



doc society



ako storytelling
institute

THE WALK 2021 AN IMPACT CASE STUDY

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Little Amal in South Africa where she was made by Handspring Puppets: Bevan Ros



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The objectives of this impact case study are three-fold: first, to reflect on the delivery, successes and challenges of The Walk. Second, to re-imagine what the project would have looked like if the team had identified specific impact goals from the project’s inception, using Doc Society’s unique impact methodology. And third, in light of these observations, to make recommendations for the future. Our findings are based on interviews with The Walk’s core team and country producers and focus groups with participants from three locations (Chios, Greece; Naples, Italy; and Manchester, UK) along Little Amal’s route.

LITTLE AMAL’S JOURNEY

Delivery

From conception through to delivery, The Walk was a tremendous feat of creativity and imagination. The project team created a compelling and unique piece of street theatre: a 3.5m high puppet of a Syrian refugee girl, Little Amal, who walked 8,000km across Europe to raise awareness of displaced children.

The context she strode out into was challenging. Millions of Syrians forced to flee their homes has created the largest refugee population in the world. The reception across Europe and the UK, while warm and welcoming in some locations, has often been fraught and hostile. Little Amal set out to tell her story and to inspire a culture of welcome in every location she stopped in along her way.

The project team did not set out with an explicit impact strategy. But their goals were focused around:

- Delivery - creating a high-quality piece of artwork that managed the logistical challenges, inspired communities and presented Amal as a representative of displaced children;
- Awareness - connecting with people in positions of power, giving visibility to refugees, opening up conversations in schools and connecting with an online global audience;
- Legacy - shifting from a narrative of crisis to one of potential and creating a corridor of friends, galvanised by the message: ‘Don’t forget about us’.

Successes

The successes we identified are summarised below:

The Walk created new connections and alliances: Little Amal’s visit brought people together, often for the first time, across and within sectors. Her message of hope provided a positive rallying point for audiences and she was responsible for generating profound feelings of connectivity and solidarity.

Little Amal was welcomed and celebrated : Audience engaged in joyful acts of welcome that stood in defiance to hostile policies towards refugees. The Walk’s strategy of inviting communities to co-create an imagined world where refugees are received with poetry, music and dance proved highly effective.

Little Amal created a strong emotional connection with her audience and participants: As a puppet, Little Amal made it possible for people to express their emotions safely and spontaneously and she elicited an outpouring of creativity from people of all ages.

The Walk achieved visibility, a high profile, and even celebrity status: An integral part of The Walk’s vision was for Little Amal to be seen to be welcomed by people in positions of power. She secured exceptional access to political and religious leaders along her route.

The Education Pack engaged hundreds of thousands of children: The Education Pack introduced Little Amal’s story to schoolchildren, a key target audience, giving teachers creative ways of talking about migration and generating an emotional connection with pupils.

Challenges

The challenges we reflect on in the case study are summarised below:

- Refugee communities were insufficiently engaged:** More effort could have been made to include and elevate local refugee communities in the places visited by Little Amal. Welcome needs to be developed as a two-way encounter, with space for displaced communities to engage and contribute on an equal footing.
- Lack of meaningful engagement both during and after the event:** The speed and geographical ambitions of the walk made it hard to make meaningful, lasting connections with the communities Little Amal stopped in. The imperative was to keep moving, important ‘moments’ during the events were missed, and the team was not equipped to stay connected or follow up with communities.
- Lack of clarity and purpose around Little Amal’s political role:** The Walk missed opportunities to enter into dialogue with the powerful individuals who welcomed Little Amal, or to share the spotlight with those she represented.
- Missed opportunities around social media and online content:** The Walk intended to use social media to keep ‘friends’ engaged and energised, but this did not reach its potential. Little Amal’s social media presence was one-dimensional and repetitive, coming from her perspective only, which resulted in a flatness to her presence on social media.
- Little Amal’s narrative and presence dominated:** Little Amal needs to share the light and attention that she attracts with other children, other narratives and perspectives. Not doing this risks the very real danger of The Walk promoting a singular view of who a refugee is, which can reinforce and perpetuate a virtuous/good migrant vs bad migrant dichotomy.

REIMAGINING THE WALK THROUGH THE IMPACT LENS

- Doc Society’s methodology was developed to generate maximum impact for documentary film. In order to analyse The Walk, we have applied our approach to impact retrospectively.
- The story environment:** In engaging with a ‘known’ and ‘entrenched’ issue, The Walk’s approach was in line with Doc Society’s recommended approach of humanising affected communities. With a clear message of hope and a desire to bring people together around shared values, The Walk was well placed to achieve impact.
 - The impact of art, the art of impact:** Doc Society’s approach is to put the artwork in the driving seat, casting impact as the beneficiary of great art, not the other way round. The intrinsic impact of The Walk as a work of art reached many people, but reach, in and of itself, doesn’t tell us enough about impact. Extrinsic or secondary impact deliver by an impact team would aim to demonstrate that lasting change had been instigated; but its approach must build and harmonise with the aesthetic and values of the artwork.
 - Navigating power and politics:** Doc Society’s methodology pays deep attention to the power dynamics at play in the making of a film. This approach, which prizes accountability to partners and collaborators, is vital to consider in relation to a project like The Walk. Despite best intentions, The Walk lacked the ability to remain connected with the people they had worked with. It would have a greater impact if it grounded future projects in creating enduring, equitable relationships with co-producing partners and the people that Little Amal represents.
 - Resourcing impact:** Given the intensive and expansive nature of delivering The Walk as a performance, the project needed a group of people working in parallel with the creative team to deliver legacy building programmes with co-producing communities in order to reach its full impact capabilities.

Although network building was part of the project’s original vision, resources were not earmarked for stewarding Amal’s afterlife in the communities she visited.

Balancing art, impact and money: Balancing these elements in an environment where funding is scarce is challenging. A clearly defined impact strategy helps the project team, partners and funders to understand the value - both financial and cultural - of a piece of work. Being able to deliver a deeper, demonstrable impact through partnership working, could have attracted new sources of funds.

Towards an impact strategy: Our approach at Doc Society is to build an impact strategy which connects a film’s strengths with the needs of the wider community of change-makers in the field. In the context of The Walk, it is the co-producing communities, galvanised and catalysed by working on the welcome events, who are the key partners for securing lasting change. Based on their feedback, a possible retrospective impact vision for The Walk 2021 could be:

To make the world a more welcoming place, one community at a time.

A proposed theory of change could be articulated as:

A pincer movement from bottom up and top down, promoting contact and long term relationship building between communities

- Bottom up - Little Amal brings refugee and host communities together*
- Top down - Little Amal amplifies the voices of her peers in her encounters with powerful individuals*

Doc Society’s Impact Field Guide identifies four change dynamics which describe the kind of change that a film can drive. These are summarised below when applied to The Walk:

Change dynamic:	Impact goal:	Outcome:
Changing attitudes	To use Little Amal’s story as a gateway to other stories.	Bring multiple layers of storytelling into the welcome events and to remote audiences.
Changing behaviour	To strengthen the concept of welcome as a two-way process.	Move from the world of the imagination to creating connections between real people through activities that bring refugee and host communities together on an equal footing.
Building communities	To create a network of schools and communities that share and promote new ways of understanding and talking about migration.	Support connectivity between co-producing communities in order to build environments fostering solidarity and innovation.
Changing structures, changing policy	To develop a child-centred role for Little Amal to advocate for welcoming refugees and migrants.	Build opportunities for Little Amal to identify with and amplify the voices of her peers, so she can use the profile she has achieved to fight injustice alongside other children and young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND WAYS FORWARD

The case study outlines three future scenarios for The Walk. These explore: activities that could activate the corridor of friends, the possibilities of Little Amal’s advocacy role, and an impact campaign for Little Amal’s US tour in 2023.

Activating a Corridor of Friends

This contribution elaborates on a series of ways that The Walk could enhance impact in future. Key points include:

- **Creating networking infrastructure:** Building platforms and systems that connect and visualise the corridor of friends should be a priority investment - including contact databases, email groups, an interactive website.
- **Viewing welcome and friendship as two-way interactions:** All elements of planning must include refugee communities to ensure two-way connections live on after Amal leaves. Communications to partners and communities she has visited also need to be regular, ongoing, shaped by principles of reciprocity, and complemented by projects and initiatives that ‘give back’.
- **Forging connections based on shared values:** Afterlife activities to activate her friends should focus on ways to ensure that Amal’s core values (Curiosity - Compassion - Connection - Celebration - Child-Centredness) live on in homes, schools, communities, spaces of power, after her departure.
- **Building on the success of the Education Pack:** the pack merits expansion and further investment, including an ongoing programme of workshops and support to educators, a transnational peer support network of educators, a series of smaller Amals that can be used for in-depth education projects.
- **Narrating, rewarding and social proofing ‘welcome’:** by creatively showcasing acts of welcome across social and traditional media through partnerships with heritage sectors, diversified digital storytelling and strategic pitching to press, The Walk can shift dominant discourses about public attitudes and inspire people to join a movement of welcome.
- **Maximising the potential of digital communities:** impact and legacy - rather than reach - should be at the heart of a new social media strategy. An intentional and consistent approach to storytelling and community building should be shaped by the needs of different audiences and should create content tracks focussed on socialising Amal’s values.
- **Creating artefacts of remembrance:** From memorabilia and mementos to books, audio stories, and ongoing creative challenges to do within families and at school, artefacts and activities that lean into the totemic power of Amal can help reinforce positive memories, and reignite ‘residues’ of emotional responses to The Walk.
- **Deepening young people’s engagement through secondary storytelling:** Video content informed by expertise in child-focussed storytelling could deepen understanding of migration and integration, eg short scripted films sharing more about Amal’s story, friendships, interactions, or values, could be developed in partnerships with existing broadcast TV shows, illustrators, social-first creators, and authors, to offer a drumbeat of content to educators and families.

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Developing Little Amal’s advocacy role

A child-centred approach to advocacy and ‘voice’: The custodians of Amal’s values and her legacy should be her peers - other children, who give her a mandate and who she is accountable to. A more child-centred approach to advocacy could involve assembling a group of young people with refugee heritage and/or a background in activism, to act as the ‘brain’ of Amal. This transnational advisory group could set parameters for Amal’s activities, and feed into decisions around the spaces she visits and the advocacy messages she could carry. This structure could be replicated at national and local levels, creating a forum for key children engaged throughout the corridor to connect and have a voice.

Welcome Amal, welcome her ideas: Meetings with political, religious and cultural influencers provide an opportunity for Amal to share the stories and asks of other Amals across the world, young refugees who are shut out of the corridors of power. Given that The Walk’s existing theory of change depends heavily on contact theory and parasocial contact theory, these encounters should allow Amal to convey the wishes, hopes and demands of young people to adults in power, and hold them accountable after her departure. Ideas include involvement of an advisory group of children to shape her demands, bringing a group of local young people into these meetings, using her visit as a catalyst for schools/youth groups/families to write and implement charters of welcome.

Formulating a US Impact Strategy for The Walk 2021

As Little Amal embarks on her US tour, she crosses a threshold into a new context, with new levers to push and communities to engage. The final section of this case study, looks ahead at the challenges and opportunities presented by the US context and asks what is possible as The Walk enters this new phase.

Her story and her presence has a profound resonance and deep emotional impact on those experiencing The Walk, clearly evidenced by her celebrity-like reception and the massive audience in her recent trip to New York City (Fall, 2022). Her capacity to leverage the power of spectacle to reignite community support for those working directly with impacted people is particularly apposite, as compassion fatigue is profound and widespread in the US context.

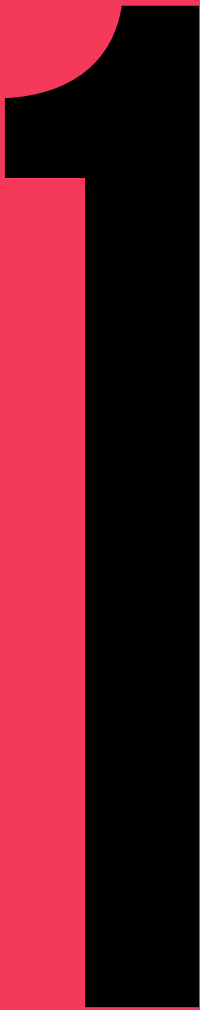
However, in the wake of the Trump administration’s policies of “intentional cruelty” towards migrants and refugees and explicit xenophobia and racism, big questions remain about the efficacy of harnessing solidarity in a fragmented political landscape.

Regarding Little Amal’s advocacy role the message is clear: the political context in the United States demands a more explicit political positionality from her or her ambassadors as a basis for meaningful engagement with impacted communities. There is a risk that, without this, the team is not only passing on an opportunity, they are opening the project up to use as narrative cover for those with interest in maintaining the status quo.

With regards building lasting impact and delivering tangible outcomes for impacted communities, the same impact opportunities that were identified in Europe will apply: to provide space for ongoing positive contact between refugees and host community members, as an investment in long-term attitudinal shift; to find ways to uplift and support the asks and aspirations of the young people she was created to represent. Our US colleagues provide valuable insights and carefully considered options, prompts and provocations to contribute to the kinds of discussion that lie ahead, both within the team and with impact professionals, needed to move from the theory of a strategy to a fully actionable impact campaign.

Conclusion

Typically, a social impact producer working with documentary film will engage with multiple audiences based on a single encounter with a film. The creative process is over; the story is locked, the film is replicable, distributable. Working with a live participative art work opens up new opportunities for impact: The Walk 2021 was constantly being re-created and re-imagined through an immersive collaboration with interdisciplinary, co-producing groups. The co-creation model itself laid the foundations for lasting impact to take hold in communities, and the people involved emerged as energised collaborators and motivated change-makers - a “corridor of friends”. An impact strategy would build on these exceptional foundations, intentionally and explicitly uplifting stories of welcome and amplifying the asks and aspirations of the displaced children she represents. In this way, Little Amal’s story could contribute more effectively to the narrative shifts that drive the vision for the project, and can eventually lead to policy change.



