Happy Accidents, Bureaucratic Debacles, and Deliberate Decisions at Select Creative Hubs in Canada

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Abstract: In this paper, the authors examine impact assessment in the culture sector by taking a deep dive into the happy accidents, bureaucratic debacles, and deliberate decisions that create new ways of managing and working at several creative hubs in Canada. Drawing from two rounds of interviews and field research over a four-year period, we compare six creative hubs across Canada that have transformed their sensemaking and knowledge-sharing narratives. We consider, first, how these creative hubs talk about their visions and values, and then how they operationalize those values in the spaces they are charged with activating. We also examine the ways that these hubs aim to ameliorate the legacies of colonialism, discrimination, and lack of representation in the culture sector. For example, two of the creative hubs, UKAI and BC Artscape, could be considered outliers because they are interested in disrupting economic valuation frameworks by putting feelings and compassion at the centre of their operations. Others, such as cSpace (Calgary), Culture Link CIC (Halifax) and Artspace (Toronto), are compelled by a combination of traditional (economic) measures of success but also want to be more responsive to the needs of precarious creative workers. Consequently, we ask: in what ways is each hub achieving its mission and mandates on their own terms, and which of these are useful exemplars for others? We look at each organization's narratives of impact, process and affect emerging from overcoming challenges that include the global COVID-19 pandemic, bureaucratic debacles such as offering a disability organization a heritage site that is only accessible by stairs, and a series of awkward missteps and honest efforts towards decolonization. This article serves as a demonstration of how two important elements of impact assessment—knowledge-sharing and sensemaking—can be effectively applied to other creative hubs and arts organizations throughout Canada.

Keywords: creative hubs, cultural management, bureaucracy, decolonization

Résumé: Dans cet article, les auteures examinent l'évaluation de l'impact dans le secteur culturel en se plongeant dans les accidents heureux, les débâcles bureaucratiques et les décisions délibérées qui créent de nouvelles façons de gérer et de travailler dans plusieurs centres de création au Canada. À partir de deux séries d'entretiens et de recherches sur le terrain sur une période de quatre ans, nous comparons six pôles créatifs au Canada qui ont transformé leurs récits de création de sens et de partage des connaissances. D'abord, nous examinons la façon dont ces pôles créatifs parlent de leurs visions et de leurs valeurs, puis la façon dont ils concrétisent ces valeurs dans les espaces qu'ils sont chargés d'activer. Nous examinons également la manière dont ces pôles visent à améliorer les héritages du colonialisme, de la discrimination et

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du manque de représentation dans le secteur de la culture. Par exemple, deux des pôles créatifs, UKAI et BC Artscape, pourraient être considérés comme des exceptions parce qu'ils souhaitent perturber les cadres d'évaluation économique en plaçant les sentiments et la compassion au centre de leurs opérations. D'autres, comme cSpace (Calgary), Culture Link CIC (Halifax) et Artspace (Toronto), sont contraints par une combinaison de mesures traditionnelles (économiques) du succès, mais veulent aussi être plus sensibles aux besoins des travailleurs créatifs précaires. Par conséquent, nous posons la question suivante : de quelle manière chaque centre remplit-il sa mission et son mandat selon ses propres termes, et lequel d'entre eux constitue un exemple utile pour les autres ? Nous examinons les récits d'impact, de processus et d'affect de chaque organisation, qui ont surmonté des défis tels que la pandémie mondiale de COVID-19, des débâcles bureaucratiques telles que l'offre à une organisation de personnes handicapées d'un site patrimonial uniquement accessible par des escaliers, ainsi qu'une série de faux pas maladroits et d'efforts honnêtes en faveur de la décolonisation. Cet article montre comment deux éléments importants de l'évaluation de l'impact - le partage des connaissances et la création de sens - peuvent être appliqués efficacement à d'autres centres de création et organisations artistiques à travers le Canada.

Mots clés : centres de création, gestion culturelle, bureaucratie, décolonisation

Introduction

Over the last fifteen years, many culture sector researchers have aimed to expand our understanding and measurements of impact assessment including in cultural governance terms (e.g., Banks, 2010; Dempwolf et. al., 2014; Essig, 2018). In this paper, the authors take a deep dive into some of the happy accidents, bureaucratic debacles, and deliberate decisions that have created new ways of managing and working at six creative hubs that serve the culture sector in Canada. These emergent developments bend and reshape the cultural governance structures and practices these spaces take up, helping leaders and facilitators to respond to emergent needs in the cultural communities they seek to support. The term "culture sector" refers to the full range of for-profit, nonprofit and hybrid organizations and activities associated with visual and performing arts activity, media and creative industries, and creative workers in general, as defined by Statistics Canada (n.d.) and Canada Council for the Arts (Glossary, n.d.). Drawing from two rounds of interviews and field research led by Luka over the last five years, we use thematic, affective, and open coding methods undertaken primarily by Klimek to compare six creative hubs across Canada that have transformed their approaches to leadership and community engagement. In the culture sector, creative hubs are gathering and co-working spaces "for professional creative workers to share skills, networks, or...current work; to spark innovation; [and] to involve citizens, clients, and users in more collaborative ways" (Luka, 2022b, p. 157). Artscape, now in receivership (see below), or the Centre for Social Innovation in Toronto are often held up as exemplars of creative hubs motivated by making market activity more affordable for creative enterprises or workers, and funding programs such as the Canada Cultural Spaces Funds are designed to support these structures. By framing the challenges of the sector as primarily economic, other values (such as social justice, accessibility, aesthetics, or knowledge-sharing) are devalued. However, more than half of the creative hubs sites in Canada operate with a combination of these latter values as well as economic values[i], which makes them outliers as far as funding support and policy are concerned. Many of these organizations face challenges as regional operations. Some

explicitly aim to ameliorate the legacies of colonialism, discrimination and lack of representation in the culture sector. Some, such as UKAI and BC Artscape (BCA), operate as outliers because they are particularly interested in disrupting economic valuation frameworks by putting values related to feelings and compassion at the centre of their operations. Others are compelled by more responsive but still competitive incubators for precarious creative workers, including cSpace and Culture Link CIC.

