

Case Study

# Aspect

**Creative arts  
conquer conflict**

2021





### **Venture**

In Place of War



### **Social science discipline**

Arts



### **Aspect Members**

Manchester University



### **Sector**

Creative Economy



### **Route-to-market**

Spin out



# A global spin-out is using creativity and the arts as a tool for positive social change across the world, transforming cultures of violence and suffering into ones of hope, opportunity and freedom.

**There are thousands of artists living and working in war zones across the world. Previously, there has been a demand to produce art which documents experiences of war. However, people living in these communities want to forget about their suffering, not remember it. Artistic creativity in places in conflict could provide local people with an escape from everyday life and create positive social change, but there is a serious lack of funding and support to do this.**





Addressing this challenge, In Place of War (IPOW), an activist arts organisation, is helping to create a support system for community artistic, creative and cultural organisations in places of conflict, revolution, and areas suffering the consequences of conflict. Headed up by Ruth Daniel, the University of Manchester, the spin out started life as an AHRC funded research project in 2004 led by James Thompson (now Professor of Applied and Social Theatre) that set out to investigate the work of artists living in war zones, but this soon evolved and organically spun out as a separate entity which now has an incredible presence.

The research discovered the power of arts and music in these countries and the impact and opportunities creative arts can have on people living in these communities. They also found that artists often seek to create art which enables them to forget about the conflict, rather than art which focuses on war and its effects on society.

For the past 17 years IPOW has been working with a network of 125 grassroots community organisations in Africa, the Middle East and Asia who become part of the IPOW community

as change-makers. They believe that it is these local creative organisations who are best placed to appreciate the complex historical, political, social and cultural dynamics unique to their situation and know how to reach their communities.

Funded through grants and donations in the UK, In Place of War is made up of a small team. Their aim is to support artists and creative communities to thrive in their different dynamic responses to the challenges they face. Working with these organisations, IPOW focuses on three pillars of activities:

- Cultural spaces: the organisation is co-creating cultural spaces in the most marginalised communities to enable people living there to express themselves non-violently and build opportunities.
- Education and entrepreneurship: delivering creative entrepreneur training designed specifically for conflict zones which provides people with the tools and capacity to build their own opportunities and futures – which is essential for making long term, impactful and meaningful change.

- Artistic collaboration: curate artistic collaborations across the world which result in shared skills, knowledge and hope.

Living in war zones, the opportunity to do something creative and express themselves; to imagine a better future and then be able to realise it due to the connections people make and the support network they have, is delivering real social impact. Working with primarily young people rooted in communities, the change-makers are using the arts to take people out of gangs; helping to rebuild communities; rebuild their own futures and engage people away from violence and even terrorist activities.



# The impact

- The legacy of the project is the local organisations, the change-makers, who have helped to set up spaces in Uganda, Palestine and South Africa and engage with thousands of people every year, helping to create new opportunities and change lives.
- The Creative Social Entrepreneurial programme certified by Man run over 18 countries, helped established hundreds of businesses and improved livelihoods. The programme demonstrated how the power of creative industries and businesses can harness working together to create impact in business.
- In Place of War provided a platform for those most marginalised, working with Community Mapping in Uganda to stimulate engagement that changed perceptions on disabilities.
- They created GRRRL – an electronic music collaboration between revolutionary women, whereby the all women ‘supergroup’ featuring women of colour from international conflict zones tell their stories via music and have performed to over half a million people, across some of the biggest global festivals including closing the Commonwealth Games in Australia.
- The venture makes a case for the arts as a powerful tool for change and how art can play a role in areas of conflict to help bring peace
- IPOW has developed a strong relationship with the commercial music industry, working with 20 of the world’s biggest music companies to deliver live streams which have raised significant amount of money. As a result of this fundraising, 40 grants have been issued to local organisations, over 250k of music equipment has been mobilised and 30 music grass roots studios created across the world in countries including Palestine and South Africa

“

**Training changes lives  
and perspectives...  
[participants] are now  
champions in their own  
communities**

”

Faisal Kiwewa  
The Bayimba Cultural Foundation

# Key Learnings

The professional support within the University of Manchester was fundamental to supporting Ruth in the commercialisation of the initial research and helped to progress the idea for the spin out, into a reality. The support at the University helped to provide seed funding and key information on IP and helping to protect it, along with making introductions to key people who have helped to progress the spin out.

## Some key advice:

- Relationships are key to building success, right at the beginning you need to become a community; build relationships with everyone

involved, and rather than seeing research as a one-off contribution, realise it as an ongoing contribution to that community. Try to engage people outside of the academic environment to understand how other organisations work because academia is really unique, consider volunteering for a business to understand how it works.

- When you establish your venture, surround yourself with amazing people – from across sectors, people who will help you realise what is that you want to do and will support you on your journey.
- Start small and build – things can change from an initial idea to realising it.



# What's next for In Place of War?



There are some big fundraising projects coming up for the organisation. Following success building relationships with the music industry, IPOW will be focussing on further building these, and will be holding 'Around the world in 80 raves' in September 2021, where 80 raves with renowned DJs will be held and people encouraged to dance/walk/run to raise money to set up new music spaces across the world.

IPOW will also be aiming to harness its US and Irish entities. The US board recently expanded and they are keen to embed IPOW domestically in the US, bringing change-makers and their methodologies to embed change into the UK and US, decolonising the knowledge and bringing what has been learnt overseas. Working with 10 disadvantaged communities in the

UK, IPOW will be taking young people through a residency programme where they will interact with change-makers, learn about their stories and achievements, and provide them with the seed funding and tools to go back and make social changes in their communities, with the aim to create 100 future change makers in the UK.

The organisation will also be developing more education programmes around creative industry, particularly alternative music programmes, and more generally, looking to diversify representation on its boards, across the world.





# Background Information

## Ruth Daniel



### Role

CEO. Artistic Director. Activist.  
Change-Maker. Honorary Research  
Fellow at The University of Manchester.



### Contact

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As CEO of In Place of War, Ruth has led a diverse range of arts and peace-building initiatives across the globe. She has developed and implemented over a hundred cultural programmes in sites of conflict and disadvantage such as war zones, post war zones and areas of economic deprivation. She prepared numerous successful funding applications, recently receiving a £1million AHRC research grant for a 3-year programme that will explore how grassroots organisations can create social change using art.

From guitarist at the age of 8 to record label owner, band manager, fundraiser, international cultural activist, entrepreneur, educator, influential speaker (TEDx) to prestigious award winner within a national arena (Social Enterprise of the Year & Manchester Woman of Culture to name a couple), Ruth's passion to empower people to build their own positive futures through creative entrepreneur programmes, the development of cultural spaces and artistic collaboration shows no boundaries in terms of fields of work.



## Case Study

# Aspect

Transforming Society Through  
Social Science Innovation

Aspect (A Social sciences Platform for Entrepreneurship, Commercialisation and Transformation) is a network for organisations looking to make the most of commercial and business opportunities from social sciences research.

Supported by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund, Aspect members sit at the epicentre of discovery, imagination and progress in the social sciences. We draw together pioneering academics with innovative industry leaders to tackle the most complex societal challenges of our time.



Aspect is funded by Research England's Connecting Capability Fund