INTRO- DUCTION

1.1—THE WALK 2021

1.2—THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

1.3—METHODOLOGY

1.4—CONTEXT

1.4.1 Political Context

1.4.2 The pandemic

1.4.3 Local settings

1.4.4 Refugees in popular storytelling

Family puppetry making work shops
for The Walk ©Priti Shikotra



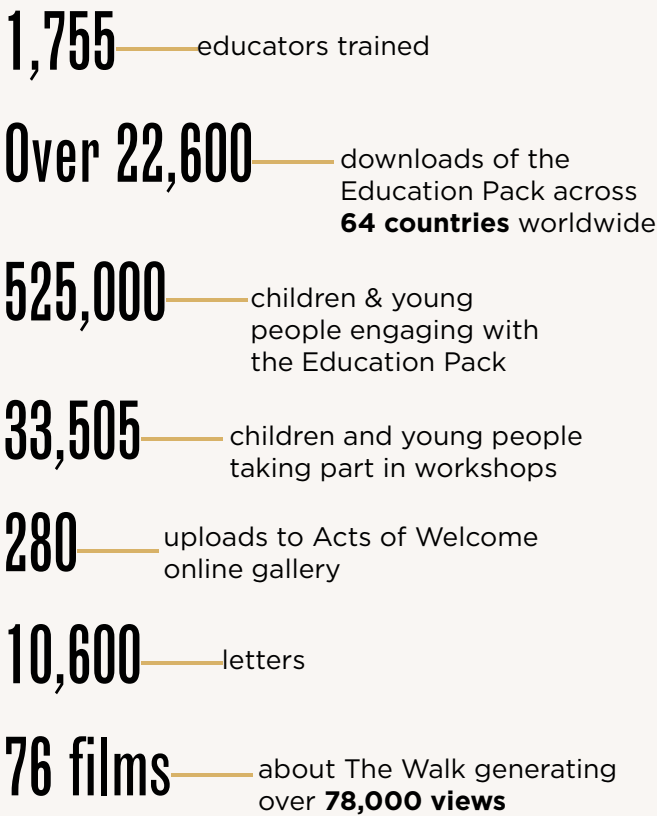
1.1—THE WALK, 2021

The Walk was a work of live, public, participative street-theatre delivered on a grand scale across eight countries starting on the Syrian/Turkish border in July 2021 and ending in the UK in November 2021. Little Amal, a 3.5m high puppet of a Syrian refugee girl, is a unique work of art produced to the highest possible standard - created by Handspring Puppets in South Africa. She walked 8,000km to raise awareness of displaced children, many who, like Amal, had been separated from their families. Little Amal’s backstory is that following a bombing raid, she was unable to find her family, and so set off looking for her mother. Her journey in search of reunion took her from Turkey to Greece and then through Italy, Germany, Switzerland, France, and Belgium. She ended her journey in Manchester, England.

The **core creative team** delivering the project consists of: Amir Nizar Zuabi, artistic director; David Lan, producer and creator of the original concept of The Walk; Tracey Seaward, producer; Sarah Loader, executive producer; **Craig Leo** and **Enrico Wey**, puppetry directors.

Country producers: Greece - **Yolanda Markopoulou**; Italy - **Ludovica Tinghi and Roberto Roberto**; Manchester UK - **Abir Tobji** (Manchester International Festival).

THE WALK, 2021 IN NUMBERS¹



¹ The Walk Evaluation Report, Melita Armitage, March 2022

1.2 —THE PURPOSE OF THIS RESEARCH

As part of a pilot project leading up to the launch of the AKO Storytelling Institute at the University of the Arts London, Doc Society was invited to carry out research into three art projects, of which The Walk is one. The research aims to assess how Doc Society's social justice centred practice developed with and for countless non-fiction filmmakers and other change-makers, and codified in the [Impact Field Guide](#), could be usefully applied to different artforms. The Walk did not start with a strategy to achieve specific impact goals at the outset, but there was an implicit desire to have cultural impact with social and political outcomes. As an impact strategy is usually created before or around the release of a film, this is new territory for Doc Society - the first time that we have been asked to look back at a completed artwork and apply our approach retrospectively.

1.3—METHODOLOGY

Our first contact with The Walk was several months after Little Amal reached her final destination in Manchester. The research is based on interviews with the core team reflecting on the ways they felt The Walk had created impact and where they felt more could have been achieved [see [Appendix 7.1](#) for Project Brief]. We interviewed country producers and commissioned local facilitators to run focus groups, comprising artists, teachers, cultural producers and humanitarian organisations from three of the communities who had welcomed Little Amal on her route in Chios, Greece; Naples, Italy; and Manchester in the UK, to explore Little Amal's impact from their perspectives. With thanks to facilitators [Yolanda Markopoulou](#) (Chios), [Yasmine Accardo](#) (Naples), Ayla Suveren (Manchester). We brought in experts in culture, migration and social change to contribute to our analysis and engage with our findings: [Alice Sachrajda](#) advised on key aspects of the report; [Esme Peach](#), [Anna Nolan](#) and Kat Aylwin co-authored the recommendations. US based impact producers Alice Quinlan and Javier Rivera DeBruin, [Red Owl Partners](#), authored the piece "Formulating a US Impact Campaign" for The Walk's 2023 US tour. The case study was researched and written by [Julia Farrington](#) Impact Producer, Doc Society.

The case study is structured around the three phases of this retrospective exercise:

First: to reflect on the delivery, successes and challenges of The Walk 2021 which are presented in [Section 2](#) and [Section 3](#).

Second: to re-imagine what the project would have looked like if the team had identified specific impact goals from the project's inception. Following Doc Society's approach to planning an impact strategy, we integrate the artwork's strengths with feedback on how things could be improved and the needs of partner organisations, to inform an impact vision, theory of change and associated impact goals. This analysis is presented in [Section 4](#).

Third: as the project is ongoing with a tour of the United States planned for 2023, in this third section we look ahead and offer recommendations for implementing these new goals, both in relation to the future plans for the US tour, and through revisiting places Little Amal has already been to.

These recommendations can be found in [Section 5](#).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We are exceptionally grateful for the candid and generous interviews with the creative team which gave us real insight into where they felt The Walk had impact, and where it fell short.

This and the thought-provoking and constructive feedback from the country producers and focus groups in our three locations, has allowed us to take an informed position as critical friends to dig down into and try to articulate the full potential of Little Amal's impact.

1.4—CONTEXT

1.4.1 Political context

In March 2011 peaceful protestors called for democratic reform in Syria but the situation rapidly spiralled into a civil war. The escalation of fighting and unrest precipitated the displacement of millions of Syrians and has created the largest refugee population in the world, constituting over a third of the total refugee population. A recent poll of public opinion in 10 European countries revealed that an average of 77% people support “taking in” refugees.² But, despite this, Tuesday Reitano, writing in the Official Companion Book to The Walk, describes how international migration has become “not only politicised but weaponised, used as a means to draw back from international obligations”. She cites a recent report by the Ethical Journalism Network, observing how news outlets grant “disproportionate airtime to political views that [come] close to hate-speech, stereotyping and social exclusion of refugees and migrants.” With this as the backdrop, The Walk stepped into a fraught and divisive social and political environment across Europe.

Hostilities in Greece

“Following hostility and threats on social media, we had police protection in Larissa. We started walking with 300 children aged three years and up, holding little hand-made puppets, singing a traditional kids song adapted to welcome Amal. After a few minutes, 20 people appeared and started screaming abuse and throwing shoes, watermelons, oranges at us. It was terrifying but no-one was badly hurt. The police didn’t react. The hostility on social media intensified, and Amal appeared on every website and newspaper. We had to cancel an event in Athens due to a demonstration organised against Amal by extreme right-wing parties. The city-centre was closed and there was a clash between the demonstrators and Amal’s supporters. With Amal being in the spotlight people supported her more actively. The small group of aggressors couldn’t silence thousands of people of all ages that worked for the Walk, participated and followed us.”

—Country Producer

1.4.2 The pandemic

The pandemic had a huge impact on The Walk. The project was postponed twice; contact with and between performers was limited at best, conducted almost exclusively on Zoom, and time for preparing to welcome Little Amal was dramatically reduced. Plans for the core team members to travel to meet participating groups, and to scope out possibilities for engagement in the early stages of production had to be scrapped. Schools and theatres were closed, many artists were out of work, severely derailing the job of coordinating and preparing for The Walk, both for the creative team and participating communities.



Entertainment industry workers protest in Naples during the pandemic

² Pew Research Centre

1.4.3 Local settings

Chios is a major port for refugees and asylum seekers arriving from Turkey. Vial Refugee Camp, a waste-processing plant turned Reception and Identification Centre with a capacity of 1,000, hosted up to 3,500 people between 2015-2020. The population is now down to 800, but the population in Chios, as across Greece, is very divided over the refugees. “In 2019/2020 the prevailing attitude in Chios was [coloured by] the negative incidents with the refugees, local opposition to the creation of a new Facility (camp)... [this] combined with the fact that everything was closed down due to the Covid virus created friction.””



Images of Vial Refugee Camp, Chios.

Naples has seen a sharp increase in migrant populations in the past 15 years. Many people are held in detention centres, while others live in the neighbourhoods in the city centre where Little Amal walked. Schools and youth programmes are the only spaces where different cultures can come together, though migrant children often do not attend for reasons of alienation and fear. The pandemic forced many refugees and migrants onto the streets who, with no support from the state, were reliant on volunteer organisations for food and shelter. “The city is not welcoming to refugees, but the people are” [Naples Focus Group].

Manchester sees itself as a city with a long history of welcoming refugees and Little Amal’s welcome in Manchester was the finale event of the Manchester International Festival (MIF). Calling on a long-established community engagement programme to deliver this event, MIF organised a steering group of people with lived experience of migration to work with the creative team to devise the programme. Local frontline service organisations campaign against UK’s hostile refugee and asylum policies.

1.4.4 Refugee stories in popular storytelling

Whilst narratives about refugees are prevalent across popular news platforms, there are limited examples of artistic storytelling content that have punched through into the mainstream to capture our imagination. Furthermore, news agenda-driven stories focus predominantly on the misery and desperation of the refugee experience.

The past decades have offered us series such as Channel 4's *Exodus* and films such as *Last Resort*, *In This World*, *The Visitor*, *Welcome*, *Human Flow*, *For Sama*, *Limbo*, *Flee*, *His House* and the upcoming *The Swimmers* – most of which are documentaries, dramas, and dramatisations of true stories. We have seen refugee storylines integrated into primetime TV dramas like *The Street* and *Years and Years* and even music videos like MIA's *Borders* and John Legend's *Love Me Now*. Authors such as Mohsin Hamid, Khaled Hosseini, and Chris Cleave have also brought refugee stories into mainstream reading cultures.

However examples from the world of theatre and instances of storytelling which are appropriate for families to experience together are not as common (notable exceptions being *Benjamin Zephaniah's Refugee Boy*, *Barroux's Welcome*, Onjali Rauf's *The boy at the back of the class* and Disney's *Encanto*). As such, there is an exceptionalism to *The Walk*, with its narrative of joy and hope, which has managed to achieve popular cultural recognition across borders within a very short period of time.



Little Amal walks through Bristol,
Refugee Week, June, 2022
©Paul Gillis/Reach PLC

2.

PLANNING & DELIVERY OF THE WALK

2.1—AIMS AND AMBITIONS

2.1.1 The co-production model

2.1.2 From aspirations to objectives

2.1.3 Little Amal as a change-maker

2.2—WELCOME EVENTS EN ROUTE

2.2.1 Chios

2.2.2 Naples

2.2.3 Manchester

Little Amal in Dunkirk
©Sylvain Lefevre/Getty Images



2.1—AIMS AND AMBITIONS

“Hope. Too BIG to ignore... Little Amal is 3.5 tall because we want the world to grow big enough to greet her. We want her to inspire us to think big and act bigger.”

—The Walk’s website landing page

The name, Amal, means hope in Arabic and Little Amal’s task is to “represent all children fleeing war, violence and persecution”, celebrate the dignity and potential of refugees, and in doing so shift the narrative around the refugee crisis. Cast as a game-changer, she provides a highly visible, joyful rallying point for audiences to engage in acts of welcome that stand in defiance to the refugee policies of most countries. Inviting communities to co-create an imagined, alternative world where refugees are received with dancing and music, aims to create the conditions for change to happen in real life. The Walk opens up a different kind of political space, as a member of the team described it, “coming in through the window, not through the door... Our project is to change or to inspire public opinion to think differently, that will in turn support the advocacy projects.”

The invitation was simple - to create a welcome Little Amal would never forget. The one imperative was that Little Amal was to be seen to be welcomed by local political power – usually the mayor – in the community. By engaging with cultural, humanitarian, civic and religious organisations and schools, they hoped to create a corridor of friends made up of all the people who had welcomed her along her way, galvanised by the urgent message: ‘don’t forget about us’. With children as a key target audience, they devised an Education Pack with exercises, ideas and creative projects designed to introduce Little Amal’s story and to open up new ways to talk about and respond to forced migration.

2.1.1 The co-production model

The Walk was achieved through a co-production model, based on shared financial and artistic responsibility between The Walk and the communities Little Amal visited. The latter are referred to throughout this case study as co-producers or co-producing communities to acknowledge the centrality of their role in delivering the project. The Walk recruited and paid country-producers to deliver the welcome events and covered all the costs related to bringing Amal to each location. The country producers and co-producers fundraised for the costs of the welcome. There were many different production models. Some events were taken over by large cultural organisations or festivals

in major cities, some events were directed by the country producers, some had significant budgets, some delivered events on a shoestring. The artistic director provided an overarching narrative that guided the journey as a whole, which for instance included the idea that Little Amal would have a tantrum in Naples. He also supported the country

“The fact that it stayed glued together and we were able to do this amazing adventure was because of the unbelievable communities that got involved and got involved really, that were willing to follow leadership that was going, I can’t guarantee what will happen tomorrow, but it will be okay follow. Sometimes it was very hairy.”