Using an impact assessment framework previously developed by one of the authors, we consider the aesthetic and business vision and purpose of the six creative hubs. We then examine how they discuss operationalizing those values in the spaces they are charged with activating. As we analyze the ways that each hub sets its own goals and defines success according to their own values, we seek to identify ways in which these could be potentially useful examples for other creative hubs or gathering spaces to consider. To accomplish this, we look at the way each organization uses sensemaking to build its own narratives of impact, often by explaining processes. These emerge from overcoming challenges that include the "happy accidents" (cSpace) of innovations generated by the global COVID-19 pandemic or the way that values of compassion, generosity, and community building can build a more responsive, flexible, and welcoming organization, rather than allowing profit motives to evacuate such values (UKAI, BCA, NaAC, Light House). This includes recognizing the value of vulnerability in a series of awkward missteps and honest efforts towards decolonization (e.g., cSpace) as well as the lived experience and expertise required to centre outlier voices and approaches from equity-deserving groups (e.g., NaAC, UKAI). These narratives also come from what we like to call bureaucratic debacles, such as offering a disability organization a heritage site that is only accessible by stairs (e.g., NaAC). Ultimately, we sought case studies that illustrated how to overcome the difficulties of combining social goals with creative enterprises and needs (NaAC, BCA, UKAI).

Impact Assessment framework and methods

The research project for this article involved multiple case studies (Yin, 2009), participant observation, and semi-structured interviews (Cresswell, 2014) as its primary research methodologies. Original research was conducted by Luka with more than 200 organizations, policymakers, and funding bodies across the culture sector over a five-year period, including analyzes of business models, mission/vision and values, and programs and services among others. As part of the qualitative research process, Luka conducted more than 50 semi-structured interviews with creative sector executives, facilitators, policymakers, and creative workers by phone, Zoom, or by travelling from coast-to-coast to meet people in person and conduct "walking interviews" (King & Woodroffe, 2017) during visits to artistic and business workplaces. Walking interviews are "a natural fusion of interviewing and participant observation, [and thereby] a powerful and unique method for engaging with space and place, and the important and nuanced meanings, experiences, values, and understanding of individuals" (King & Woodroffe, 2017, p. 3). Undertaking walking interviews in locations such as creative hubs is fruitful, as this helps with witnessing how a sense of belonging is generated. This enables us to see affective responses from leaders as well as artists, site users, and service providers in these spaces. This generates a better understanding of how the ability to work collegially comes to be in the face of the isolation and precarity characteristic of work in the creative industries and culture sector. In the impact assessment schematic presented below, these

affective responses are represented in the sense-making and knowledge-sharing groupings, but also because participants are responding to social and civic issues--and therefore impacts. With the onset of COVID-19, all conversations pivoted to Zoom, which made it more challenging to elicit context and the material conditions within which people worked in creative hubs. Once access to vaccines became available and it was safer to travel, Luka went back in person to visit some key creative hubs to continue these conversations and learn how these institutions adapted to the global pandemic and modified their businesses under these circumstances.

Just prior to and during the COVID-19 pandemic (when in-person contact was restricted from health regulations), Luka worked virtually with two separate research teams to analyze almost 200 creative hubs and networks, to conduct virtual interviews with several people in the field, and to examine more than 200 previous studies about the impacts of creative hubs (Luka, 2022a, 2022b; Luka et. al., 2020; Luka, 2018; Wallace & Luka, 2018). This enabled the development of a series of much-needed public resources for creative workers, policymakers, and scholars alike to share knowledge across the sector to better understand how to use impact assessment frameworks and strategies to analyze the complex work undertaken in the sector (e.g., see Déziel & Duchesneau 2019; Essig, 2018; Luka, 2022a). Impacts that may require assessment include, for example, how and what kinds of collaborations emerge from which kinds of co-working spaces; how much space is available to artists or creative workers while they are growing their business; whether and how artist practices change or audiences for particular artforms cross-pollinate; or in what ways agency and autonomy are generated for and taken up by specific equity-deserving groups. In the study, there are hundreds of potential measures that could be generated according to the schematics developed below. However, most organizations in the culture sector do not undertake regular or even periodic research to assess impact much beyond marketing information or financial health (e.g., see Crossick & Kaszynska 2019; Dovey, Pratt, Moreton, Virani, Merkel & Lansdowne 2016; Gill, Pratt & Virani 2019; Hawkes, 2001).

The first key resource inventories and details a database of 190 creative hubs and networks in Canada, including business models, programs and services, as well as vision, values, and numerous other characteristics.[ii] This is an important contribution for funders and policymakers as well as scholars to understand the dozens of unique operational models across the sector, but also for aspiring creative workers to seek support, and for culture innovators and entrepreneurs to evaluate the potential for their own projects and businesses. These are collected in a downloadable spreadsheet as well as supplemented by a Dashboard Dictionary that consolidates definitions of these terms from academic, policy, and professional sources. The database provides direct links to the organizations for further study or contact. For example, one of the 190 entries provides information about Culture Link CIC, the parent company of Light House Arts Centre (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Sample entry from Creative Hubs and Networks Database

To shift the focus to impact assessment, Luka worked with a second team to inventory, annotate, and develop the Impact Assessment Bibliography.[iii] The bibliography includes an extensive list of potential assessment measures and keywords combining terms used by practitioners in the culture sector with scholarly terms, set up as tags within BibBase, Zotero and downloadable spreadsheet versions. In turn, this work has informed and contributed to a third, sector-driven, public resource, Artifex[iv] in collaboration

with national arts service organization, Mass Culture (https://massculture.ca/). Artifex focuses on toolkits, models, and other pragmatic resources. During the pandemic, the development of these resources provided useful context not just for the creative hubs and networks they involved, inventoried, and analyzed but also as a complex foundation for the flexible impact assessment framework used in this article.

On the basis of this comprehensive corpus of research, Luka and the teams involved in each project developed versions of the impact assessment framework used in this article to help enable analysis of creative hubs, networks, and other placemaking sites (e.g., Luka 2022a, 2022b). Originally, the framework identified four key components that sat side-by-side. First are the aesthetic and cultural measures that focus on the core creative outcomes sought, such as appealing programming, design services, professionalization of creative workers, and developing communities of practice. Second are the social and civic impact measures, including physical accessibility, healthy working conditions, welcoming and safer spaces, and programming that attracts and is designed for diverse audiences and creative workers. Third are the more standard financial and business measures commonly reflected in grant proposals and annual reports, including understanding the most appropriate business model or marketing strategies. Finally, knowledge-sharing (such as the database of creative hubs and networks) and sensemaking measures (such as self-published profiles of the organizations on their websites) describe the landscape and organizations, and, when connected together, contribute to the sustainability of the sector and society as a whole (Figure 2).
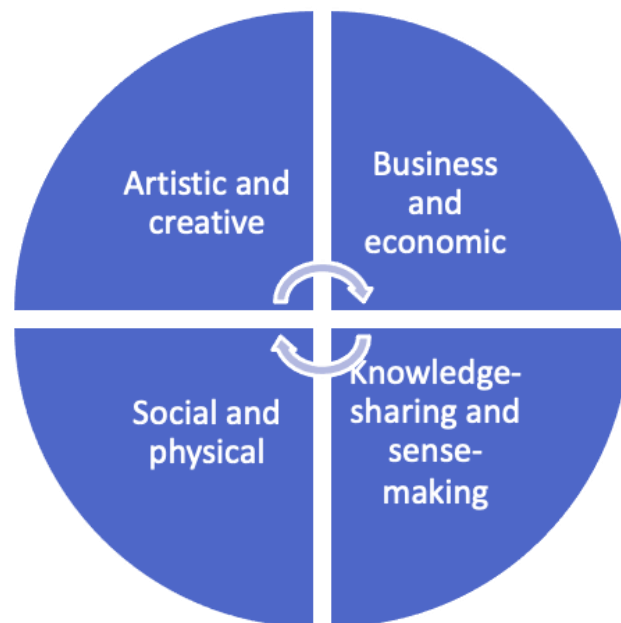

