's only that my wife doesn't really like me being on a board, I don't think, because she thinks at some point, it will go wrong and you will be blamed and you will be held accountable in the negative sense.

[01:00:28.680] - Matthew Balnaves

When I was doing the synonyms game with her mother earlier, we ended up with survival, blame, comeuppance, liability. Liability is a big one, isn't it? Results, account given and justice and right and wrong. I think it was Helen in the chat, mentioned something around what's going on in the public interest, what's going on in that wider public context.

[01:00:54.160] - Matthew Balnaves

I do think there's maybe something a little bit overlapping there when we do see more bombastic, perhaps, views that are given so much credence. We've seen what's been mentioned in Parliament this week as a throwaway statement to try and attract attention. That is such a Trumpest kind of thing to throw out there.

[01:01:17.980] - Matthew Balnaves

And you mentioned, Helen, about people like climate denialists. I think it's almost like a temperature in society of "Do we see accountability as a positive thing?" Someone mentioned the Nolan's Principles of Public Office. That scrutiny under accountability is a positive thing, or actually, is it this race to the bottom that we see in society. And actually then, accountability is about blame. Then it's "Who can we blame first? Who can we blame quickest?"

[01:01:50.160] - Matthew Balnaves

Then if we do want to get, if we do want to keep it, even though it's quite tyrannical, this concept of accountability, but if we do want to keep it, how do we attract the best quality people if ultimately we're just going to get blamed when things go wrong and we can't fail? So I think it goes up and down with society. It's my view, but it's actually a fear that I've got that one day, this all goes wrong, and it's my name on the front of the Liverpool Echo. I hope that doesn't happen, but could.

[01:02:24.550] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

It's interesting, Matt, because it comes back to this question right at the beginning about failure and how failure is not something that is actively embraced within culture, but it is actively embraced within business because you said, failure becomes the way that you learn from it. You learn from the things that go wrong in your business, and yet somehow that same freedom is not extended within the cultural sphere, or that if it is, it very quickly lends itself to a blame game.

[01:03:06.230] - Jack Tan

I think for me, blame is attached to a sanction and humiliation, whereas I don't necessarily think accountability has to be attached to the idea of a sanction or humiliation. Accountability is like what went wrong, what failed, how did it fail, and who was involved, but doesn't necessarily mean that it has to attach to some kind of punitive reaction or humiliation of that person. And I think that probably is one of the issues with blame and accountability and failure. Because also, our leaders don't model good failure either. They don't put their hands up and go, "Sorry, I went wrong. What can I do better?"

[01:03:55.970] - Jack Tan

In Parliament, it's all about blaming. It's all about trying to find fault so that you can pull somebody down. Can you imagine if we, in this meeting right now, we behaved like we were Parliamentarians, and anything you said, I would just go, "Boo!", point at you and make faces. Like, Matthew says something, I go, "Boo! No." How does that help? And I think that kind of happens, that silent boo happens in boards, especially with boards having to hold staff, senior staff, to account. Boards start behaving like policemen, not because they want to.

[01:04:45.440] - Jack Tan

Then the other thing about the artists be accountable, I think actually, it's such a minefield now in terms of how artists have to... I think Santiago Sierra lived in this kind of age where it's like, whatever, "In the name of our art, I can just abuse people." But I think it wouldn't personally, I hope, and I think it won't be possible now, we have to think about harm and trauma and cultural appropriation and all sorts of things like that. I just feel, hopefully, it's a different and better time now.

[01:05:31.650] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Thank you so much, Michael. I'm going to move on to the next question, which is from Amanda. Amanda, could you unmute yourself, and if you feel like it, turn your camera on?

[01:05:40.510] - Amanda

Hello. Hi. Can everyone hear me? Hi. I just wanted to share a brief reflection and then also a question. Just to reflect as someone who, I've worked in probably easily over 10 organisations, and I would say my background is a bit more social work side of charities sector, but I've worked in many organisations, usually the front line worker, and I just was thinking about how I've never met a board member in any of those organisations. I've never had a board member try to meet me. To be honest, I still have no idea what a board does most of the time, but I do know that my job hinges on that.

[01:06:23.260] - Amanda

I've always thought they make these decisions, but I have no idea who they are, and I don't ever feel like they're invested in knowing who I am despite the fact that I'm keeping the organisation running. Also I'm the one directly working with the people that they're meant to be serving. Just as a reflection.

[01:06:45.890] - Amanda

One of the things that I've been thinking about also and I wanted to pose is I think in charity sector, there's so much saviourism and particularly white saviourism. I think that's from really top-up. It's everywhere, but also really top-up. So I guess I was wondering if you all had any ideas about how to tackle that, dismantle that, address it because I feel like that just permeates and it really impacts how services are created and that really trickles down and causes lots of problems.