—Core team member

producers in the lead up to the event. But his most important directive was to “go local” encouraging each community to conceive and deliver the welcome on their own terms. A videographer and photographer followed the journey to capture the story as it unfolded. A film team travelled with Little Amal, recording her journey for a documentary to be released in early 2023.

When The Walk started, the team had no idea if this model of co-producing with communities was going to work or not; if they were going to be able to manage the huge logistical challenges of the route; and whether people would turn out to see her as she walked through their town or city. The one thing they were absolutely certain of was that Little Amal was a unique work of art, animated

by the most experienced and respected puppeteers; guided by an internationally acclaimed artistic director, and backed up by an ace production team. Exhaustive attention had been paid to creating her persona, personality, her story, her likes and dislikes, her hopes and fears, and to preparing her to encounter the world with spontaneity, curiosity and joy. From the first event in Gaziantep near the Turkey/Syrian border, the crowds were there when she set off. The musicians, the actors, the children, the Mayor, each played their part to create the magic and the team thought, “OK, maybe this is going to work.”

“The team working on a show were the most creative when they had least ability to anticipate... When you’re making it up, when you’re improvising, to say the obvious, the more experience you have, the more skill you have, the better. Because you need everything.”

—Core team member

“Throughout the walk, I was sure going to collapse 10,000 times... And then the execution of The Walk, everything was cutting it very, very close to the bone.”

—Core team member

2.1.2 From aspirations to objectives

The team did not set out with an agreed set of impact goals. Instead the project objectives were iterative, informed by shared assumptions and values that were articulated during interviews with the core team. Based on conversations with the team, they can be grouped around three main headings:

Delivery

- To create an artwork of the highest quality that tells the story of a refugee child
- To manage the extraordinary logistical challenges posed by The Walk
- To inspire and support communities to create a welcome she would never forget
- To present Little Amal as the representative of displaced children everywhere

Awareness

- To be welcomed by power and to be seen to be welcomed by power
- To give visibility to refugees, bringing the marginalised into the centre of the community
- To use Little Amal’s story to open up discussion about and creative responses to migration in schools
- To connect to a global audience through social media and website

Legacy

- To shift perceptions around refugees from being ‘an issue’ and ‘a crisis’, to individual human beings with potential
- To create a corridor of friends, galvanised by the message: ‘Don’t forget about us’

2.1.3 Little Amal as a change-maker

“The whole idea, the big word, is joy. The big word is think about potential. Think about these people, not as a cause... We change the game, people go, well, actually it’s great. She’s lovely, we like her.”

—Core team member

Although The Walk didn’t have a theory of change, Little Amal is clearly cast as a change maker. She provides a visible, tangible focus for audiences to engage in acts of welcome that stand in defiance to the refugee policies of most countries. The mechanisms of change envisaged could be described as:

- Communities are invited to co-create an imagined, alternative world where refugees are welcomed with shared values of compassion, curiosity, connection and celebration, drowning out and/or dispelling negative attitudes towards refugees
- The properties of a puppet elicit curiosity and in turn solicit an open emotional connection that can start the process of rethinking attitudes towards refugees.
- The Education Pack introduces Little Amal’s story to hundreds of thousands of children - a key target audience, giving teachers new ways of talking about and responding to ideas of migration. When children had met Little Amal’s story at school prior to her visit to the community, the welcome was strongly contextualised and therefore more impactful, both for the children in the audience and their families, which supported shifts in perception and narrative.



Little Amal visits Old Trafford ©Zozan Yasar

2.2—WELCOME EVENTS EN ROUTE

Invitations were sent out asking cities, towns and villages along Little Amal's route to give her a welcome "she would never forget". 147 communities rose to the challenge, involving a total of almost 150,000 artists, participants and audiences, supported by 469 co-producing partner organisations. We reached out to three locations who had welcomed her – Chios in Greece, Naples in Italy and Manchester in the UK - and ran focus groups to answer our research questions. In each location an interdisciplinary group of artists, teachers, cultural workers, community organisers and people working in front-line service organisations, who had worked closely with the country producer devising and delivering the welcomes, gathered to reflect on the experience.



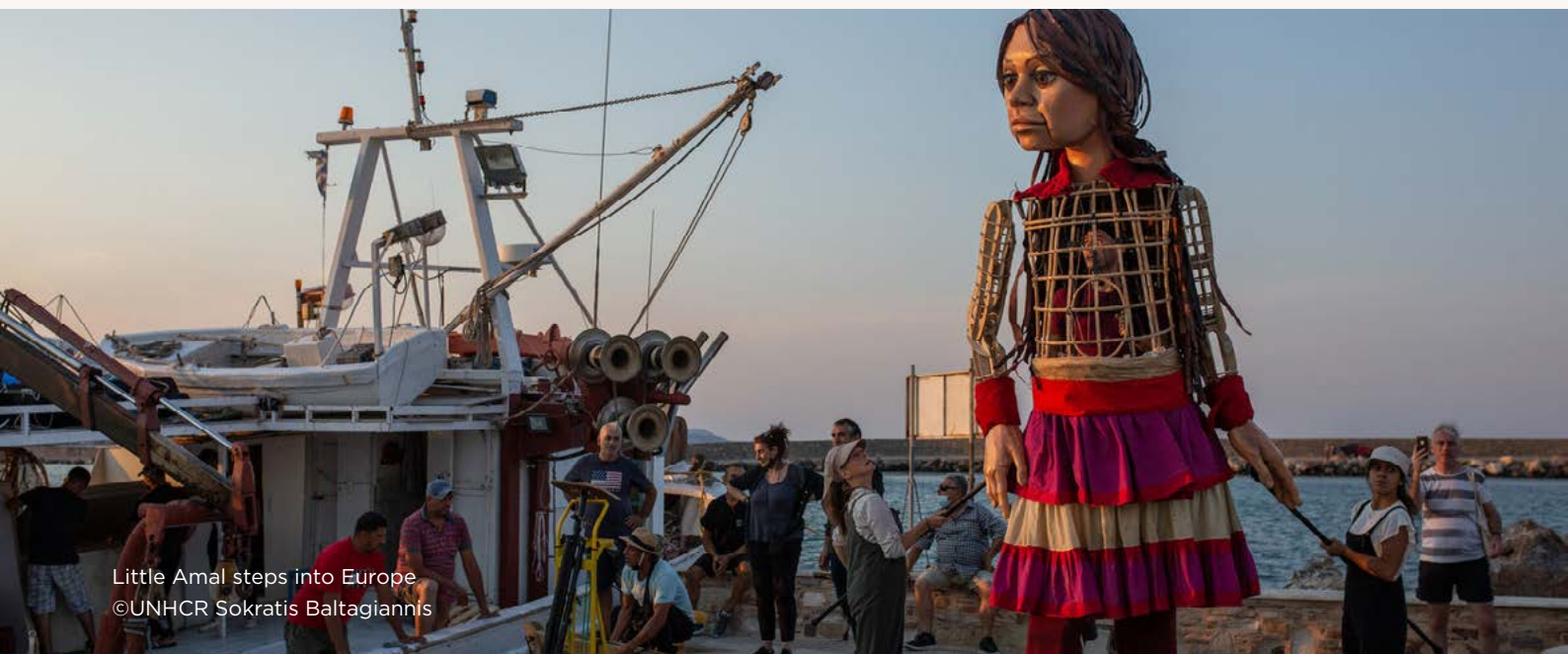
"Amal proposes an image of migration that is beautiful, that has value, that is something to look forward to, to dialogue with, to play with, to learn from, to confront, thus unhinging the toxic and the abused narrative of drama, fear, danger, exclusion, violence."

—Naples Focus Group

2.2.1 Welcoming Little Amal to Chios

Participants in the focus group: add in info here

Little Amal's welcome was part of the Chios Music Festival and revolved around a very well known, traditional song sung to welcome in the New Year. New lyrics written by children and young people welcoming Amal to her new life in Europe wished her luck in finding her family. Different performance groups, including the city orchestra, a youth choir, refugee children and Brazilian drummers played the song along Little Amal's route from the port to the main square. A huge crowd turned out, way beyond the expectation of the organisers - many were children who had learnt about Little Amal in school with their families. This was the first event in Greece and those who were against the welcome, stayed away. However the negative backlash on social media that followed the event fanned the hostilities that were to erupt as Little Amal moved through Greece.



Little Amal steps into Europe
©UNHCR Sokratis Baltagiannis

“Groups of people in favour of the refugees, who were involved, offered solidarity, wanting to help, to discuss, to listen, they weren’t heard for so many years, because they didn’t shout! But all of a sudden, because of Amal, most of these people – they came, as part of the audience who welcomed Amal.”

—Chios Focus Group



Far Left:
Children
rehearsing

Left:
Children work
with Education
Activity Pack
©Adonis
Logothetis



©Adonis Logothesis

“The artistic dimension of the project helped a lot to include people that would not be included under other circumstances. The positive side is that through their artistic involvement they softened their views on the refugee issue.”

—Chios Focus Group

“Because extremists attacked Amal fanatically, they proved that unfortunately it is not possible to unite everyone. Amal made some voices sound louder but also brought the existing problems to the surface.”

—Chios Focus Group



Singers welcome Little Amal
©Adonis Logothesis



©Adonis Logothesis



Students from Chios Music School rehearse



©Adonis Logothesis

2.2.2 Welcoming Little Amal to Naples

Participants in focus group: 16 artists, 6 educators, 4 migration activists

Little Amal was welcomed in three of the city's poorest districts where events had been devised by school children working with local artists. Highlights were the gift of a skirt featuring children's messages of welcome and a performance piece 'Disarming the Gun', featured a father gifting Amal a book about his daughter who was killed in the street by Camorra. When Little Amal arrived in Piazza Plebiscito in the centre of the city she had a **tantrum** accompanied by 300 drummers with dancers in a tour force performance of the Tarantola, a very energetic traditional dance. *"Everyone was concentrated. Everyone wanted to achieve the expected result. The square was explosive".*

Little Amal walks through Forcella district
©Amapola Chianese



"We had to get as much as possible, we did not want to miss this opportunity to talk about migration in another way, to bring it into the schools and onto the streets".

—Naples Focus Group

"When I asked my group if we wanted to participate there was a strong, spontaneous YES! It was not important who we were and our differences. We wanted to welcome Amal all together and do it well despite the short time".

—Naples Focus Group



Young people perform: Disarming the Gun
©Amapola Chianese



THE SKIRT FOR AMAL

A skirt created for Little Amal by school children in Naples, each panel of the huge garment was painted by a different child or group of children. The panels were sewed together by the Association of African Seamstresses.



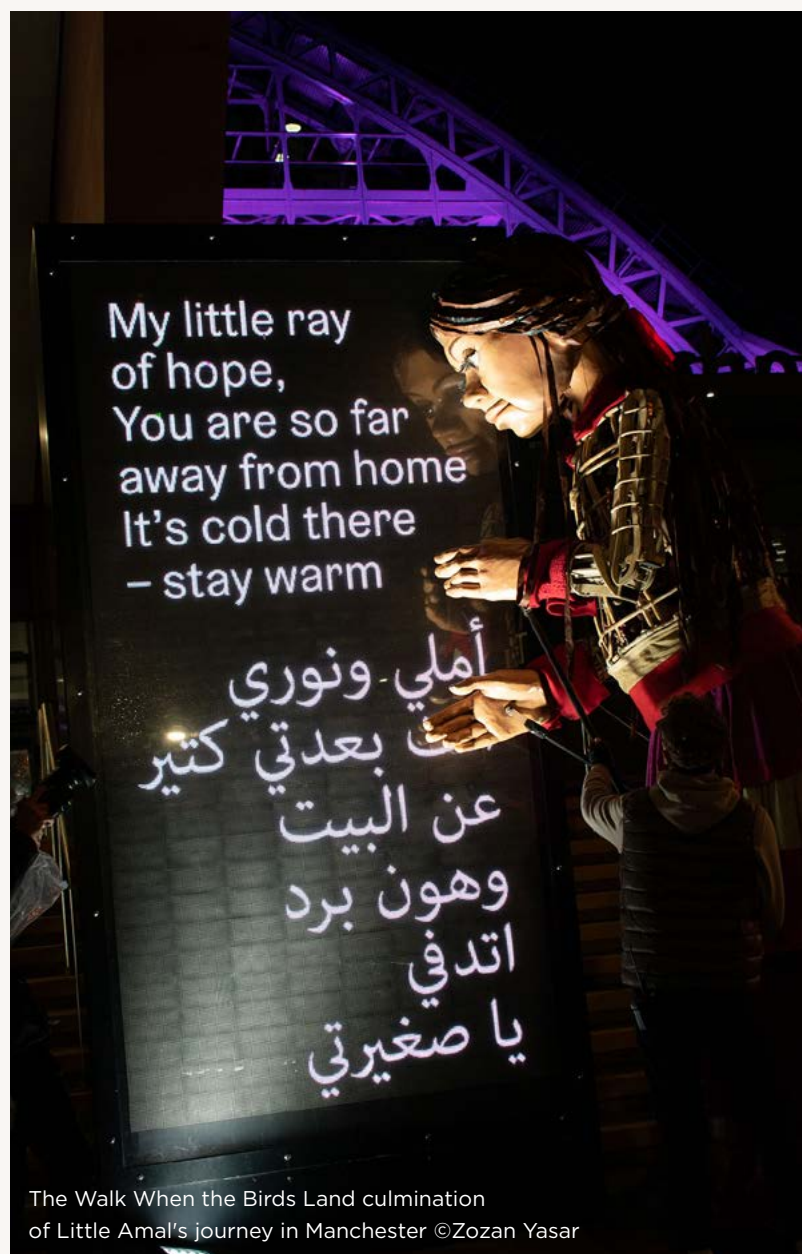
“Beauty is important to bring us out of despair.”
 —Naples Focus Group

“Everyone wanted to be there. Despite the divisions and the speed with which we had to organise ourselves, we saw that making art together is possible.”
 —Naples Focus Group



2.2.3 Welcoming Little Amal to Manchester

Little Amal's search for her mother ended with 'When the Birds Land', an epic cross-city promenade performance, directed by film director Simon Stone, involving over 4,000 participants, 110 local performers and 10 schools. Launched with speeches from civic leaders and activists and live streamed, Little Amal was welcomed by refugee artists and musicians, drag queens and homeless poets, who performed for her on her route into the city centre. 5,000 people had gathered to watch the finale - her encounter with the spirit of her mother - and witnessed the beginning of her new life, looked after by the people of Manchester.