Figure 2: Schematic of key impact measures. Source: [Luka, 2022b, p. 167]

As Luka and Klimek parsed the coding, it became clear that knowledge-sharing needed to be separated from sensemaking (see Figure 2, above compared to Figure 3, below). This is because these sets of measures were both the most abstract, with each providing a different way for the hubs to control their

own narratives (internally-defined sensemaking) in a sector context (externally focused knowledge-sharing). For this article, Klimek undertook a detailed coding process over several months to identify themes, affect, and what differentiated one place from the next, using ten of the interviews conducted over the five-year period. This is congruent with what coding can do with data. In her book *Constructing Grounded Theory* (2006), researcher Kathy Charmaz writes, "Coding is the pivotal link between collecting data and developing an emergent theory to explain these data. Through coding, you define what is happening in the data and begin to grapple with what it means" (p. 46). As a researcher brought into this project in its last few months, Klimek had a fresh perspective and looked at each interview individually rather than as a monolithic set. Klimek coded each interview line-by-line, making note of emotions, themes and interactions between the interviewer and interviewee. By taking each interview as a separate segment of data, Klimek made a note of their first impressions, the narratives that were being built throughout the interview and how that compared to the fieldnotes from Luka. As the data becomes codified, Charmaz notes, "Coding is part work but it is also part play. We play with the ideas we gain from the data. We become involved with our data and learn from them. Coding gives us a focused way of viewing data. Through coding, we make discoveries and gain a deeper understanding of the empirical world." (pp. 70-71) Klimek's coding notes and themes evolved by reading through pre- and post-pandemic interviews. For instance, affective responses such as pride came through in different ways, depending on whether the interviews were conducted during (March 2020) or post-pandemic (various dates). So too did descriptions of accessibility or programming linked to those affective responses. For example, in 2020, some of the creative hubs were just being built (Light House, then known as Culture Link CIC; NaAC) or launched (Artscape Daniels Launchpad; Artscape British Columbia; cSpace; UKAI) and when the pandemic happened, they quickly had to adapt to virtual operations to survive ensuing lockdowns and restrictions. So, March 2020 was marked (affectively) by uncertainty about the survival of the hub as the participants had originally conceived it (sensemaking), especially for projects in the midst of capital investments (Light House) or programming expansions (cSpace, NaAC). Post-pandemic, adjusting back to in-person programming required time, of course, but also resulted in shifts in sensemaking narratives, often incorporating a much richer narrative about who and what each creative hub had and could overcome to be able to go forward. Compared to March 2020, this was a much stronger expression of confidence and pride for having survived. In the post-pandemic period, participants were much more likely to be excited about planning for the future, because they felt they could now return to and improve on their initial sensemaking narrative. This important contextual information painted a fuller picture of the initial coding term 'bravado/pride', including examples of how each creative hub had survived the pandemic.

In preparation for this article, we found ourselves having detailed discussions about the changes in sensemaking at each hub over the three-year period. It became evident that sensemaking and knowledge-sharing needed to be pulled apart analytically. Figure 2 represents what appears to be a closed cyclical loop of potential impact measures, some of which might be more evident or important than others. But there was something more complicated going on (Figure 3). While Luka conceived of the impact measurement framework as non-hierarchical, in fact, each creative hub and network prioritized different sets of impact measures, depending on their values and the timing. So, we rebuilt the schematic in a honeycomb format to illustrate this flexibility. This makes it easier to think about the inter-relationships among categories. For example, reading left to right, and "top" to bottom, Figure 3A shows that cSpace prioritizes impact measures around aesthetics and core creative activity in combination with financial and

business outcomes (first) and social and civic impact outcomes next. This contributes to their sensemaking narrative. Additionally, they are interested in knowledge-sharing. Figure 3B shifts the emphasis to prioritize financial measures over aesthetic measures at Light House. Figure 3C shows that NaAC emphasizes social and civic impacts, in conjunction with financial measures, and considers aesthetic measures in that context.
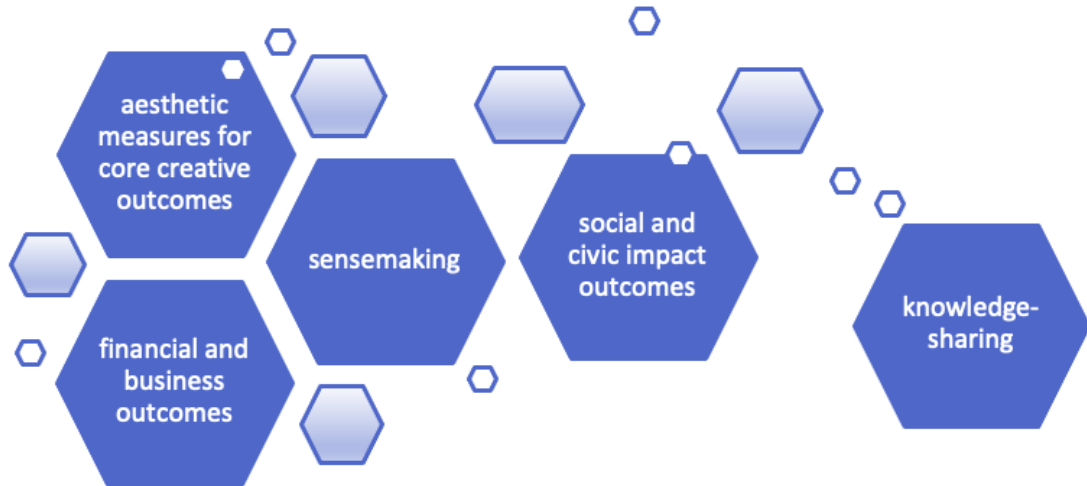