[01:07:24.670] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Again, really, really good question. Who wants to start with that one? But also, Amanda, your reflection about this relationship between the board and staff is a really, really important one because...

[01:07:44.210] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Previously, we met a couple of weeks ago to prime ourselves for this conversation. We spent a lot of time talking about this relationship between the board, the leadership, the staff, that sort of intersection

between how does governance philtre down, but also how do staff actually interact with the people at the top and what that relationship needs to be, how involved the board needs to be on a day-to-day basis or to really understand the day-to-day running. At what point does their objectivity gets compromised in some ways by being too involved, too closely linked to the day-to-day delivery?

[01:08:25.610] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I'm putting that out there because it's just come back to my mind that we talked about this. But maybe Jack, Matt, Lauren, you want to add something.

[01:08:36.530] - Jack Tan

I would just add that already we're talking in terms of there being a top and a bottom, and the top is not talking to the bottom. Already, that's the problem, this hierarchy. That's why there's that distance. Is there other formats that we can look at how an organisation is structured like a co-op? I don't know. What do you think?

[01:09:00.480] - Matthew Balnaves

Yeah. Hi, Amanda. Thanks for the question. I'm deep in thought on the second part, on what a better way. I suppose my only reflection is I always get really irrationally angry at these big charitable appeals that we get, like Comic Relief and Sport Relief and Red Nose Day. For me, it's almost like we're relied upon in society because of our conscience to fill a gap that maybe should be created societally, that should be created from structures, whether it's from governance or somewhere else. And I think sometimes the charitable sector is just relied upon.

[01:09:52.320] - Matthew Balnaves

Let me talk a little bit of almost like this colonial aspect. It's almost like a conscience that runs deep from them that charity has to plug this gap when actually these are services that people should expect. I'm really close to a charity called WellChild, something we do at work. It's all about children being allowed to live at home when they have extremely complex needs. They've got a waiting list of 1,500-2,000 children who really should be at home with their families, but WellChild hasn't got the funding and they get no funding from governments, but surely that should be quite a fundamental human right that those children should get the care that they need in the place around their family.

[01:10:41.610] - Matthew Balnaves

So I don't know whether there's a better structure, but it does feel like so much is put on to the charitable sector and then the leadership, when we do have boards that are so separate, that don't see the front line, that don't get a sense of what the culture actually is with the people who are the ones who are the principal actors, who are the people... How can we be surprised when we see them failure? I'm only struggling because I don't know the answer, but I really understand the question if that makes sense.

[01:11:20.280] - Matthew Balnaves

I suppose for me, I wouldn't be a volunteer, I wouldn't be a trustee at FACT, for example, if I didn't feel like I would give the time. The thing that I get really maybe irrationally angry about is colleagues on the board who don't give their time or say that they have, "I'm so sorry, I'm just too busy." No. We're accountable here and it happens far too much of the time. I felt like that was very meander, Amanda, but hopefully, that gives a sense.

[01:11:54.330] - Jack Tan

Lauren, did you have anything... I was going to talk about the white saviourism, but I didn't want to say anything until you had anything to say.

[01:12:03.990] - Lauren Craig

Thank you, Jack. No, you go ahead. Thank you.

[01:12:07.350] - Jack Tan

Just very quickly, I just feel the white saviourism really is to do with the way in which the culture of NGOs and charities have just traditionally been. It's just that thing of "Let's go out into the world, into the Third World with our NGO and help them because we know better." That's bound up with the lack of diversity in charities.

[01:12:37.190] - Jack Tan

I think, in a way, it's just really simple. Just get the staff and the board super diverse and then hopefully that just circumvents the white saviourism because if you have a really, really diverse board, they will just already just go, "No, stop doing that saviour thing because I don't want to go out and save myself if I'm a working-class single mother on a board. I don't need you to pontificate to me."

[01:13:12.570] - Jack Tan

That culture would change already if we just made the board and the staff diverse, I hope. But then that goes back to my previous point also in that, even if it's diverse, the system may make you perform in the way that even if you're a black person or East Asian person, you may still perform in a patriarchal Victorian way because you can't help it. I resigned from a board because I started realising I was becoming really picky. I was nitpicking, really enjoying my power and feeling like I was some kind of auditor.

[01:13:55.250] - Jack Tan

People have to report to me, I feel so great. I just go, "Oh my God, I'm a horrible person. I'm becoming a horrible person. Why?" It must be just dysfunction. So I just thought, "Okay, I can't do this. I'm not doing this." There's that caveat as well. We need to make organisations more diverse, but we also need to change the systems to remove the colonial optic in them.