The Walk When the Birds Land culmination of Little Amal's journey in Manchester ©Zozan Yasar

Does Little Amal find her mother?

A recurring question we heard in our focus groups, particularly from children, was 'Does Little Amal find her mother?' The answer is that at the climax of the event in Manchester, her mother's spirit spoke to her, telling her that she should stop her search now. Her words, spoken in Arabic were translated and projected. At this point, Little Amal the puppet disappears into the smoke and a real girl emerges in her place.

"To see that her struggle need not define her... gives us (refugees and asylum seekers) all encouragement and hope".

—Manchester Focus Group

Little Amal visits Wigan ©Lee Baxter



"Seeing the sheer number of people come out leaves a beautiful memory for us as an organisation that supports refugees."

—Manchester Focus Group



Above:
The Quilt (see bottom right) features in Little Amal's visit to Rochdale ©Alan Hamer and Rochdale Borough Council

Family puppetry making work shops for The Walk ©Priti Shikotra

“We observed that the [refugee community] felt ‘seen’ through this work, and that the children felt that the event / work was about them and for them - and it brought a realisation that their role in building Manchester is important.”

—Manchester Focus Group

“In Leigh there were many platforms on which the far right put out negative things - but you could see this was a situation where people, communities were actually defending (her) and calling out that behaviour - and it encouraged positive connections and discussion in a way we’ve not seen before.”

—Manchester Focus Group



Little Amal visits Wigan ©Lee Baxter



Quilting workshop at Rethink Rebuild Society ©Priti Shikotra

3.

ACHIEVE- MENTS AND CHALLENGES

3.1—SUCCESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

- 3.1.1 New connections and alliances
- 3.1.2 Spotighting and celebrating refugees
- 3.1.3 Building emotional bonds with audiences
- 3.1.4 Visibility and celebrity status
- 3.1.5 An acclaimed Education Pack

3.2—CHALLENGES AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

- 3.2.1 Insufficient refugee engagement
- 3.2.2 The absence of aftercare
- 3.2.3 Lack of clarity around Little Amal's political role
- 3.2.4 Missed opportunities online
- 3.2.5 A dominant single narrative

Little Amal — When the Birds Land, Castlefield Bowl, Manchester
©Eddie Coldwick



3.1 SUCCESSES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

3.1.1 New connections and alliances

The Walk created new connections and alliances. In all three of our research locations, we heard how Little Amal’s visit brought people together, often for the first time, across sectors - educators, artists and humanitarian organisations - but also within sectors. For example, in Naples, the visit unified people and organisations that have sometimes been “divided and uncooperative”. One member of the core team mentioned that several refugee organisations in the same city had come together for the first time to create the welcome: “Even though [these organisations] were essentially moving in the same direction, it took Little Amal to create that link or communication between them.”

Her magnetism was compelling. People reached out to each other across traditional boundaries, as a member of the core team commented, “a big theatre is suddenly thinking how they support an event that is happening led by a solidarity group, and vice versa”. A circle of connectivity emerged around her “making something that feels distant and unreal just a little bit closer” and fostered a “different kind of solidarity”. [Core team member]

“In Naples Little Amal brought a “very rich imagery, generating a kind of ‘collective ritual’ from which one cannot escape”.

—Naples Focus Group

“People were calling out to each other – they could not be ignored! Amazing to see how people were brought together – it was exciting to witness kids come together and play together.”

—Manchester Focus Group

In Chios, where, as everywhere in Greece, attitudes towards refugees are extremely polarised, the artistic dimension of the project “helped a lot to include people that would not be included under other circumstances” [Chios Focus Group]. The fact that so many school children had learnt about Little Amal in school and wanted to attend the event, meant that their parents and grandparents came too, and local families accounted for a large proportion of the unexpectedly high turnout.



Little Amal visits Vial Refugee Camp, Chios ©UNHCR Sokratis Baltagiannis

“Amal can be the way to unite everyone together, even against unjust policies, and not only by acting as a bridge between associations and individuals that are split, divided and uncooperative, an isolation that has been reinforced with the pandemic, but precisely by planning how Amal can stay in our territories.”

—Naples Focus Group

3.1.2 Spotlighting and celebrating refugees

One of the key aims of The Walk was to bring people living in the margins of society to the centre and to celebrate them. Members of the core team cited moments of connection between Little Amal and refugees as those with the deepest impact, “the way that refugee children or refugees [in Manchester] saw themselves in Amal and walked with her. And they were proud.” Amal’s visit brought positive awareness to migrants, refugees and asylum seekers: “For those kids who had migrant backgrounds, [I experienced that they] had a voice – felt more comfortable and free and supported to talk about their backgrounds without shame.” [Manchester Focus Group].

“It gave people the opportunity to really SEE asylum seekers and refugees and gave people the real opportunity to show that they welcome asylum seekers and refugees - and it made Wigan feel like it wants to be a welcoming place...”

—Manchester Focus Group

“[In Chios] these people who had been shut off into these terrible camps were suddenly being celebrated in the centre of the city. And the women [in the crowd] were very emotional, that’s my memory of them anyway, and were standing sort of smiling and that was very powerful.”

—Core team member

The opportunity to acknowledge and lift up the work of frontline organisations and people working in solidarity with refugees in camps was also important. This was particularly noticeable in Chios where people who were supportive of refugees “hadn’t been heard for so many years” [Chios Focus Group].

“Amal was the reason that solidarity in the community became visible again.”

—Chios Focus Group

Fairy Tale in Chios

“Last year was like a fairy tale for me and for the children. It was like a very big party right here in our place, and they were a part of it. 12 year old Hussein [not his real name] was in the audience, and as he watched, his eyes were filled with tears. He said, “This is a child like us!” And for the first time he started speaking about his story and how he got here, and how similar Amal’s story is to the stories of all the children at the centre. It made the children open up a little bit, to share their own feelings and the stress that they had in their minds and in their hearts. All the trauma that they had from the journey that brought them here, and about the future.”

—From an interview with member of staff at the refuge for unaccompanied children in Chios

3.1.3 Building emotional bonds with participants and audiences

Little Amal created a strong emotional bond with her audience. The Walk opened up the possibility of responding to refugees in a new way through creativity. In Naples, the audience and participants responded with joy and wonder, “she helped people out of the quagmire”. And in Chios, her story and her age gave her broad appeal and “thoughts on the refugee issue were sweetened and not filled with so much anger”.

“People were really living it. They were really crying. They were really emotional about everything.”

—Chios Focus Group

This emotional connection fuelled the engagement needed to deliver a complex event. A musician in Naples commented: “When I asked my group if we wanted to participate there was a strong, spontaneous YES! It was not important who we were and our differences.”

One respondent in Manchester noted that performing in the choir as part of her welcome “was a way of relating to her experience – we wanted to give her hope now that she is here and that she is empowered and strong”.

“There’s something about [a puppet] that when it’s alive, it becomes a vessel. I find that very often an audience will pour in whatever they’re feeling into this vessel and that gets channeled through this and they can empathize on a deeper level.”

—Core Team Member

3.1.4 Visibility and celebrity status

Being seen to be welcomed by people in positions of power was an integral part of The Walk’s vision, and by the time Little Amal arrived in Manchester she had achieved celebrity status.

“Because of her scale, she couldn’t be ignored even by political and religious figures. It made it very difficult for them to go, oh, well, we’re just going to ignore this giant child knocking outside our church door.”

—Core team member

Along her route, she achieved exceptional access to political and religious leaders. In Rome, she was welcomed to the Vatican by the Pope, and in London, the Dean of St Paul’s opened the doors of St Paul’s Cathedral for her, a privilege usually only reserved for royalty. She had a private meeting with the Archbishop of Canterbury and all along her route, the mayor of each city, town and village had welcomed her.

Image:
Vatican Media



3.1.5 An acclaimed Education Pack

The [Education Activity Pack](#) engaged hundreds of thousands of children and made an exceptionally important contribution to The Walk. In the places Little Amal visited, it engaged children before, during and after the welcome event, which deepened their experience of her visit. The Education Pack was also widely used in schools all over Europe and beyond, in places not on Amal's route.

“It was very clear where places where the audience was briefed, especially the young ones, had a little bit more info. And of course... when they have that information, then they want to know more.”

—Core team member

In Naples, the educational work meant that Amal was not just a temporary event: “she is still present in the activities and has generated dialogues, reflections and expectations”.

“We had to get as much as possible, we did not want to miss this opportunity to talk about migration in another way, to bring it into the schools and onto the streets.”

—Naples Focus Group

From the Manchester focus group we heard how the education work facilitated new conversations: “Some children have a limited understanding of why their parents might have migrated in the past - maybe teachers have dealt with it superficially or made assumptions... We saw that the kids asked their parents to explain why they migrated.”

The attention paid to migration helped pupils with lived experience to gain confidence “in their own identity and in describing their identities to others; in finding other ways to articulate how they feel about other topics in school... the year 6s felt more able to challenge - had greater confidence to disagree.” —Manchester Focus Group.

“For the children I worked with [Little Amal's visit] made a dream come true for them - the conversations that took place afterwards around identity and culture were different.”

—Manchester Focus Group



Education was central throughout Greece

In Greece, The Walk's major delivery partner was the national Theatre Education Network of Teachers from kindergarten to high school. A major win was getting the Education Pack into the school curriculum for the whole country. They delivered 30 hours of online training on the pack, attended by nearly 400 teachers, and created One Step Forward, a touring exhibition that went to three cities in Greece featuring work created for Amal. They mobilised their contacts in the seven towns and cities that Amal went through to encourage students to join in the welcome events, bringing their parents and grandparents as members of the audience. In addition, in the lead up to the welcome event in Chios, seven children from Syria living in Chios and seven local children, filmed, acted and produced [the short film](#) inspired by Little Amal's story - it had its first screening the evening before Little Amal arrived in Chios and has been screened in several schools since.

3.2. CHALLENGES AND MISSED OPPORTUNITIES

“I don’t want her to be a transitory, ephemeral moment – a moment that trivialises the humanitarian urge. This happens when we sympathise with children but forget the source of their suffering.”

—Samar Yazbek³

3.2.1 Insufficient refugee engagement

“Many of these communities actually did have refugee communities in them already. [The Walk] could have been bringing in more displaced communities to be with Little Amal”.

—Lina Sergie Attar, Karam Foundation, The Walk partner organisation

Although Little Amal was created to humanise refugee experiences and to celebrate the potential of refugees, the welcomes in the main were designed and delivered by host communities, with a less prominent role played by people from displaced communities. As one team member put it simply: “there wasn’t enough engagement with the communities that we were trying to raise awareness about”. Another concurred: “we didn’t have enough resources to get more people with lived experience involved from the get go”. A trustee of a major UK charity working with refugees said “there was not an easy or specific way for [organisations working with refugees] to get involved”. In Naples, migrant communities did not take part in the events, noting that “fewer and fewer [migrants] want to be involved in projects where they have no part in the organisation.” This resonated with feedback in Manchester where it was recommended that more “[people with] lived experience be involved in the overall project planning”.

3.2.2 The absence of aftercare

“We weren’t thinking of the tomorrow, we were busy surviving the today.”

—Core team member

When discussing the aftercare and onward stewardship of partners and audiences after Little Amal left a location, a drumbeat of regret runs through team interviews. When the project and its staff moved on, there was no lasting infrastructure for groups to continue to stay connected with Amal

“Because every time we finish with the city and we finish with an audience and we have a lot of children and parents [saying] Where’s she going? How can we keep in touch with her? Where can I send my drawing?... And we were always talking about this but it wasn’t the right time to talk about this because we had to move to the next [city].”

—Country producer

and each other, to meet and organise. This was mirrored in the feedback from the focus groups which concurred that Little Amal left a void behind her verging on a sense of abandonment after the intensity of the interaction. 10,000 letters were written to Little Amal by children via the education programme, but they remain unanswered and many children are still waiting to find out if Little Amal ever found her mother.

All team members lamented the “crazy pace”, as one described it, at which Amal passed through communities, making it hard to embed impact at the level of the individual and connect in ways that will convert audiences and allies into long-term friends. Some core team members said they missed the opportunity to spend time, exchange with and learn from the communities they were there to serve.

“Being so heavily involved and moving through countries and cities so quickly, sometimes three a day, the amount of engagement with community groups or artists or even public figures is very limited.”

—Core team member

³ The Official Companion Book to The Walk

The speed also frustrated the communities organising to welcome Amal, who felt that important details were missed. For example the handover of gifts, such as the skirt made for Amal by the children in Naples, was rushed.

“You’ve got a community that’s worked for six months on something. It’s a two hour event. But the minute we left their city, we also left them behind, and we couldn’t carry them with us. We sent an email saying thank you and would you like to give us any feedback.”

—Core team member

3.2.3 Lack of clarity and consensus around Little Amal’s political role

“We had partners or we had internal debates where you go, but she could be more. And you go, yeah, maybe, but she’s ten and she likes ice cream. And the fact that she’s ten and she likes ice cream is a political act.”