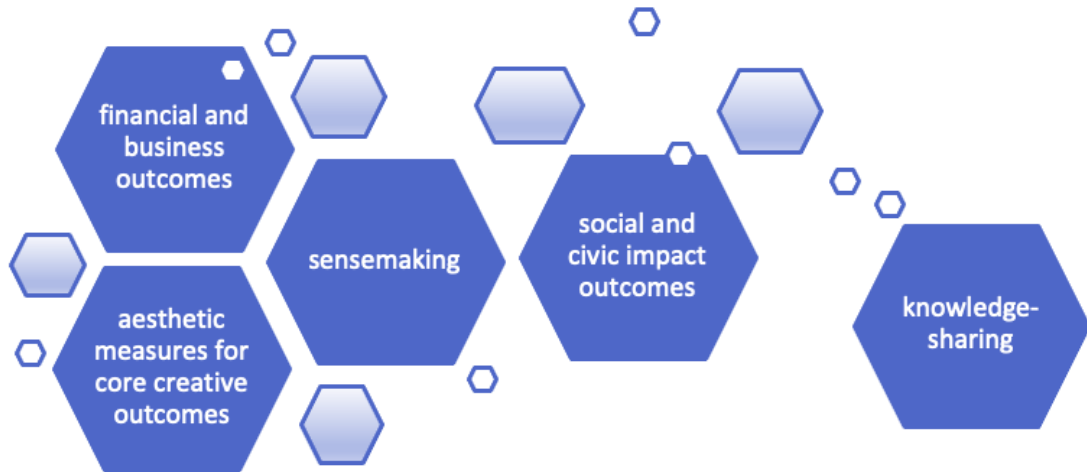Figure 3A: Example of how cSpace prioritizes impact measures

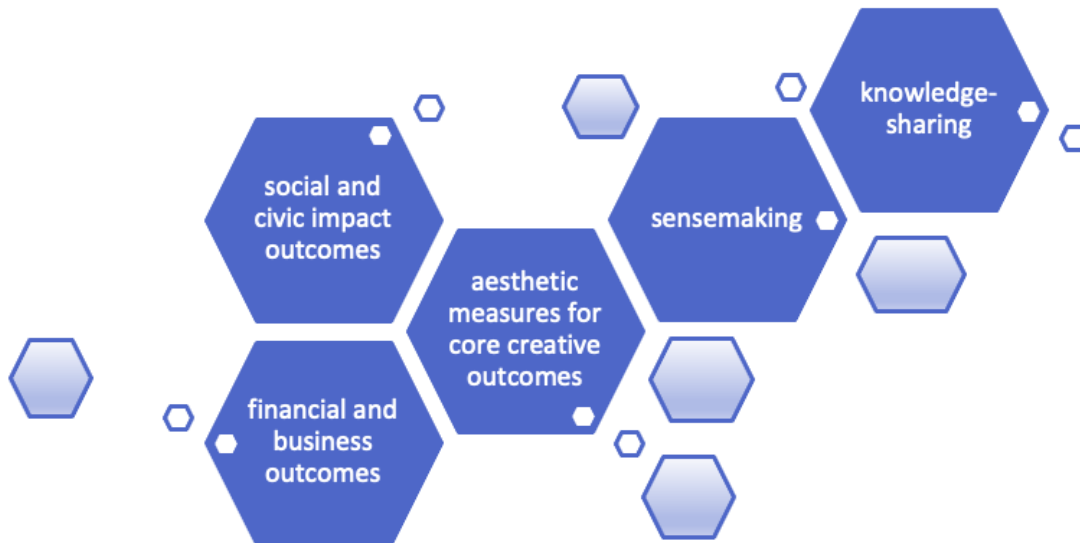Figure 3B: Example of how Light House prioritizes impact measures

Figure 3C: Example of how NaAC prioritizes impact measures

Consequently, to better understand the value of six of the creative hubs studied as sites of creative and professional practice, and to critically examine how these organizations describe themselves, we

unpack some of our findings below using a combination of sensemaking and social and civic impact assessments. This enables us to look beyond straightforward financial data, including contributions to GDP, profit lines in for-profit organizations, or the ability to break even in nonprofit environments ("financial and business outcomes" in Figure 2), but also to assume (based on the information from the databases enumerated above) that these provide an important component of each operational model.

Vision and Purpose: The Creative Hubs

In the rest of this paper, we first examine the process of making sense of one's organization through mission and values (in this section), and then we study elements of the respective origin or transformation stories in the Working Towards Impact section below. The latter fleshes out the "sensemaking" process outlined in this section, but also explicitly identifies "social and civic impact measures" as in Figure 3. While aesthetic measures are common with creative spaces, and social and civic impact measures are important to nonprofit organizations, the idea of sensemaking is a common feature of creative, nonprofit, and entrepreneurial and start-up spaces alike (e.g., Weick 1995, among others). In the Working Towards Impact section, specific examples are provided about how leaders talk about the obstacles they faced and how each adapted cultural governance actions and structures to best suit these six creative hubs as they went through changes precipitated by the Covid-19 pandemic. This provides evidence of the kinds of social and civic impact that were important to them.

To begin with sensemaking, we examine the vision and purpose of each creative hub to better understand how such a process works for each of the creative hubs. Identifying the type of business model each uses links sensemaking to the financial and business impact measures they use, and thereby the cultural governance structures they favour. But as we begin to investigate how the challenges they have faced in the last five years could be turned to the organization's growth or transformation as an institution, we find ourselves looking at how they articulate their social and civic impacts under certain financial and business constraints, invariably weaving together their governance approach to their core mission, vision and values.

Artscape Daniels Launchpad is one of many sites that come under the umbrella of Artscape, a classic nonprofit creative hub for supporting artists and artist-led families by providing varied types of affordable space. The oldest creative hub model in Canada, Artscape is going through receivership at the time of writing, having survived the pandemic but overextended their financial and real estate commitments (Artscape, 2023). Creative placemaking is a central commitment in the architectural design of their spaces. As at cSpace, and given the challenges of finding affordable space in Toronto, tenants are carefully chosen to be relevant to the surrounding community while also providing affordable professional space to arts organizations, and residential or commercial space to individual artists. Like many incubator and creative hub spaces, Launchpad was meant to enable artists to generate significant income over the long term by building entrepreneurial skills relevant to small and medium sized operations (Gill et. al., 2019). While many of the Artscape spaces focused on some aspect of live-work spaces, the Daniels Launchpad was established to provide a business development pathway for the many highly trained and specialized artists and designers who do not earn income commensurate with their expertise and education. As a result, Launchpad requires more hands-on governance by its membership compared to other Artscape

properties which are tenanted spaces. Unlike other Artscape properties, but aligned with co-working spaces, Launchpad was set up to operate on a membership model, delivering a set of programs, spaces and services to its members. Since Artscape has been put into receivership, it is unclear what the future of Daniels Launchpad is, not to mention other Artscape real estate holdings.

