

Entrepreneur - a person who sets up a business or businesses, taking on financial risks in the hope of profit.

Origin - French. Early 19th century (denoting the director of a musical institution)

We need state support of the arts to nurture ideas, for artists to 'buy' much needed time, clear space for ideas to grow. Many of our greatest artist's development has been funded in some way by the Arts Council over the years. Bursaries that allowed for 'draft' manuscripts to be produced. Materials and residencies funded etc.

This intercession which in effect acts as 'curator' of national movements in the arts, places the Arts Council as the state agency that we in the cultural/creative sector look to for support.

The Arts Council is charged with directing the compulsory public support of the arts. The taxpaying public have no choice in this matter. They are made to be patrons of the arts. And not a bad thing either.

Having been a beneficiary of much support from the Arts Council over the years and thankful for it I recently found myself at a bit of an impasse.

I developed an idea, with its foundation firmly grounded in contemporary art practice , and yet, as it had been adopted by a major Irish Hospital, it attracted the interest of local enterprise boards, Enterprise Ireland and private investors. Investors it should be said who's first focus was that 'a good idea should be given a chance', but nonetheless wanted a share of the 'upside' if ever an upside should come.

In seeking to develop this idea I have had a working relationship that has a foot in the Arts Council and a foot in Enterprise Ireland.

However, there is a fundamental conflict in how these two state agencies approach the funding. One encourages profit, the other does not.

Vivartes is a company that is first and foremost 'cultural' in its endeavor. The mission of the company is to improve the quality of life of patients in hospital isolation or longterm care. In leading the company, I have always sought to become independent of state aid as quickly as possible.

However, what we have been trying to do is difficult on limited financial resources in a sector that is traditionally the realm of charity.

As things progressed it has become necessary to look for private support of the company. This brought further pressure on the companies relationship with funders .

There is a lot of talk these days of how a major driver of the recovery of the economy will come through the arts.

There is also a lot of talk about needing to do things differently, to learn from the mistakes that have been made.

Even within the firmly capitalist confines of the Economist magazine, from New York business editor Matthew Bishop, we have a call to arms under the banner of Philanthrocapitalism. A recognition that there is an opportunity waiting to be taken, to do things differently. A concept that recognizes that 'social good' needs to be firmly ensconced within any future vision of capitalism.

Enterprise Ireland have the structure. They have figured out how to seed entrepreneurship and how to have a stake in the 'upside'. A stake which, when realized can be invested

back into the sector. Balancing public money incentives with companies transitioning into commercial viability and the market, with shareholders and hopefully, profit.

The Arts Council have the expertise required to manage the cultural/ creative industries sector. They are already in the space. It's what they do on a national level.

But they don't have the structure. Would it be so awful if there was a way for cultural / creative entrepreneurs to grow a commercial model with the Arts Council if the opportunity so presented itself. A model which might include giving a stake back to the sector if realized?

Enterprise Ireland have a high potential startup unit or HPSU which exists to seed and grow companies that are in the delicate phase between 'idea' and viable business. Could we consider such a structure for the cultural industries?

Creative Capital in New York City is according to Variety Magazine a 'nonprofit arts funder that's struck an unusual balance between cultural philanthropy and the business principles of venture capitalism'. Can we learn something from this model?

Not everyone wants to run a business. I hasten to add that an idea like this will not be and should not be for everyone looking for state assistance when trying to create. However, if we are serious about cultural entrepreneurship, in whatever form it might come, then the option I believe should be there to give it a fighting chance.

The Arthur Guinness fund is the first fund that I have come across in this country that accommodates businesses that have social good as their first priority as well as NPO's. You don't have to be a N.P.O to apply for their fund. Leaving you free to fund your 'good idea' in whatever way you can. In my opinion, the development of culture is a social good. And sometimes it has a commercial side.

The tradition of the arts sitting outside of the commercial world is a longstanding and noble one. Although it is estimated that sales in the international art market totaled \$46bn dollars in 2009.

Nobody wants to be a burden to the rest of society. Autonomy and independence is at the forefront of the human condition. It may not be a bad thing for the Arts in Ireland, in the long-run to have a complimentary or alternative route to the longterm dependencies that can arise under the current structures.