—Core team member

Taking a 3.5m puppet of a Syrian refugee across Europe is a political act, and the notion that everything is political, including Amal, is embraced by the project team. And yet there was a difference of opinion about her political voice. This was commented on in focus groups. “There was no analysis of the meaning, no raising of awareness despite the attempts of some artists to give meaning and permanence to the events and related artistic creations.” [Naples Focus Group] Little Amal’s decision to make Manchester her home led many in the focus group to insist that raising awareness of the next stage in her journey as an unaccompanied asylum seeker, was imperative. The artistic directive they were given was “to create compassion rather than be political... but the issues that it raises are too political and too important to NOT try to use the enormous visibility that is [achieved by] an art project.” [Manchester Focus Group]

“The issues that [The Walk] raises are too political and too important to NOT try to use the enormous visibility that is [achieved by] an art project.”

—Manchester Focus Group

“Little Amal can get involved with the Asylum process... also show the suffering we face....endless waiting for years, going from hostel to hotel to homelessness...this is the reality of the process... we could push for more meetings with her/public interviews... Amal’s story was too easy – we need to show this to popular opinion – it is not easy otherwise to do.”

—Manchester Focus Group

3.2.4 Missed opportunities online

The Walk intended to use social media as a means to further the goal of positively shifting the narrative on refugees. And yet, it was generally felt that the opportunity to use social media to keep ‘friends’ engaged and energised did not reach its full potential. The vast majority of social media content was reportage-style video clips, or images, documenting the single narrative of the epic journey, of a symbol passing through civic and geographic space (with footage provided by the videographers accompanying The Walk). This felt one-dimensional, repetitive, coming from her perspective only, and resulted in a flatness to her presence on social media, especially to young ‘friends’ who have already experienced and engaged with her.

Notably, The Walk’s social media accounts did not provide much opportunity for the amplification of participant stories, partner voices or efforts, or signposting to their accounts. Feedback from Naples pointed to some of the problems of representing and sharing the experience online, noting “there are no places to share the materials produced or to exchange ideas”. This marked a departure from the central role partners played in developing and delivering creative ideas along the corridor of friends along Amal’s route. Some of these live on the current website but feel hidden away and are not presented in an engaging or artistic way, making it difficult to engage with the content.

Spotlighting The White Helmets

The White Helmets (a humanitarian volunteer organisation, officially known as Syria Civil Defence) recorded [this](#) short video for Little Amal’s birthday last year. It seems to have been lost, or at least not searchable on the website, but it immediately gives you a window into the world of the young people Amal represents, as the White Helmets turn their attention to rebuilding a playground for children.



Syria Civil Defence/White Helmets

3.2.5 A dominant single narrative

Although she was tasked with amplifying the stories of the children she represents and transforming the perception of refugees through storytelling, the narrative legacy of The Walk is dominated by Little Amal’s story, as discussed above. Her stature presents a challenge - her size attracts exceptional public and media attention but on the other hand she is also, as a team member described her, “untouchable... an unreachable giant”. And so it is a challenge to lift other people or stories up high enough to be heard or seen alongside her. This was described in feedback from the Manchester focus group: “the depth of engagement was held by Amal alone - it wasn’t shared [out] with those communities she passed through.” The Walk did not provide an effective portal into the lives of the people who welcomed her, or those she was created to represent, to re-balance this.

“Amal seemed alive, yes, but brought no real awareness. The theme of borders, of walls, of exclusion, of children left in the street was not focused [on].”

—Naples Focus Group

4

REIMAGINING THE WALK THROUGH AN IMPACT LENS

4.1—THE STORY ENVIRONMENT

4.2—THE IMPACT OF ART, THE ART OF IMPACT

4.3—NAVIGATING POWER AND POLITICS

4.4—BALANCING ART, IMPACT AND MONEY

4.5—TOWARDS AN IMPACT STRATEGY

4.6—THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF IMPACT

©Adonis Logothetis



4.0—THE IMPACT LENS

The main purpose of this case study is to see how the impact methodology, devised for non-fiction filmmakers and codified in the Impact Field Guide, could effectively be translated to other art-forms. In this section we retrofit impact planning exercises to The Walk that are normally used by film teams and their partners prior to a film's release.

What is an impact strategy?

An impact strategy is the plan put in place to ensure that an artwork spurs change on an issue. It is based on an analysis of:

- who needs to be engaged in the artwork to deliver its full potential
- what partnerships, tools and resources are needed to reach the desired change
- what partners, participants and audiences can do to support the desired change

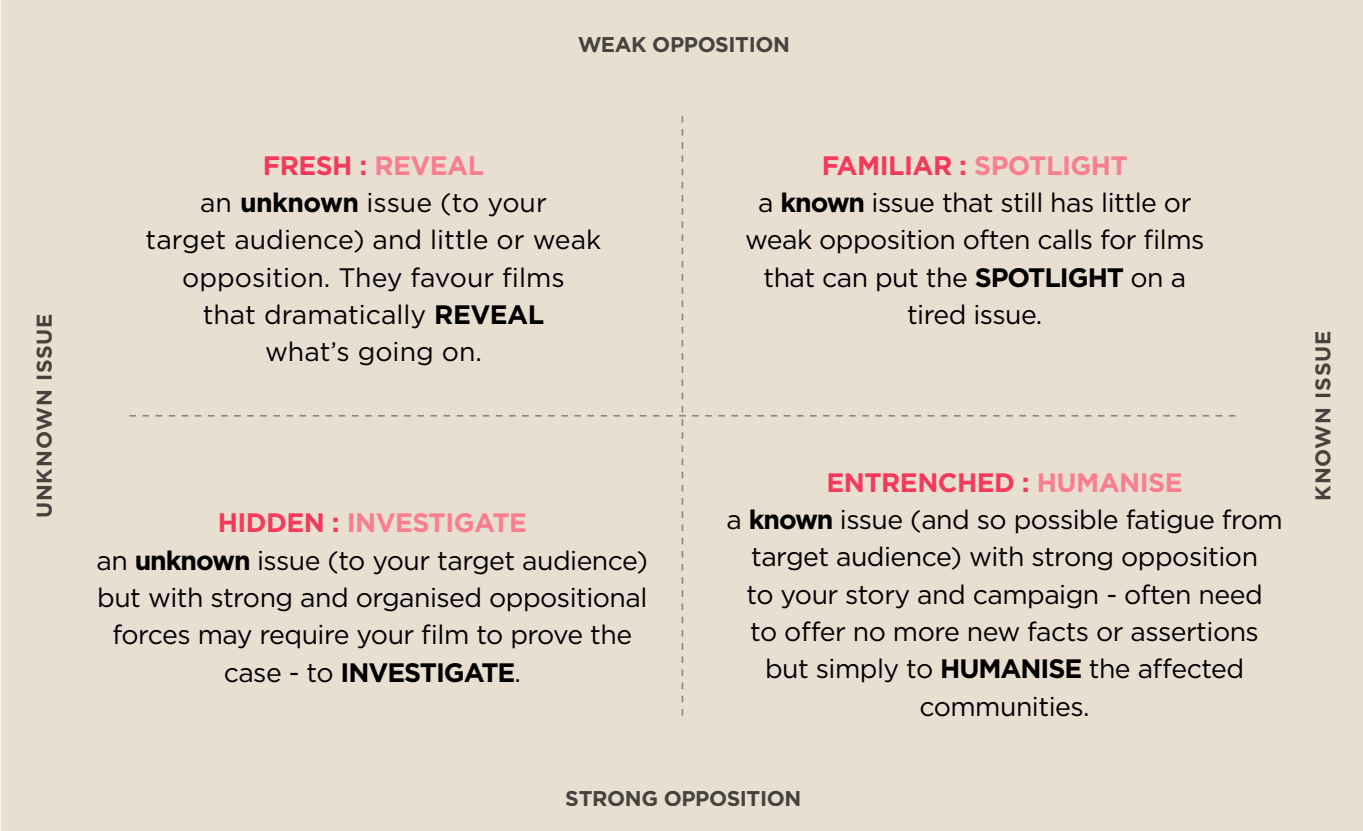
The impact strategy planning process usually begins well in advance of the artwork going out into the world, ideally at the inception of the artwork. Time would be put aside for the team to give space to discussing and agreeing on the change they want to see, having the big conversations about value and vision, and resolving potentially conflicting priorities within the team.

We start this process of reflection looking at the Story Environment that The Walk stepped out into. We then apply the steps that The Walk team would have gone through, if they had developed an impact strategy from the start of the project, to see how some of the challenges that arose could have been averted. To do this we investigate three standard topics that creative teams grapple with in the early stages of planning a strategy:

- the tensions between art and impact;
- power dynamics and accountability;
- balancing art, impact and money.

4.1—THE STORY ENVIRONMENT

One of the first exercises in the Impact Field Guide throws light on the kind of films that take hold in popular culture, based on whether the issue it focuses on is relatively known or unknown, and whether there is strong and organised opposition or little resistance. The Walk fits squarely into the Entrenched box in the lower right quadrant below - hostility to refugees and migrants is well organised and vocal, and those who welcome refugees, as we heard from our feedback in Chios, often feel silenced and overwhelmed. With its message of hope and desire to bring people together around shared values, The Walk is well placed to achieve impact according to this analysis.



“The hope based method [of communication] is based on the idea that fear makes people retreat, it ends the conversation. People go into what we call 'downstairs survival brain'. They switch off, it turns off empathy. So when you have positive emotions, it opens up a real opportunity to talk to people.”

—Kristin Hulaas Sunde – PositiveComms UK

4.2—THE IMPACT OF ART, THE ART OF IMPACT

“I wanted it to be something that gets under your skin without the leaflets, without the banners. Every time somebody said, I’m making a banner, I’d go, can you make butterflies instead?”

—Artistic Director of The Walk, Amir Nizar Zuabi

One of the first big conversations for a team undertaking the impact planning process, is to unpack the potential for tension and culture clash between the intrinsic impact of art and what we will call the secondary or extrinsic impact created by change makers from other sectors who might be engaged in delivering impact strategy down the line. In their report *Riding the Waves*, Pop Culture and Social Change in the UK, the authors highlight the fact that some of the creatives they interviewed “are wary of initiatives to instrumentalise their work for political ends.” Writers and producers “are genuinely sceptical of charities and the fact that they are often pushing an agenda... and want too much control over the messaging”. [*Riding the Waves* - Sachrajda and Peach]

“Something I used to say frequently,... is we don’t make big claims for what we’re doing, we’re just doing. And then I would say, this is a theater piece, right. We’re not claiming to change the world.”

—Core team member

Artistic Director of The Walk, Amir Nizar Zuabi, is no exception and expressed concerns that extrinsic impact activities might kill the magic of the artwork. Comparing the imagination to the wind he said “there’s this gust of wind that goes through the town, but by the way, we’ll need to build turbines to keep it going.” He describes his work variously as being “fragile as bubbles”, “playful, contradictory”, appealing to the emotions and the senses, political in that “everything is political”, yet assiduously avoiding the “deaf arguments” and “self-righteousness” he associates with the political impasses that coalesce around divisive issues. Zuabi describes the intrinsic impact of theatre as “a knife that

“The impact is in the long-standing relationship with the communities we went through. And one of the intrinsic hardships there, is that it’s very easy to get people to run a sprint with you. It’s hard to get them to run a marathon.”

—Core team member

penetrates and goes out and if it hits a vital organ, so it hits a vital organ, most shows don’t, right?” Theatre, he said, is “the most throw-away of art forms here today, gone tomorrow...” and the theatre maker’s instinct is to say “goodbye, forget about us, we’re not important”.

But there is a dilemma here. In spite of this last statement, the core team, including Zuabi, universally expressed regret at having to say goodbye so quickly, and not having the time to engage more deeply. This regret was further

compounded by the ambiguous central message of The Walk: “Don’t forget about us” as it was not clear if it refers to Little Amal, or to the people she represents. Though the relentless schedule conspired against it, the team all acknowledged that paying attention to the ‘afterlife’ following Little Amal’s visit, and consolidating the relationships with the co-producing communities, was where an enduring legacy would reside. But this too came with a warning. “It is to do with what happens after you leave. Not before. Because if you try asking these questions, kind of imposing this before you’re there, this reduces everything you do, to impact.”

The warning gives useful insight into why impact can be seen as threatening by the artist. It is cast as an imposition, a blunt instrument, and as reductionist. It also raises the issues of not only how, but when extrinsic impact work should come into play. The artwork has to communicate on its own terms, free from messaging.

Doc Society’s approach concurs with this; it puts the artwork in the driving seat and to cast impact “as the beneficiary of great art”, not the other way round. We endorse the idea that secondary impact or extrinsic activities can only start after the show is over, when the artwork has had its primary, intrinsic impact. It is that precious space after the show that is most valuable to the impact producer, when the audience has been moved and is inspired to act. However, the most meaningful and enduring impact is only possible when the groundwork for ongoing partnership working has been laid well in advance.

Live Art and Impact

When thinking about maintaining the space and separation between the artwork and the impact campaign, the difference between film and live performance come into stark relief. The film team’s job is done as soon as the film is out in the world, and though they might get involved in the impact campaign, the story is locked and impact distribution can begin. Live performance is, and has to be, created new every time. The art of impact — being sensitive to aesthetics, timing, aptness, locality — is important in any scenario, but when working alongside live art, this takes on new dynamics.

There is another potential culture clash between intrinsic and extrinsic impact which arises around the issue of measurement. The artist’s perspective is captured here by a member of the core team: “[Given] the ephemeral, transitory nature of performance... you have to believe that there is a power in it, that there’s a power in something that is fleeting that sometimes is greater and offers more than steadfastness or solidity”. The problem is “there’s no way you can measure ... something that can literally affect you in the blinking of an eye”.

Where impact is perceived to be so hard, and arguably counter-intuitive, to measure, great value is placed on reach, to ensure that the largest number of people is exposed to this potentially life-changing experience. The reach of the The Walk though impressive and important doesn’t tell us anything concrete about impact and it follows that the website says “We believe that we are instigating lasting change” [author’s italics]. By contrast, the impact producer loves measuring, precisely because we want to be able to say “we can demonstrate that we are instigating lasting change”. We would therefore be interested to know what messages people are receiving and internalising, what people are doing as a result of meeting or working with Amal, to inform the design of ongoing engagement activities.