BCA[v], based at the Sun Wah Centre in Vancouver, was a nonprofit creative hub originally called BC Artscape, that was affiliated with (Toronto) Artscape for its first three years, until the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020, at which point it rebranded as BCA. Located in Vancouver's Chinatown, it occupies 49,000 square feet of space over three floors of a former abandoned mall. Tenants have included more than 70 artists, arts organizations, and social justice organizations. The hub used a combination of cost recovery and government support for its operating model, although this became a challenge since some tenants had limited resources, including finding ways to secure ongoing government support. From a current map of available studios, it seems to have transitioned into a primarily tenanted building focused on arts and culture. The lack of government support is a consistent theme in the sector. Notably, the founding staff at BC Artscape expanded the typical Artscape mandate (to support artists and creative workers), to incorporate explicit social justice commitments since the hub is adjacent to Vancouver's downtown eastside. However, they were only able to sustain this approach for a year or so into the pandemic (end of 2021), at which point the organization became BCA. For a time, BC Artscape tried to support and build a cultural ecosystem that could be responsive to the community's social and accessibility needs and impacts. For example, BC Artscape developed the practice of paying representatives from marginalized groups and artists for their involvement in community engagement activities, in recognition that these individuals are constantly asked to give their valuable insights and labour for free.

cSpace is a LEED Gold creative facility that was developed over a 10-year process facilitated by Calgary Arts Development and the Calgary Foundation. It also operates as an internet service provider, reselling fibre internet to tenants at below-market value. Originally led by Reid Henry (formerly of Toronto Artscape), and now led by Deeter Schurig, the hub was established to support the local creative sector and thereby mitigate the flight of creative talent from the city. Located on the site of a former school, the multi-tenant multiple use space occupies roughly 50,000 square feet and includes 30 different nonprofit organizations and co-located tenants. cSpace offers a tiered pricing system for their rental spaces, allowing them to cross-subsidize below-market rents. The hub offers a coworking space with monthly and daily desk rentals, adaptable meeting and event spaces, as well as a state-of-the-art multipurpose flexible theatre space. The hub's focus on engagement and partnerships is reflected in the internal corridors of the building, which Schurig describes as a "collision space for exhibitions, and art openings, and events" including periodic "Doors Open" showcase events. Different areas of the hub were opened to tenants over several years, with 2019 marking the hub's first full year of operations. During the Covid-19 pandemic, cSpace worked with community partners and creative workers to activate the outdoor spaces, as well as to maintain meaningful relationships among the occupants. The hub also has partnerships with a coffee shop and a Farmer's Market.

Light House Arts Centre[vi] is a multi-purpose creative hub based in Halifax, Nova Scotia, incorporating media production and performance spaces as well as nonprofit and creative tenants. **Culture Link CIC** is its parent company and was founded using a unique cultural governance and business model, which is a collaboration between a nonprofit board and a Community Interest Company (CIC). Originating in the UK,

this is one of the first times this corporate approach was used in Canada. British Columbia has legislated a similar approach, though it was not originally set up for the culture sector (BC Registry Services, 2018). The Culture Link CIC is operated by a multi-stakeholder management team and serves as the secretariat for a nonprofit organization, which frees up the nonprofit board to focus on aesthetic commitments for core creative outcomes (as in Figure 2). Although the idea for Culture Link CIC started as a production and performance centre, the mandate shifted when founders Marc Almon and Rob Power engaged in dialogue with members of the community who came from a wide variety of artistic disciplines. It has since become a model for other CICs incorporating housing and other social needs, with creative outcomes at the core of operations.

UKAI Projects, including the Ferment incubator, were established in 2017 as a virtual space (long before the Covid-19 pandemic made this a common operational approach) to explore what artists need to sustain themselves in the contemporary arts ecology, while simultaneously subverting the typical transactional arts model with one that is centred around generosity and reciprocity. The organization was shaped by founder Jerrold McGrath's experience working as a program director for the Banff Centre and Artscape Launchpad in Toronto. The hub operates as a producing partner with organizations and institutions that lack the infrastructure to confidently solicit funds or deliver on strategic priorities of government and private funders. Examples of projects include video storytelling for clients, helping for-profit firms develop core business models that assist in investments that benefit communities, and digital prototyping for non-western culturally-specific music practices. A major difference between UKAI and that of a typical creative hub model is the activation of compassion and love in their processes, instead of competition and profit-building. There is a strong focus on enriching connections amongst all actors rather than producing specific outcomes. A core objective of the organization is to take advantage of momentum to fund cultural worth, often by exploring how instruments of capitalism can be leveraged in a way that they become openings to create new resources. UKAI uses recruitment processes that emphasize finding facilitators who are doing good work but might struggle to access traditional resources or spaces, and whose practices are centred from a place of generosity. Although diversity is not an explicit condition of recruitment, many of the facilitators involved in UKAI and Ferment are women of colour, and the majority of participants in UKAI and Ferment-supported initiatives have artistic practices that span well beyond traditionally Western traditions and aesthetics.

National access Arts Centre (NaAC) is a new creative hub in Calgary developed by the Indefinite Arts Society, an organization with a 45-year history of serving artists with developmental disabilities. NaAC serves at least 300 artists a week (with the potential to double that number), as well as 150 support workers, 50 volunteers and 20 staff members with a wheelchair accessible lounge, a kiln room, a fibre studio, 2D and 3D capabilities as well as digital photography suites. Funded by a combination of fee-for-service health services and Federal culture sector government resources (e.g., the Canada Cultural Spaces Program[vii]), NaAC is currently housed in a space that is not yet fully accessible, although interim renovations have made it functional. Once funding has been fully confirmed, ground will be broken for a fully-accessible space. Design plans for the Centre include a digital and visual media centre, a fully accessible black box theatre and rehearsal spaces, as well as a social enterprise space that would include a craft shop, a gallery, and a community-based café that would employ people with disabilities. The Centre would also provide an artist residence suite that will host artists with disabilities from across the country for approximately three weeks at a time.