[01:14:21.230] - Lauren Craig

Which I think, just to mention the work that you're doing with GEMBA, Jack, this has been life-changing for me, really. As I said earlier, I gave up on board because I was like, "I'm done. I'm absolutely done." And I think I probably would have stood down from my current positions had I have not been able to engage with the community through GEMBA.

[01:14:49.100] - Jack Tan

GEMBA is short for Global Ethnic Majority Board Association. We got together. We're a group that meets like every three months. Just a peer-support group of people of colour who are on boards, basically.

[01:15:06.190] - Lauren Craig

I think I've only attended the first two meetings, but they already gave me the courage to step back into the environmental world. Back to Amanda's point about white saviourism, I checked out. I just couldn't do it anymore. I couldn't be in those environments anymore, knowing that I am of the people that are being most destroyed by what we were trying to save on this board.

[01:15:40.260] - Lauren Craig

So I checked out, and I think actually it goes back to what you were saying, Jack, again, about the bottom, people that are at the bottom and being able to find a way to check into oneself and be responsible and accountable to oneself and that being a starting point for how we connect with each other.

[01:16:03.650] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Thanks, Amanda, so much. A really, really brilliant question.

[01:16:06.560] - Jack Tan

Thank you, Amanda.

[01:16:08.330] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I'm going to ask Jillian, who has also got her hand up, if she would like to join us.

[01:16:14.270] - Jillian

Hi there, everyone. Thanks so much for this conversation. It feels so vital to be talking about infrastructure and systems. As Jack said representation within existing systems is only going to get us so far. And I feel like this conversation has really highlighted in a 360 manner the problems of charities in every aspect.

[01:16:47.420] - Jillian

I remember a conversation, Jack, we had a long time ago about the only solution being is to abolish charities and to completely disinvest charities. I know actually, it's actually much more complicated because we're talking about resources that are invested.

[01:17:09.260] - Jillian

And especially when resources are invested in particular communities, it's hard to say, "Let's just abolish that and let it dissipate into the system," because you're trying to protect those resources for specific communities or interests which you really care about. It's also harder to invest in alternative community infrastructures.

[01:17:36.490] - Jillian

I sit on a board of like a mental health arts charity which had questions about whether it should try a more alternative format or become a charity. It was just impossible not to become a charity because most funders require you to be a charity.

[01:18:01.740] - Jillian

I guess I'm really interested in the naughtiness of now, like in how we can navigate that better, to give ourselves more courage to disinvest in charities but also move towards investment and to incentivise alternative community infrastructures and to take on a much, much longer stewarding mentality of all the generations of resistance and creation before us and all the generations beyond us and what we need to do in that much, much, much larger timeline but knowing it's extremely naughty in the present.

[01:18:48.650] - Jillian

Maybe it'd be good to hear from the FACT Board as well. What the FACT saw? What do you plan to do with this understanding, these conversations, these explorations of structures? Where do you plan to take this? How are you navigating that naughtiness?

[01:19:16.490] - Matthew Balnaves

Cool. Great question. Is it okay if I start? Maybe it's quite a basic first response. Maybe Jack and Lauren would be better placed to go and touch deeper. Maybe if I talk from the perspective of someone on the board, in fact, right now.

[01:19:32.810] - Matthew Balnaves

I think when I joined the board, it was very much how I expected it to be. It was X amount of meetings per year and they were always two hours long. We then had to go digital, we had to go online. We all probably dressed a touch smarter than what we normally would in the house like I am tonight performing. That's the way it goes.

[01:19:57.690] - Matthew Balnaves

It was very much playing the role still. I think it's immense credit to our chair, Rachel and our Chief Executive, Nicola, that we are open to really trying to do this in a different way.

[01:20:15.950] - Matthew Balnaves

I'm performing tonight as a board member. I'm being myself but I'm not doing something else. I'm here, I'm present. We're trying to do board in a different way. We've got our away day coming up, which again is quite a standard structure. But we want to use that time as well to really think about how we move forward, how we as a board structure articulate our time, how we do things perhaps that are non-standard in order to change the way from a sector perspective, boards are run.

[01:20:52.790] - Matthew Balnaves

I think without wanting to make you sound like a case study, Jack, you're like our case study because it's totally changed already the way that we are... I think we are communicating a board level. I think what's interesting is we've lost a few team members because they've moved on. They've saved their time that you have to serve on a board and then they move on.

[01:21:18.470] - Matthew Balnaves

Some people decide to leave for their own personal reason. The people who come into this board now and we're just about to recruit. I'm part of that interview process, you know what, I want them to be part of what we're doing here, not in the prior understanding of, you're going to attend four board meetings a year and sit on a sub-committee once every few months. I want them to come and be active.

[01:21:44.780] - Matthew Balnaves

That's what I want from FACT. I want them to be part of the art. I want them to be an active player in the culture. I don't think that answers all the question by any means. But from a sector leadership

perspective, I think what we do with Jack is something that I don't see in many peer organisations. It is changing the way that we act and the way that we live and breathe our culture within the organisation.