Though little is known beyond the anecdotal about the audience, we do know that The Walk generated considerable appetite for ongoing connection amongst the co-producing communities. This makes it possible for extrinsic impact of ‘afterlife’ activities, to flow naturally out of the intrinsic impact of the artwork, harmonising with the aesthetic and values that engaged people’s imagination in the first place. Citing Zuabi again, the impact strategy has to build “the mechanism of harnessing wind without killing the wind, without building walls that stop the wind”. See [Section 5.1](#) for our recommendations for activating the corridor of friends.

“Because the minute you go, there’s this huge thing that’s coming through town, there’s this a gust of wind that goes through the town. But by the way, we’ll need to build turbines to keep it going. People go, I just want to enjoy the wind. I don’t want to do the turbine work. And maybe there’s a mixture there. Maybe this is a good imagery for us to start thinking what the mechanism of harnessing wind is without killing the wind, without building walls that stop the wind. Imagination and wind are very similar. And maybe it is starting not with turbines, but with these funny things, the children’s toys - windmills.”

—Amir Nizar Zuabi

4.3—NAVIGATING POWER AND POLITICS

“The terrain of documentary impact, largely propelled by people of color and other marginalized communities (and allies), has been recalibrating its focus and recognizing that a film’s impact is first felt by those closest to the film—the participants and film teams, then it slowly expands outward to the communities at the center of the story, then to other stakeholders, and then finally to the audience who may be disconnected to the lived realities of those documented on camera.”

—Sahar Driver and Sonya Childress⁴

Accountability and participatory practice

At the heart of the Doc Society methodology, deep attention is paid to the power dynamics at play in the making of a film. As part of ongoing work to decolonise our own practice, and non-fiction film-making more generally, particular attention is given to the power dynamics between the film-team and the subjects, participants, or impacted communities represented in the film. This places scrutiny on the film’s process, how it is produced, “the way people feel about their participation and what we leave behind when the project moves on” [Impact Field Guide]. In the context of film, this refers to the experience of the communities who featured in, or participated in the making of a film often lasting several years. It asks what are the power dynamics at play in the relationships between the film-team, who may be coming from outside the community, with two distinct groups of people: those whose lives are being represented in the film; and those whose work is contributing to the making of the film. And crucially, it asks, what is the film-team’s accountability to these groups of people?

When applied to *The Walk*, this phenomenon of community participation and engagement, of arriving and leaving, of working intensively together and then moving on, was repeated an astonishing 147 times in four months. *The Walk* was acutely aware of the fact that it hadn’t found a way of carrying the people they had worked with with them, and candidly acknowledged that they put no attention or resource into the ‘afterlife’ with their co-producing partners. This deficit was felt keenly precisely because the relationships between the partners that had developed through working so intensively together were strong. Little Amal’s swift arrival and departure made it very hard for displaced people to engage, who because of the insecurity of their status tend to be harder to reach.

As a result, critical, unanswered questions emerged in interviews with the core team: “How do you go very deep whilst being on the move?”; “What stays behind?”; “How do you become her uncles or aunts? How do you send her, you know, how do you, how do you create this family that keeps taking care of her from afar?”. The feedback groups, on the receiving end of this sudden departure experienced it as being cut adrift, disconnected from the well-spring of new possibilities; as one respondent described it as “like being a piece in a jigsaw puzzle, but not part of the whole”. They too were left with unanswered questions as one of the country producers eloquently recalls: “Where’s [Little Amal] going? How can we keep in touch with her? Where can I send my drawing? I was obsessed, there were so many people who wanted to stay more with her. How are we going to do it?” These questions would come up while they were all working together on the welcomes, “but it wasn’t the right time to talk about this because we had to move to the next [event]”. These are all excellent questions, precisely what an impact producer would be working to answer.

Another message that came through clearly from our research was how strongly children and young people related to and connected with Little Amal. The Education Pack had exceptional reach as already noted, and was universally acclaimed for very effectively opening up new creative ways of having important and difficult conversations. But it was more than a creative or intellectual exercise, children related emotionally to the story that Little Amal was looking for her mother and she received thousands of personal letters. However the letters remain unanswered, and to a large extent it appears that the question whether she found her mother also remains unanswered, or at least unclear.

4 [The Evolution of Impact: The Future of Social Change and Nonfiction Filmmaking](#)

Representation and voice

“There are two sides to this picture: yes empowerment and hope is important but so is the representation of 1000’s of people here today – what their reality is like – this was a real opportunity to make change happen.”

—Manchester Focus Group

The other group that lies at the heart of The Walk, and is central to the core, existential purpose of The Walk, are those Little Amal represents. She was created to “represent all children fleeing war, violence and persecution” and yet how and where she relates to these children is not clearly defined and remains under-developed. Looking at Little Amal herself through the power dynamic lens, an inherent paradox of the project surfaces. Whilst Amal is a 10-year-old, her voice, agency, and strategy is controlled by adults. Although the creative team note her power and her agency as a symbol, they often minimise her political agency and that of displaced children more generally. Such a perspective risks undermining opportunities for impact as well as being at odds with the reality of countless engaged, active 10-year-olds who are already thinking about making this world a better place. Gaining a deep understanding of their perspectives and experiences, especially those with experience of forced displacement, would be a way to strengthen her relationship with those she represents. But the relationship goes beyond understanding, it is also about communicating. If she is positioned as representing displaced children, then where is her voice? Little Amal does not speak, but neither do we clearly hear the voices of those who do.

“Because she’s a brilliant, big public representation she may be better able to challenge power – and looking at the ripple effect she has [in terms of people calling out to each other/ messages flowing quickly] maybe more than a real person can.

—Manchester Focus Group

“Amal is the hero of the story, but then again, its showing her friends as heroes, focusing on them, bringing them in. What are they doing? How are they continuing to create change together? How does the story continue with her and her friends as the protagonists? I think it’s so powerful. There’s so much opportunity there. It’s such a simple and beautiful idea.”

—Kristin Hulaas Sunde, PositiveComms UK, interviewed for this study

The young people at **Karam Foundation** are a wonderful example of the kinds of friends and advisors Little Amal could have alongside her. They were closely involved in The Walk’s launch activities and their response to Little Amal’s journey was full of ideas and imagination. They gave Little Amal A Suitcase of Wonders, full of little puppets introducing themselves and games they had designed for her to take with her, so that she could show them to other children she met along the way who could in turn play their games, share their stories. The suitcase was not used as intended, but offers possibilities for future engagement, as suggested in the final section of the case study.



politics and Politics

“Little Amal has had very different receptions – in Greece it was very hostile and right wing groups came out and threw stones even at an event that included children...the Mayor of Calais was reluctant...so you could say that she doesn’t reach across political divisions... But those strong reactions that she invoked generate headlines and publicity and therefore awareness - where there had been some hostility it has been a minority of people and it has resulted in support and raising awareness. She’s not going to be able to go everywhere and have a positive reception – but you could argue that those negative receptions could be turned into a positive message – raising the awareness of refugees.”

—Manchester Focus Group

The unresolved issue of Little Amal’s voice can be accounted for by the absence of a shared, consensual and written understanding of what is p/Political, what is advocacy, what is campaigning and what role Amal plays in this regard. At present, the notion that everything is political, including Amal’s love of ice-cream, is embraced, while at the same time direct manifestations of ‘politics’ are rejected. From the interviews, the tension around what is ‘political’ could be understood as attempts to deepen the conversations around contextual issues: forced displacement, political failures, human suffering. Engagement around these issues at depth is likely to produce more serious, potentially divisive content that would interfere with the joyous message of welcome, and be dismissed as too ‘political’.

Yet these issues are at the heart of the displaced child’s experience, and a successful impact campaign must find ways to grapple with the inclusion of these realities. Cultural strategists and impact producers Sonja Childress and Sahar Driver propose that “it is now recognized that it is the responsibility” of the film-maker telling a story about a community that is not their own, “to consider how to be accountable to that community”³. In [Section 5.2](#) we present our recommendations on how Little Amal’s advocacy role could be developed.

The dangers of a single narrative

As a representative of other children, Little Amal needs to make every effort to share the light and attention that she attracts by profiling and raising up the experiences of other children, other stories. Not doing this effectively risks the very real danger of The Walk promoting a singular view of who a refugee is, which can perpetuate a virtuous/good migrant vs bad migrant dichotomy. This is particularly the case given that she is not real, and that she is portrayed as an innocent child, i.e. the very definition of virtue. Her joyfulness and her artifice is reassuring and cathartic, but risks obliterating more nuanced and varied storytelling. If multiple layers of story-telling had been established as an integral part of her presence on location and online, the depth and complexity of the children she represents might have been conveyed more effectively and the danger of perpetuating a single story, or stereotype, might have been more decisively averted.

Power and reciprocity

“The Walk opens up the bridge to empathy, but it does not complete it because she’s not a real person... The real stories, the real faces - always having that realness attached will take it to the next level.”

—Lina Sergie Attar, founder Karam Foundation

Another very important manifestation of power dynamics in The Walk needs consideration: the imbalance of involvement in the welcome events - host communities were considerably more present and involved in the delivery than displaced communities. Lina Sergie Attar, founder/director of Karam Foundation, an important early partner in The Walk, noted that overall across The Walk, refugee organisations, and in particular Syrian organisations were unequally represented. As she said: “Many of these communities actually did have refugee communities in them already. [The Walk] could have

been bringing in more displaced communities to be with Little Amal”. Attar, interviewed for this study, stressed that welcome should be a two-way connection, in which space is made for displaced communities to contribute. For The Walk to be truly transformative, it is vital that the co-production model itself has an appreciable positive impact on displaced communities. Attar offered a vision of what more lasting change could look like, after Little Amal had moved on, with communities responding to another challenge: “The ‘leave behind’ would be actually building that bond locally between hosts and their refugee communities, that’s even more ambitious than just walking through.” The foundations have been laid by Little Amal’s visit, awareness has been raised locally, new connections made, so the next step is “to leave [the communities] working together on this idea of welcome, which I believe should be a two-way connection.”

“Perhaps to create a profound shift in the way our society views migration, for example, there may be more value in strengthening the importance of shared notions such as: hospitality, safety, care, love, kindness, family, friendship, sharing, reciprocity, hope, welcome, openness, generosity, trust and pride, rather than relying on repeatedly hitting home facts, and indeed stories, about migrants.”

—Alice Sachrajda and Lena Baumgartner⁵

Placing impact at the heart of the work

Writing in *The Filmmaker* in August 2022, Sonja Childress and Sahar Driver⁶ describe how, largely as a result of the work of filmmakers of colour and other marginalised communities and allies “the terrain of documentary impact... has been recalibrating its focus and recognizing that a film’s impact is first felt by those closest to the film—the participants and film teams, then it slowly expands outward to the communities at the center of the story, then to other stakeholders, and then finally to the audience who may be disconnected to the lived realities of those documented on camera. This new focus suggests that the work of impact must begin during production, so that the very process of the storytelling has a net positive impact on those engaged in the filmmaking process, before any attempts at large-scale societal impact.”

Typically, impact producers think about how to engage audiences after viewing a film, but this approach suggests that impact work should start with those communities closest to the heartbeat of the film’s production. As a participatory project, this resonates on many levels with The Walk, which has a wonderful opportunity to ground future impact work in creating enduring, equitable relationships with their co-producing partners and those she represents. To have engaged with the tens of thousands of people who came out onto the streets to greet her in “large-scale social” impact work, would be another kind of endeavour altogether, something to consider further down the road.

5

[More Than Words - How communicating our shared values and forging mutual connections can bring hope for a new tomorrow](#)

6

[The Evolution of Impact: The Future of Social Change and Nonfiction Storytelling](#)

4.4—BALANCING ART, IMPACT AND MONEY

“We didn’t know that it would be the success it was and we didn’t know that it would have the meaningful impact on so many people, including ourselves. So how could we curate future work? What we’ve learned from that for me personally, and I feel like it’s sort of a tired record in my conversations with the team as well, which is, okay, we get it, how do we do it better? What is it that we need to make sure that in our resource pack and our resource pack, meaning the team, how do we need to strengthen that so that we can have a genuine follow through?”

—Core team member

It is very clear that the team did not have the capacity to answer letters, or to service the onward needs of local communities and partner organisations; they had not anticipated that Little Amal would have the impact she had, and were not prepared for it. Although this kind of network building was part of the project’s original vision, resources were not earmarked for the practicalities of what turned out to be such an intensive, expansive and expensive project. It cost £3m to take Little Amal 8,000km across Europe and some members of the core team expressed concern that the money could have been better used directly on, as a core team member said, “the needs of people who’ve been radically impoverished [by migration].” But as was pointed out by another member this was, in effect, a “shoestring budget” with most of the money spent on logistics and accommodation related to moving a “huge company across such a long journey”. As we have seen, Little Amal demonstrated her considerable capacity to catalyse communities and start conversations; by restructuring the project along the lines laid out below, The Walk could have delivered more intentionally tangible benefit to impacted communities. However this requires another team of people bringing additional skills, infrastructure and expertise to work alongside the creative team, which comes at a cost in an already expensive project.

There could have been a virtuous circle here that could have opened up access to additional fundraising opportunities for The Walk. Being able to deliver deeper, demonstrable, enduring impact through partnership working, could have attracted new sources of funds, even in an environment where funding is very tight, reaching out to funders that favour supporting collaborative, interdisciplinary projects with multiple beneficiaries and who have an interest in initiatives that harness popular culture in support of social change. Most funders recognise the importance of impact measurement, even in the case of cultural change projects. This means introducing methods to evaluate the project’s impact in future would also help to bolster funding prospects.