Working Towards Impact

Identifying social and civic impact measures important to several of the creative hubs we looked at helps flesh out their narratives. Importantly, this includes "accessibility (physical, material, sensory, linguistic) [as at NaAC] and representation (basic proportional inclusion of societal groups)" (Luka 2022b, p. 176), as at UKAI and others. But it also includes the ways in which community-engaged activities and commitments are operationalized for creative hubs (Esmaeilpoorarabi, Yigitcanlar, Kamruzzaman & Guaralda, 2020), including through resistance to what turns out to be discriminatory policy, (e.g., the example of heritage policy/stairs for NaAC below), or by responding to social and creative needs in the creative community served (as with BC Artscape, UKAI, Light House, and cSpace below). By engagement, we mean: "the myriad ways in which...activity and benefits ...are shared with [various] publics. Engagement is by definition a two-way process, involving interaction and listening, with the goal of generating mutual benefit" (Public Engagement UK). We begin with NaAC and its efforts to make accessibility a core measure of success, notwithstanding heritage policy constraints and lack of understanding of accessibility principles among decision-makers.

The NaAC Bureaucratic Debacle: "It's 2022 - every place should be accessible."

The National accessArts Centre (NaAC) is a multidisciplinary disability arts organization and one of Canada's oldest and largest disability organizations (see above). It is led by President and CEO Jung-Suk (JS) Ryu, a passionate and determined leader who has been with the organization for five years and chaired the organization's transition from Indefinite Arts Organization to NaAC. In 2020, Ryu oversaw the rebranding of the National accessArts Centre that coincided with a new building located at 2140 Brownsea Drive NW in Calgary, Alberta. After their current building's roof caved in the City of Calgary gave NaAC the former Guides-Scouts Hall and $2.5 million to revitalize the building and property to create a multidisciplinary accessible arts campus. However, behind the scenes, the City of Calgary designated the Scouts Hall as a heritage building. This historical categorization meant that the stairs to the front door were named as a character-defining element of that building, which means NaAC cannot touch or alter them.

Renovations were set to begin in 2021 and into 2022 but have now stalled due to this bureaucratic debacle. According to Ryu, "To house a disability arts organization with this giant concrete staircase at the front is hilarious. And so, we've tried over the past six months or so to get the city to reconsider and to try and work with us on that. And they were very not cooperative." (2022 interview) The city suggested that Ryu create a separate wheelchair-accessible entrance at the side of the building. Ryu and the NaAC turned to the media for help when conversations with the city stalled. Ryu said in video interviews with *Global News*, "The building has a grand entrance: it faces the river and the front is where access should happen. To find ulterior entrances because our community is different — that reeks of discriminatory practices to me" (Croteau, 2022).

The current staircase does include a ramp but it is not to code and is too narrow. According to that same *Global News* article, the building was built in 1966 and designed by local architect Jack Long and was designated by the city as a municipal heritage resource in December 2021. According to the City of

Calgary's building infrastructure manager, Susan Specht, "the stairs have been identified as a historically defining element through consultation with the city's heritage planning team and Heritage Calgary. NaAC has expressed interest in removing the stairs but this is not possible given the historical significance of that architectural feature" (Croteau 2022). This historical context of this building is important for Ryu who commented, "This building was built in a time when concepts around disability and universal accessibility were incredibly dated and not right. For us to be obsessed with maintaining that element of our heritage boggles my mind" (Croteau, 2022).

This bureaucratic hiccup highlights the disability politics at play in Calgary. In media statements, Ryu commented, "In Calgary when it comes to disability, it's like we'll just develop, we'll build you a side entrance. You should be thankful. They can come through the side and keep the stairs more here. This is weird" (2022 Interview). NaAC is currently in the building as they raise money for their proposed campus. In the meantime, Ryu is working with an artist to turn the heritage stairs into an artistic statement. Throughout his interviews with Luka, Ryu underscores not only the work he undertakes as a leader of a national organization while travelling to various Canadian cities but also his role in educating through conversations on disability justice with government officials, academics and artists. This bureaucratic debacle is one such example of the work both in terms of emotional labour, education and advocacy Ryu undertakes to support the 350 artists the NaAC supports. The staircase debacle has become part of the NaAC origin story and draws attention to the important social and civic work Ryu undertakes as he envisions the future of accessibility and a national showcase for NaAC.

Eastcoasters and Entrepreneurs: Beyond the Pandemic

The multi-sited Artscape organization in Toronto is the grandparent of creative hubs for the culture sector in Canada, operating several properties using different business and creative work models (For example, their website; Luka, 2022b). As a whole, the Artscape system represents an intriguing combination of classical entrepreneurial incubators combined with spaces activating a range of social goals related to supporting creative workers, including affordable work-live spaces for artists and co-working spaces for creative entrepreneurs. As described earlier, however, Artscape is currently in receivership, which appears to be the result of a number of factors. These include the loss of revenue during the COVID-19 pandemic, the cost of real estate development and maintenance in Toronto, and potentially the higher costs of financing with growing interest rates (Warren, 2023). Artscape Daniels Launchpad was the logical extension of the entrepreneurial end of the spectrum for the Artscape properties, with the greatest number of co-working spaces in Artscape's portfolio. It was completed just a few months before the Covid-19 pandemic, with Light House/Culture Link CIC developing on a slightly later timeline. Since Artscape is the antecedent of many of the creative hubs analyzed in this article, that they are currently in receivership poses important questions about the viability of the model today. This makes it even more critical to look at the alternative or counter-models that we describe herein.

While Light House is a unique co-working and flexible performance space for the creative ecosystem on the east coast, it is modelled directly after Artscape's many properties. Light House was built during the pandemic as a "turn-key operation to generate revenues and make an impact with the community" (2022 interview). Like Artscape Daniels Launchpad, Culture Link CIC was able to secure Canada Cultural

Spaces funding ($6.5 million for Artscape; $4.5 million for Culture Link CIC) as well as community bonds funding as the keystone of their respective capital building efforts. Similarly, both organizations received financial support from a local construction developer: $625,000 from WJ Properties and $5.75 million from Daniels for Artscape, as well as several large foundation and individual donations totalling $14 million in capital funding (Newswire Canada, 2017); $2 million and a below-market lease for 20 years from Armco for Culture Link CIC/Light House (Boon, 2018). In the early days of the pandemic, however, while Artscape Daniels quickly pivoted to providing workshops and services online, often using a freemium model (i.e., offering certain services at no cost) to attract potential users, they seem to have been unable to build interest in a post-pandemic return to in-person spaces.