[01:22:14.490] - Lauren Craig

Thank you for the provocation, Jillian. Beautiful. I just love the notion of stewardship because with the introduction of that word, there's no strong direction but there's still a holding. It allows for decisions and systems to move and to breathe without stifling.

[01:22:40.810] - Lauren Craig

I think that if we are not thinking about seven more generations to come, as well as seven generations where we travelled from, then the plans that we're laying are going to be difficult for seedlings to hatch in that way. Thank you.

[01:23:13.390] - Jack Tan

My desire really is, for example, tonight we've had a discussion about charities, their suitability, the kinks, the way they work or don't work. I really hope that because we're able to have this discussion, that it goes somewhere but can we take this to the next board meeting, Matthew, and actually go right? Can we have a discussion about whether this hierarchical model works for us? What can we do to mitigate the problems of it?

[01:23:48.420] - Jack Tan

Then what can FACT do as a cultural leader in the Northwest to address these issues at a much broader level, on a sector wide level, and say to the Charity Commission, "Look, this isn't working because it's stopping us becoming diverse." How can we begin a conversation with other major museums in the sector to address the tragedy question?

[01:24:13.040] - Jack Tan

Because, yes, the tragedy question is there to regulate charities, but it's also there to support and meet charities needs. It's there to facilitate charities and charity law. How can we move with that? I think there's something that Jillian is saying, which is that there comes a tipping point for me where if charities and charities law isn't supporting art anymore, it's getting in the way.

[01:24:39.070] - Jack Tan

I think cultural workers and artists will just move on and leave charities behind. It's not that we want to campaign against it or trying to actively disinvest it, it'll just become irrelevant and we'll move on. I think that's the thing that Charity Commission or charity law just needs to get to grips with. I would also say that with the artists and residents, I think that has been a really good way.

[01:25:06.760] - Jack Tan

I really do think FACT has been brave to bring an artist on the board as an artist, not as a board member, and how disruptive that can be. The board has been actually very open to some of the slightly weird things that happens on my agenda point at the board meeting. What happens within that? That kind of cattle prod in a way.

[01:25:36.770] - Jack Tan

Maybe that's a way to think about it. With these issues, I hope that maybe I could have this one to the next artist in resident and have this kind of conversation about what I've done in the year. What conversations need to carry on, if that the next artist could hold that bet on, who knows?

[01:26:02.850] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

There will be another artist in residence on the board starting in the next financial year, so there will be someone for you to pass that baton onto, Jack. But I think for us, just to have a point about that, the devising of the residency as a role within the board, in some ways, it was partly because we needed an artist to be on the board as an artist.

[01:26:33.560] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Partly also, recognition that actually artwork is precarious work. We don't want the artist that we're bringing in to do artistic work to go unpaid. The residency was a way also of making sure that there was a mechanism where we could have someone who sits with the board. But because they're not a board member, they get paid for the time and their labour.

[01:27:02.130] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

It was a really important structural tool as well, the residency, as a way of being able to facilitate that recognising that freelance work is already preparing us enough without asking people to give up that time for nothing. It serves lots of purposes, institutional critique, reform, and also a way of making sure that payment is fair.

[01:27:32.820] - Jack Tan

I want to also say that I've been able to get the board to produce these. I view this meeting, this event, it's like curated officially. I would say it comes from the board, it doesn't come from the programming side. Although, I mean, Maitreyi, is actually doing all of this.

[01:27:53.580] - Jack Tan

But more officially, it arises out of board meetings. These events arises out of board meetings. Hopefully in the summer, we'll be able to get the board to do a performance for everybody. We'll do a performance event where the board actually makes art, so that would be awesome.

[01:28:16.690] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

I want to ask if there are any final questions this evening from anyone, if there's anything that I've missed in the chat. Kayt, I don't know if I've missed any questions in the chat. But equally, if anybody has anything else they'd like to add. If not, I'm going to thank everyone so much for giving up your time and being here and sharing this space with us. Thank you to Jack for being the instigator of these conversations and this thinking.

[01:28:57.220] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

To Matthew and Lauren, thank you so much for your generosity and sharing all of your insights into this topic. Also to Kayt, for facilitating the conversation and for setting all of this up. Thank you all. We will be doing, as Jack said, a performance event, hopefully sometime in June to round up his residency. Watch this space. There will be more coming. Thank you all and good night.

[01:29:26.930] - Matthew Balnaves

Thank you.

[01:29:28.050] - Lauren Craig

Bye, everybody.

[01:29:29.210] - Jack Tan

Bye, everyone. Thanks for coming.

[01:29:30.860] - Maitreyi Maheshwari

Thank you.