4.5—TOWARDS AN IMPACT STRATEGY

“I love the idea of always giving people something to do. Donating money is always helpful, if it's going the right place. But then always people want something to actually tangibly do.”

—Lina Sergie Attar,
Founder Karam Foundation

“Are we calling [communities] to do something in the real world? Maybe I didn't think of it because I'm very anxious about telling people what to do, when it's not what I do.”

—Core team member

The chemistry of impact

Doc Society’s methodology is built around the idea impact is created at the interplay between a film’s strengths and the needs of the wider community of change-makers in the issue landscape. Translating this into the context of The Walk, the co-producing communities, galvanised and catalysed by working on the welcome events are the key partners for securing lasting change. They are the people who have already done the imaginative work of co-creating the alternative world where refugees are warmly welcomed and have already started the process of creating the desired change by building community around Amal’s set of values - compassion, celebration, curiosity, connection. This is the corridor of friends, or as other members of the team have called it, the necklace of friends, where The Walk is the thread and the communities who welcomed her along her route are the beads. It is particularly rich also because the co-producers are mixed groups that reach into diverse sections of civil society and create the interdisciplinary synergy that supports the possibility of lasting change.

It is the impact producer’s job [See [appendix 7.2](#) for Impact Producer’s job description] to find out as much as possible about what the partners need to pursue the change making agenda over time, and, in the case of The Walk, what work is required to support the shift from operating in the realm of the imaginary to operating in the real world. Based on the experience of working on The Walk, the feedback from partners is very specific, and because of the goodwill generated by the project, it is very constructive and positive about a possible future together.

Listening to co-producing communities

In Chios Education was seen as the most important legacy and young people “the most important people to bring the message to”. The work of addressing xenophobia and racism in schools is ongoing and difficult, and there is always a need for new ideas to fire young people’s imaginations, and create opportunities to bring students and refugees together. Teachers need ongoing support: “You don’t do that by just organizing an event and just forget about it. You have to keep on supporting teachers because they feel very lonely in their school environment, in their local town and community. They don’t dare raise difficult issues.” Amal could play an ongoing role to open up new ways to have difficult conversations, and to promote the values of welcome that she represents. This activity could be supported by updating the Education Pack, providing a platform where everyone can upload material to “get inspired by each others’ work”, and a virtual database could connect schools to work together in the future.

In Naples the teachers also proposed the building of a network “in order to work better on the theme of migration and inclusion”, creating bridges both nationally and internationally between schools to share ideas and experiences. The Education Pack continues to play a connective role, as Amal remains “a necessary symbol to maintain communication channels between children, adolescents and adults” who encountered her. The group reported that they are facing the collapse of “entire sectors [working] between art and education”, so the fact that The Walk gave the opportunity to bring educators and artists together was very significant and hopeful. It showed there was energy and willingness on the part of individuals to do this work, but it needed connection with the outside to keep it going. As well as the schools network, they suggested a new “platform of value for the exchange of actions, reflections for all”, as the existing site didn’t provide space to share materials or exchange ideas. They explored how “Amal’s event could turn into praxis” and give space and time not afforded by The Walk to build on the relationship between the participants “to value the ‘friends of Amal’ ... involving not

only schools, parishes and organisations but also migrant communities. These are long processes but must be nurtured over time.”

In Manchester several participants wanted to see people with lived experience involved in the overall planning to make The Walk “more relatable” and proposed that “tangible outcomes for refugees” should be baked into the delivery of the project. Little Amal’s high profile could help “raise awareness of the realities facing asylum seekers in the UK”, bring “attention to the political climate and connect to policy makers and politicians”. There was a call for clearer messaging from The Walk to connect to real lives, to highlight allied campaigns, and “to convey how traumatising the whole journey is”, contributing to a “360 degree package” of information relating to migration. The media and public attention that Little Amal achieved could “help smaller organisations to gain visibility”. Legacy impact data relating to audiences and participants’ engagement with this kind of positive event is invaluable to the sector. Ongoing connectivity between organisations, with repeat events, maybe annually, was needed because “we know from our own work that stand alone events don’t really work”. Building solidarity with the community that has formed around Amal across Europe would “make it easier to challenge back on any negative perspectives”.

Change takes time

The feedback is very consistent. Little Amal is seen as having a central, ongoing role as a connector, amplifier, and catalyser. Contact and connectivity are vital to building solidarity around shared values and vision. As Childress and Driver⁷ say: **“Learning and change takes time. It is premised on relationships and trust and community. It requires repeated encounters with people and ideas that are pointing in a new direction.”** The Walk sparked new awareness and brought people together in a mad rush of activity and creativity. But to build lasting bonds within and between communities, to embed and enact welcome as a set of values, people need **“the opportunity to turn new ideas over and examine them in-relationship, that is a more reliable and sustainable way to ensure those ideas become more and more embodied.”**

“[Amal as a character] can instigate projects that foster thought, and expression in writing and performing locally. It’s the opportunity that arises for young people to get engaged, get into the shoes of others and have the chance to be aware. If the projects have a chance to be internationally connected it is even stronger, but even locally there is great need to work outside the box and propose new ways of raising awareness.”

—Chios Focus Group

4.6—THE BUILDING BLOCKS OF IMPACT

Impact Vision

Now that we have a clear idea of the needs of our partner-change-makers, we can start to formulate an impact vision for The Walk. This should be a vision that sits alongside the artistic vision, that is clear and simple and that everyone involved can sign up to. Making a work of art usually revolves around the vision of a single creative and their close associates, but making impact is definitely a team sport, so the creative team and everyone involved in the impact project should be part of this exercise.

The Impact Field Guide suggests that the impact vision should be clear and aspirational “outside your comfort zone, not something that is immediately and obviously possible”. For the purposes of this case study a possible retrospective formulation for The Walk 2021 could be:

To make the world a more welcoming place, one community at a time.

Theory of change

Little Amal has unique attributes as a change-maker: being able to connect with the most marginalised and the most powerful in society. A proposed theory of change could be articulated as:

A pincer movement from bottom up and top down, promoting contact and long term relationship building between communities

BOTTOM UP	Little Amal brings refugee and host communities together	To achieve lasting change means ensuring equity of engagement with and contact between host and migrant communities in creating and delivering the welcomes, and ongoing ‘afterlife’ activities in schools and communities. Then, by explicitly and intentionally catalysing, supporting, documenting and spotlighting the public’s willingness to welcome, The Walk can contribute to the narrative shifts that drive policy change.
TOP DOWN	Little Amal amplifies the voices of her peers in her encounters with powerful individuals	While Amal does not literally speak, these encounters provide an opportunity for Amal to share the stories and asks of the countless other Amals across the world, young asylum seekers and refugees who are shut out of the corridors of power. These encounters with policy makers and key influencers present the opportunity for her to convey the wishes, hopes and demands of young people to adults in power, and hold them accountable after her departure.

Change dynamics and impact goals

The Impact Field Guide identifies four change dynamics which describe the kind of change that a film can drive: changing attitudes, changing behaviour, building community, changing structures/policy. The impact goals are specific propositions for how to achieve the overarching impact vision and each one sits under one or other of the change dynamics. Suggested activities to deliver these goals are fully developed in [Section 5](#).

Change dynamic:	Impact goal:	Outcome:
Changing attitudes	To use Little Amal's story as a gateway to other stories.	Bring multiple layers of storytelling into the welcome events and to remote audiences.
Changing behaviour	To strengthen the concept of welcome as a two-way process.	Move from the world of the imagination to creating connections between real people through activities that bring refugee and host communities together on an equal footing.
Building communities	To create a network of schools and communities that share and promote new ways of understanding and talking about migration.	Support connectivity between co-producing communities in order to build environments fostering solidarity and innovation.
Changing structures, changing policy	To develop a child-centred role for Little Amal to advocate for welcoming refugees and migrants.	Build opportunities for Little Amal to identify with and amplify the voices of her peers, so she can use the profile she has achieved to fight injustice alongside other children and young people.

Mapping the issue

One of the key roles for the impact producer at the early stage of planning for impact would be to carry out a mapping exercise of organisations [see below and [Appendix 7.3](#)] working across all the issues woven into The Walk's enterprise: migration, child rights and advocacy, identity, network building, values-based communications and more. We would be looking to understand where the strategic priorities of these organisations could align with, inform and help deliver The Walk's impact vision, and ensure that the impact work can proceed with accountability. Below is a possible schema for how partnership working would enrich and facilitate the development of our impact strategy from the earliest stages.

- ➔ **Planning:** people with lived experience of claiming asylum and migration, and organisations who support them would collaborate and strategise in the planning of The Walk, to ensure that refugee communities are equal partners in the delivery of welcome events. Manchester is a good example of this, and their experience could be called upon to inform future iterations.

Examples of organisations working in this space:

- **Counterpoints Arts** – leading UK organisation in the field of arts, migration and cultural change. Central to their mission is the belief that the arts can inspire social change and enhance inclusion and cultural integration. They work with a large range of partners with a broad geographical reach and aim to elevate multiple narratives and experiences of migration through multiple art forms.

- [Solidarity with Refugees](#) – building networks between grassroots organisations serving refugees and asylum seekers, helping to build effective collaborations that amplify collective impact and voice. Trusted organisation with direct access and engagement with multiple small scale grassroots refugee initiatives across the UK.

→ **Engagement:** the creative team would work with children with first-hand experience of forced displacement, with refugee heritage, or with a background in community-based activism to prepare Little Amal for her entry into the world.

Examples of organisations working in this space:

- [Karam Foundation](#) – a youth leadership programme, providing mentorship and innovative education to Syrian youth and their families.
- [Safe Passage](#) – helping child refugees reach safety. Specialising in supporting lone child refugees in Europe who are looking to reunite with their families, with a well organised Youth Leaders programme.
- [The Advocacy Academy](#) – an activist youth movement of young leaders fighting for justice and equality. It serves as the political home for grassroots youth organising and the catalyst for collective action. Our Advocates’ lives have been directly shaped by living in an unjust world, and we exist to turn their anger into action.
- [Save the Children](#) – campaigning in the UK and globally to ensure children keep safe, healthy and learning, with extensive expertise in supporting youth advocacy.

→ **Delivery:** The Walk’s values-based approach to change aligns with the work of a swathe of strategic communications experts working in the field who could support the impact vision with the kind of clear messaging that is key to delivering impact campaigns.

Examples of organisations working in this space:

- [On Road Media](#) – supporting people and media to create content that changes the world. Supporting and training people with lived experience to communicate safely and effectively. The [Media Movers](#), run by On Road Media, is changing the way media and popular culture tell stories about young people with migrant backgrounds.
- [More in Common](#) – understanding the forces that drive us apart, in order to find common ground and come together to tackle shared challenges. Good understanding of public perceptions about integration and refugee issues due to extensive polling.
- [IMIX](#) – professional communications experts who want to change the conversation about migration and refugees to create a more welcoming society. Trusted by the refugee and migrant sector and have good reach through their daily media emails to a wide audience within the sector.

These are the building blocks of a strategy, which indicate how Doc Society would approach creating an impact strategy. To follow are three future scenarios by consultants working in the field. They bring their extensive skills and experience to imagining how to develop and deliver the potential for instigating lasting change within The Walk. The first piece by Anna Nolan, Esme Peach and Kat Alywin looks at activities that could activate the corridor of friends; the second, also by Anna and Esme, develops the possibilities of Little Amal’s advocacy role. The third, written by our US colleagues Alice Quinlan and Javier Rivera DeBruin of Red Owl Partners, put forward an outline impact strategy for Little Amal’s US tour in 2023.

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5.

LOOKING FORWARD & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1—ACTIVATING A CORRIDOR OF FRIENDS

5.2—DEVELOPING LITTLE AMAL’S ADVOCACY ROLE

5.3—FORMULATING A US IMPACT STRATEGY

Singers welcome Little Amal
©Adonis Logothesis



5.1—ACTIVATING A CORRIDOR OF FRIENDS

Creating networking infrastructure

Underpinning all the following recommendations in this section is the need to build basic infrastructure that connects and visualises the corridor of friends. Specifically:

- Creating email groups or developing other digital communication platforms to enable key groupings like educators or community/arts organisations to communicate with each other directly.
- Securing resources to invest in a website that showcases in more interactive, artistic and creative ways:
 - the organisations that form part of the corridor of friends (eg, interactive maps, searchable and visually presented databases)
 - the acts, messages and artefacts of welcome created for Amal (eg geotagged by location, accompanied by additional storytelling, virtual exhibitions, digital postcard collections).

To make this run smoothly and to maximise the potential of the networking process, it would be beneficial to recruit a part time coordinator.

5.1.1 Understanding welcome and friendship as two-way interactions

To fully develop the potential for The Walk to make an enduring change in how we think about welcome, it is important to get past the paradigm of the host community showing compassion to the stranger who receives the welcome passively. As Lina Sergie Attar reminds us, welcome needs to be developed as a two-way encounter, with space for displaced communities to engage and contribute on an equal footing. Efforts should be made to better reflect this by inclusion and elevation of refugees in the places Amal visits. As The Walk looks to both deepen connections with existing partners and develop new ones, the very idea of the act of welcome should be reconceptualised as a two-way process. All elements of planning from the narrative development, creative ideation to community level activations must look to include refugee communities to ensure these two-way connections can live on long after Amal leaves. Consideration should be given to asking questions such as:

- What investments (be that time, money, networks) would be needed to make this happen at every location?
- Should a plan for the involvement of refugee communities be a prerequisite of participation for any group?
- What lasting difference will be left in communities that facilitate welcomes - not just to the project but to the real little Amals in that area?

In developing an impact campaign for the project’s afterlife and conceptualising ways to activate the corridor of friends, it is also important for the project to remember that the most enduring friendships are two-way, reciprocal and non-extractive. Little Amal’s failure to keep in touch with the friends she made on the road was disappointing, especially for children.

Lessons could be learnt from digital community managers who work with fandoms, who are experts in fostering a sense of personal proximity and connection to cultural icons and ensuring that channels celebrate the fandom so they feel valued - especially during ‘downtimes’ between tours, films, etc.