At the heart of Light House and Artscape Daniels' operations, there lies an interesting entanglement: first as for-profit operations running spaces for creative workers; second, as headquarters for online and virtual services compelled into being by a global pandemic; and finally, as nonprofit contributors to the community. This plays out in specific ways. Both accessed the Cultural Spaces Fund to build and equip their 'bricks and mortar' spaces, to support a combination of for-profit entrepreneurs and precarious creative workers until the pandemic, when the entrepreneurial incubator model was dealt a blow that forced both organizations to start operating virtually. The subsequent crash in for-profit activity and revenue was mitigated by the culture sector being supported through government emergency funds to provide non-profit or social benefits to creative workers whose incomes were severely damaged, as we heard in detail from these organizations. Shortfalls in programming and service revenues were mitigated at different rates and in different ways in the waning days of the pandemic. Here, the comparison between Light House and Artscape is interesting. While Artscape ended up in receivership, Light House was at an early enough stage in their development to be able to pivot. Crucially, they had finished building the television studio, which meant they could ramp up with their key paying client, the TV program *This Hour has 22 Minutes*. In addition, they were able to use some of their founding funding to buy state-of-the-art equipment at "used" prices from other performance and creative operations when these in-person operations shut down during the COVID-19 pandemic. As the pandemic eased, supply chains did not, which enabled Light House to charge at the higher end of the market for use of the equipment. At the same time, the funding generated by such services also subsidized the use of space within the building. This was the moment when Light House could begin prioritizing precarious performing artists to give them a home, which acts as a measure of social and civic impact. These civic contributions to and impact on the culture sector come directly from governance and business structures allowing for a combination of nonprofit and for-profit values. But they were grounded in knowledge-sharing of a particular model. Looking through the lens of receivership, it seems that the capitalist growth imperatives to scale up in the way that Artscape has done over the last 30 years is not viable today. While Artscape operated as the most desirable and feasible model for creative hubs in Canada for these three decades, the pressures of a pandemic, changing financial conditions, and the price of real estate, has called that model into question. To bring the point home, it is because Light House was not fully operational and that they recognized that they needed to change gears in the waning days of the pandemic, that they could move away from the Artscape model into something new. Today, the Culture Link CIC founders are looking at parallel sectors such as housing for creative workers and a new regional form of public broadcasting. It will be intriguing to see how this develops. But it also leads us straight into additional examples of what

happens when organizations are nimble enough to recognize opportunities and adapt. cSpace provides one such example.

Happy Accidents - cSpace and their Reconciliation Efforts

cSpace is an arts incubator and co-working space located at the old King Edward School on 1721 29th Avenue SW in Calgary. Unlike NaAC, cSpace is a social enterprise that acts as a landlord for nonprofits, communities of artists and local entrepreneurs. They offer flexible and affordable spaces including a hot desk system. cSpace views itself as the centre of this network that creates opportunities for tenants to interact, meet and collaborate. This web of connections was highlighted during Luka's interview and walking tour of the cSpace in 2022. During Schuring's tour, Luka met some of the tenants and artists in the building and engaged in conversations about their work, tenant collaborations and exhibitions. This walking tour showcased the sensemaking of cSpace, where Schuring views the purpose of the building as a connector for the arts community in Calgary.

The location of cSpace features an Edwardian landmark that showcases Calgary sandstone work from 1912. The school has an important historical and colonial context that President and CEO Deeter Schurig wanted to reconcile with its namesake. In 2021, cSpace commissioned artist Nathan Meguinis to collaborate with artist Doug Driediger to create a mural on the north side of the building. According to Schurig, this mural was cSpace's attempt to respond to the Truth and Reconciliation Call to Action #83 to undertake collaborative projects and produce works that contribute to the reconciliation process. Driediger was an artist tenant at cSpace and had started the mural featuring King Edward VII, the namesake of the school and titled the mural "Long Live the King." For Schurig, the half-finished mural created depicted a disengagement between the aspirations of his creative hub. In an interview with Luka, Schuring noted, "Jump to 2021, and the time that we find ourselves in with residential schools and so forth, that we realized that there's a huge disconnect between what our ambitions are as a community building, with cSpace and the fact that we have this colonial namesake and we're perpetuating the colonial story." (2022 Interview)

During the pandemic, a moment of serendipity was enacted as Schuring spoke with Meguinis about potentially collaborating with Direiger to finish the murals together. Unbeknownst to Schuring, Meguinis was an admirer of Direiger's mural work as he was an emerging muralist himself. Together the artists were commissioned to finish the mural together in a partnership with the Beltline Urban Mural Project (BUMP). The finished mural was called We Are All Treaty People and depicts Chief Bullhead, a signatory to Treaty 7 on the right-hand side, who looks to be in dialogue with the colonial King, the original painting on the left side. The creation of this mural showcases the collaboration between an emerging and established artist and is the type of work cSpace promotes. According to Schuring, "Sometimes you get those happy accidents. Things don't get quite finished and you let them sit for a while." (2022 Interview) For cSpace, this mural acts as a bridge between past and present as they continue their decolonization and reconciliation work, which includes discussions on changing their creative hub name. During the interview it was clear that Schuring's fulsome description of this process was an important development in their narrative as a creative hub. This was an important sensemaking assertion: it has become part of their

origin story with documents on their website depicting this process and describing the history of this building and how as a creative hub they are actively engaged in reconciliation.

Image 1: We Are All Treaty People Mural by Nathan Meguinis and Doug Driediger

(Taken by Luka)

Against the Grain: Enabling Compassion and Generosity

Given the focus on social and civic impact in this article, it is not surprising that Artscape Daniels Launchpad, Light House, and cSpace provide a foil for the two remaining creative hubs examined in this article. UKAI was set up to embody compassion, generosity, and community building within creative workplaces and to centre outlier voices and approaches. As a virtual organization, it sought a combination of for-profit and nonprofit revenue sources to support its programming and to promulgate a model of business development that simultaneously enabled and empowered workers in the creative sector and in fields where innovation and creativity are invoked, including in applications of artificial intelligence (AI) and the measurement of arts impact (2018, 2020 interviews). BC Artscape was set up as an evolution of original Artscape commitments to socially responsible community-engaged relationships with the

surrounding communities, including but not limited to creative workers. BC Artscape's location, adjacent to Vancouver's downtown eastside (a relatively low-income neighbourhood with much-needed addiction and mental health services), meant that this originally incorporated commitments to providing affordable social services as fundamental commitments to members of the neighbourhood itself. As Caitlin Jones, the executive director for BC Artscape, noted: "that was a major focus, and a major reason why the mandate for BC Artscape expanded to cover more social justice- and equity-related...development, as opposed to just being about artists and cultural space" (2020 interview). Over a three-year period (2018-2021), BC Artscape attempted to find a breakeven model to support annual leases for subsidized studio and work spaces for artists and more intriguingly, for a combination of creative organizations and social justice organizations, while providing a range of social and creative programming to the neighbourhood as well as the creative sector. The project was originally funded through grants ($2.5 million from the Cultural Spaces Fund, $1 million from the province, an initial $250,000 grant from City of Vancouver) and a $1.25 million mortgage with the City of Vancouver (2018 interview). Debt servicing proved to be unworkable, particularly in light of the drastic drop in the use of the space (as required by health regulations) during the Covid-19 pandemic. In 2021, at the end of the three-year support period by Toronto Artscape, the City of Vancouver approved a further grant of $1.6 million and the transfer of the operation to another nonprofit organization, listed as 221A Society, which continues to operate BCA as it is now known[viii], though with less subsidized space and fewer social services (City of Vancouver, 2021). This only emphasizes how important it is to consider counter-models or outliers such as UKAI.

The UKAI virtual operational model and distributed governance processes enabled it to take on riskier and fewer revenue-generating projects, in part because they were protected from the demands of operating and funding a building in one of Canada's expensive cities. Their timing was impeccable. While founded in 2017, their activity (and funding) ramped up over the following three years. As founder Jerrold McGrath notes:

> About half of [our funding comes from] coproduction with organizations and institutions that are well-positioned to deliver on some of the strategic priorities of government and private funders but they sometimes lack the infrastructure to be able to confidently solicit those funds or deliver on it...About a quarter of [our funding] is earned revenue...[For example,] we work with [some organizations] in doing research, we do video storytelling for different clients, we do digital prototyping for non-western culturally-specific music practices, like what does it mean for a taiko group to go online. And then about 25% of our funding comes from grants (2020 interview).

Since they were already a virtual organization when the pandemic hit, UKAI was ready with a viable operational cultural governance model that simply continued to operate as before. Their six self-generated projects since 2017 have focused on better understanding ethical considerations in relation to AI, gentrification, environment and climate change, and algorithmic culture, including recommendations, reports, and creative responses directed at the local environments within which they have operated, through to the United Nations' policy development for AI (2020 & 2022 interviews).[ix] Their level of activity is somewhat limited, however, by the lack of business and creative industries funding for virtual modes, and for their unique hybrid of for-profit and nonprofit work, intended as it is for both revenue generation and social benefit. Luka has previously argued that the limitations reflected in government grant eligibility

for creative hubs funding have prevented innovation in the sector, notably through the emphasis on 'bricks and mortar' buildings and equipment rather than on "distributed, global, virtual, local [capacities that can be] responsive to marginalized communities and to realizing equity in the field" (Luka, 2022a, p. 211). Such an approach to creative hubs funding has also prevented the activation of creative work that can generate outcomes that are more aesthetically or culturally appropriate, or in terms of social and accessibility goals, for example, both key elements of the impact assessment framework delineated above. This becomes quite stark by comparing BC Artscape's inability to find the right combination of social services and innovation funding, notwithstanding significant capital investments by three levels of government, compared to UKAI's ability to pivot quickly during the pandemic and successfully promulgate an approach that saw several projects come to fruition notwithstanding health restrictions, and notwithstanding the lack of capital investment from any level of government.

Towards a conclusion

In this article, we have accomplished three tasks leading to the reworking of both practical and theoretical findings related to cultural governance. First, we have revealed pragmatic ways in which various tensions in cultural governance structures and processes in the creative hub's ecosystem play out in the current environment. These include frictions generated by trying to find a balance between for-profit and nonprofit business models, or between bureaucratic requirements for funding and mission-based commitments to accessibility and social impact, or by activating creative spaces in such a way that we could entirely transform how we do creative work, including decolonization efforts or recentring inclusive, compassionate values.

Second, we have provided specific case studies as examples of how such places are successfully navigating as well as creating their own narratives; "making sense" of contributions and ways of being. The approach we used (from interviews, to building and leveraging bibliographic resources that were also made public for the sector itself, to the detailed coding undertaken) allowed us to analyze the cases at a macro or systems level as well as ground it in lived experience.

Together, this evidence enabled the reworking of Luka's earlier impact assessment framework by separating sensemaking from knowledge-sharing. Third, this allowed us to point towards ways in which sensemaking actually combines with social and civic impact analyzes as well as creative and financial measures to affect the ability of each creative hub to do its work. So, for example, cSpace, NaAC, BC Artscape, and to a lesser degree, Light House realized some success because they own (or pay mortgages) on their own buildings. But this made each of these places more vulnerable to financial pressures during the pandemic, not least because their primary clients and tenants were unable to use their spaces. As the health regulations have loosened, there was a significant level of returning to the usual ways of doing things. This too, is proving to be untenable, as, for example, in the case of the Artscape receivership. Under the classic Artscape model, a great deal of effort is needed to generate revenue for paying mortgages and property taxes. Instead, as shown by UKAI, BCA, cSpace, and even Light House, compelling sensemaking arguments emerge to challenge investors such as the Department of Canadian Heritage (Cultural Spaces Fund), to interpret virtual operations as suitable for "capital funding" as much as for bricks and mortar operations. Accordingly, the virtual and distributed UKAI operation has been able to pivot according to

the needs of both clients and service providers, having only recently taken on a physical in-person space. In the wake of the Artscape receivership, and the downsizing of Centre for Social Innovation, this ability to be flexible, and to wait until clients need in-person space, points to new directions for organizations wishing to operationalize culturally-specific, accessible, generous, or inventive work in the spaces we call creative hubs in Canada

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[i] For example, https://criticaldigitalmethods.ca/creative-hubs-and-networks-database/

[ii] For example, https://criticaldigitalmethods.ca/creative-hubs-and-networks-database/

[iii] See https://criticaldigitalmethods.ca/research-and-creations/academic-bibliography-collection/impact-assessment/

[iv] For more information, visit https://criticaldigitalmethods.ca/artifex/

[v] For more information, visit https://www.bcabca.ca/about

[vi] For more information, visit https://lighthouseartscentre.ca/culture-link/

[vii] For more information, visit https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/services/funding/cultural-spaces-fund.html

[viii] For more information, visit https://www.bcabca.ca/

[ix] Also visit https://ukaiprojects.com/projects