Some illustrative ideas of what that might mean practically:

- Sending ‘postcards’ from Amal (digital and/or actual) to engaged partners and friends updating them on her activities, sharing new actions and highlighting #ActsofWelcome. Careful attention should be paid to developing her first person voice and allowing her values to shine through the content.

Planning a key moment when The Walk can explicitly thank all those who supported the journey. This could take the form of a digital party, behind the scenes content and appearances from some of the project’s high-profile Ambassadors.

- Establishing a flexible Fund for partners to resource off-shoot projects inspired by The Walk that involve a new collaboration between partner organisations - e.g. a school working with an arts organisation, or two arts organisations in different countries collaborating.

5.1.2 Forging connections based on shared values

When considering what durable impact might look like, a useful approach might be to focus on the key values as articulated by the project team:

Curiosity - Compassion - Connection - Celebration - Child-Centred

In designing content, activities and channels that aim to activate her corridor of friends, it might be helpful to think about how the impact team can make the values that Amal ignites in people live on after her departure. An exercise to gather ideas for engagement could be to ask:

- How do we ensure Amal’s values live on in the home?
- How do we ensure Amal’s values live on in the school?
- How do we ensure Amal’s values live on in the community?
- How do we ensure Amal’s values live on through her social channels?
- How do we ensure Amal’s values live on in spaces of power/key decision making spaces?
- How do we ensure children are centred/in the driving seat?

Focussing on how afterlife activities might stimulate remembrance and continuity of these values helps us see what kinds of onward and adjacent work might be needed for audiences that have already experienced The Walk.

- **Connection:** How can this activity/content foster greater contact and collaboration between ‘friends’ of different backgrounds, between different partners?
- **Curiosity:** How can this activity/content offer ‘friends’ the chance to grow their understanding of each other’s’ experiences?
- **Compassion:** How can this activity/content support ‘friends’ to welcome newcomers from all backgrounds?
- **Celebration:** How can this activity/content centre the abundance and potential of embedding welcome as a two-way process.
- **Child-centred:** Is this activity by/for/with children? Does it centre children, is it driven by children, informed by children, interesting to children and educators?

This approach also provides a filter for evaluating new opportunities, and a funnel for channelling any resources that are available for further work with engaged audiences - including the social capital that Amal carries which might manifest as offers of pro bono content creation, public relations support etc.

5.1.3 Building on the success of the Education Pack

The success of the Education Pack and schools programme presents a huge opportunity for further expansion and investment. Of all the necklaces of ‘friends’, children and their educators (teachers, families, youth workers, librarians, etc), seem to be the ones that hold the greatest promise in terms of impact legacy and seems to be the area where attention should be focussed. Resourcing could be sought to:

- update the educational resources based on feedback and consultation
- offer an ongoing programme of workshops and support to educators wishing to use the resources
- build a network of educator ‘friends’ that can act as a transnational network of support for others, eg through a Google email group
- develop a series of smaller Amals that can be used for a targeted programme of schools work in key areas in partnership with other specialised arts organisations
- ensure the above activities take into account the needs of refugee and non-refugee children, who may need to engage with Amal in different ways
- create a series of online case studies showing how different settings have used the resources in order to support and inspire others
- ensure the Education Pack is focussed equally on igniting values of curiosity, compassion, celebration and connection and recognises and harnesses the potential of children as change agents
- as part of the updated pack, develop a suite of ideas for educational settings along the corridor to engage with each other directly - collaborative projects, postcard and artwork exchanges, Zoom discussions responding to new Amal videos etc.

5.1.4 Narrating, rewarding and social proofing ‘welcome’

“As human beings, we operate by mimicking one another’s behaviour. So if you tell stories of people who are being welcoming, then you inspire other people to be welcoming too. That’s the way that we operate.”

—Alice Sachrajda, Independent Consultant

The Walk enjoyed beautiful and moving acts of welcome, collected around the campaign [#ActsofWelcome](#) yet the stories of these acts of solidarity rarely reached beyond the participants of the events and a small, dedicated social media audience.

Having made Little Amal famous, the project should now consider turning its immense creativity to making the concept of welcome famous.

With creative investment to celebrate these acts, they can reach and inspire millions more across social and traditional media. The combination of the visual nature of the acts, with the emotions of the gestures, and the hope they offer, are the essential ingredients of virality on social media. By telling these stories, The Walk should aim at crowding out negative refugee narratives - each welcome is a counterpoint to the images of border guards, armed police and military patrol boats splashed across the media. Beyond shifting the refugee narrative, the celebration of acts of welcome can also shift individual behaviour, each documented welcome acts as ‘social proof’ - by showcasing a particular behaviour it makes others in the same social networks much more likely to imitate it.

Moving forward, a tight brief focused on [#ActsofWelcome](#) will create the right starting point for impact activities.

- Building partnerships with the heritage sector to ensure that the very rich archive of

artefacts of welcome created by ‘friends’ and the story of The Walk can be displayed to the public in some way (eg Migration Museum, One Step Forward featured above, or V&A collaborations of [this type](#))

- Identifying the most moving or engaging acts of welcome and pitching them to media and video-first social accounts. One of these should make the ‘most watched’ list on BBC videos.

5.1.5 Maximising the potential of digital communities

There is a huge opportunity to reconceptualise social media as being integral to the project aims, by making Little Amal and acts of welcome globally recognised symbols of hope.

With investment, tens of millions of people could be meeting Amal on their phone or computer everyday, her stories could be sparking discussions in family Whatsapp groups.

This should start with the development of a social media strategy as part of the overall impact strategy, with the project’s afterlife as a key consideration. As part of this strategy, a range of success metrics beyond views should be introduced and socialised across the team. This will allow the social media content to range from short viral videos to long-form live conversations with partner groups.

“Working on a scale down, smaller stories, these things that feel like they’re on your lap that you can actually access, a person that you can engage with. And I wonder whether that will tie into a longer memory.”

—Core team member

“Amal is an instigator. She’s like a fire starter for me to get a conversation going. Stories heal. I wonder whether some kind of workshop process is implemented where they are able to talk back.”

—Core team member

The social media content tracks should be shaped by an understanding of the different groups of ‘friends’ and their communications needs - defined both by their proximity to and engagement with the project so far, and also their purpose in the world. Rather than simply documentary style shots of the journey, content can be developed that focuses on broadcasting Amal’s values:

- curiosity (content that deepens understandings of refugee experiences and contexts)
- compassion (content that reinvigorates empathy, and stimulates acts of welcome)
- connection (content that signposts to partners and showcases collaborations)
- celebration (content that social proofs acts of welcome and humanitarianism)
- child centred (content that elevates the voices and experiences of children)

Underpinning the content should be a set of key messages to guide outputs across traditional and social media. As noted elsewhere, given that Amal cannot speak, careful consideration should be given to developing a set of consistent talking points about the goals and messages of the initiative.

Priority should be given to developing relationships with social platforms to secure in-kind support to help increase the reach of The Walk’s profile, in particular the youth focused platforms of TikTok, Snapchat and Youtube. In-kind support can range from advertising budgets, connections with location specific community groups, and influencer engagement.

Finally, social media is also the most accessible way for the project to communicate with its corridor of friends. Nascent communities already exist and can be grown and activated even in the ‘down’ time between Walks. Content tracks focused on engaging these audiences should be developed.

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5.1.6 Creating artefacts of remembrance

One way to ensure the values of Amal lives on in homes and schools particularly is to create artefacts of remembrance that lean into the totemic power of Amal.

While no one wants to pedal the myth that buying more tat will drive transformative social change, there is a lot to be learnt from existing arts institutions and entertainment fandoms about the ways to keep children engaged and talking about a play, a film franchise, or an exhibition long after the physical experience is over, which could further unlock Amal's core values.

Done well, emblems, motifs and artefacts can help reinforce positive memories, and reignite 'residues' of emotional responses to The Walk. Examples of this could be:

- Memorabilia and mementos that serve as memory triggers and talking points at school or the home - posters, badges, t-shirts, cards, small puppets, or even murals in local community spaces. Perhaps there is scope for these to be designed / produced by refugee craftspeople, designers and business or other artists within the corridor of friends.
- Storytelling content such as a children's book [excellent news that two are forthcoming], short videos [discussed below], audio books that allows the story of Amal to be embedded in family/school life and that further unlocks the value of curiosity. Perhaps collaborations could be developed with existing child content brands and platforms, e.g. CBBC, Yoto, etc.
- Adapted from existing Education Packs, an ongoing suite of activity sheets, workbooks, make your own puppet/shadow puppets kits that families can use at home, and sporadic creative challenge programmes pegged to key moments (summer holidays, Refugee Week, etc) building on the existing '[Make With Amal](#)' activity postcard concept, perhaps further developed in collaboration with artist ambassadors to boost PR potential (examples of similar initiatives might be [Save with Stories](#)); Axel Schleffer's [Kind book](#); Oliver Jeffers's [A Book A Day](#); Mo Willems hosts [lunchtime doodle sessions](#); [Firstsite Artist](#) activity packs including Grayson Perry, Gillian Wearing, Hurvin Anderson, Julie Curtiss, Lucy Gunning, Hetain Patel, Eddie Peake; [Tate Kids](#) accessible and engaging introductions to famous artists and movements, and weeks' worth of home activities, entertaining quizzes and interactive games; Goldsmiths CCA [Down, up, down, up](#) [Instagram art school]; Royal Academy of Arts [How-to activities](#); Metropolitan Museum of Art's [Met Kids](#)).

5.1.7 Deepening young people’s engagement through secondary storytelling

Children and young people’s engagement with the values and issues of The Walk can be increased by investing resources into secondary storytelling. The majority of content produced to date documents the single narrative of the epic journey, of a symbol passing through civic and geographic space. After a while, this content tends to feel the same - especially to young ‘friends’ who have already experienced and engaged with her. The project evaluation noted videos that showed different perspectives tended to perform better.

Secondary video storytelling focussed on younger and family or educator audiences could help deepen understanding of and engagement with issues of migration.

The Walk team should explore partnerships with existing broadcast TV shows, illustrators, authors and social media accounts who already create content that could welcome Amal into their stories. Example formats could include:

- Short scripted films aimed at younger audiences that share more about Amal’s story, Amal’s friendships, Amal’s interactions, or Amal’s values. ‘Friends’ of Amal might want to know what her first day at school looks like, what her first trip to a cinema with friends looks like, what new dance routine she is trying to learn. This kind of storytelling would be best developed by experts in programming for children who are skilled in using stories to communicate values to children and cultivating allegiances to inspirational but relatable characters (be that Sesame Street, Anansi stories, Bluey, Peppa Pig, Octonauts, etc). The films would be of the type a school might show its class, or a parent might show a child. Stories that could be told and retold, watched and rewatched. Stylistically it could be Amal the main puppet interacting with humans, Amal the animation, or Amal a smaller puppet alongside a cast of other characters.
- ‘Making of’ stories that document the process behind Amal.
- Short emotive documentary-style films that illustrate the values of compassion and connection, speak to the overarching theme of welcome and feature ‘friends’ along the corridor.
- These videos could provide a drumbeat of ongoing fresh content for key constituencies of ‘friends’ (educators, families, children) that would incentivise them to check the social feeds (as one might do with a creator IG account like [Andrea Animates](#)) or open an emailer (as one might do with [Little Angel Theatre](#) which often makes videos of its puppetry based productions available to subscribers).
- Another aspect of secondary storytelling might be creative extensions of high profile moments. For example, a music video with Elbow off the back of the Glastonbury stage appearance, Amal takeovers of public figure socials when she shares their platform at public events, family picnics bringing together interesting and influential people (building on the concept of [Giles Duley’s supper clubs](#)). This would maximise opportunities around individual moments but also establish clearer links between creative ‘beads’ in Amal’s necklaces.
- [Further illustrative ideas see [Appendix 7.4](#)]

5.2—DEVELOPING LITTLE AMAL'S ADVOCACY ROLE

"I don't believe a ten-year-old is the right vessel for advocacy projects. I think it's different because the advocacy projects are aimed, correct me, maybe I'm wrong, but they're aimed to change governmental policies. They need a different kind of attitude. Our project is to change or to inspire public opinion, to think differently that will in turn support the advocacy projects. But you can't do both. You're not allowed to do both. They won't work. You understand? It's like trying to be in two places at the same time."

—Core team member

5.2.1 A child-centred approach to advocacy and 'voice'

Defining and navigating Amal's relationship with P/politics and A/advocacy was an ongoing challenge as noted previously. If unresolved, this makes it hard to determine what impact parameters the corridor of friends should operate within.

As noted in section 4.3, part of the challenge in identifying Amal's role as an advocate comes from a lack of clear ownership of Amal's perspective and voice: what would Amal think, say and do about things? This question cannot be answered authentically while these elements live largely in the heads of the creative founders.

One possible solution would be to embrace a more child-centred approach to advocacy by assembling a group of young people with first-hand experience of forced displacement, with refugee heritage, or with a background in community-based activism, to act as the 'brain' of Amal. This project advisory group could set parameters for Amal's activities, feed into decisions around what spaces it is appropriate for her to be in and what messages she could helpfully carry. This would heighten the authenticity of the project, and disrupt existing power structures in the way the project hoped to. It is worth considering how might The Walk have looked different if in the planning stages this advisory group of young people spent a week with the creative founders.

As a child herself, Amal's first necklace of friends should be her peers - other children, who give her a mandate and who she is accountable to. In terms of activating other necklaces of friends, the custodians of her values and her legacy should ultimately be her peers. Further ideas might include:

- As Amal starts to stand alongside the Gretas and the Malalas as a visible symbol of hope for young people, child-led advocacy and activism are areas where the project would benefit from more guidance from young people themselves and relevant civil society organisations, NGOs and academics experienced in this space.
- This transnational advisory group structure could be replicated at national and local levels, offering an ongoing role for key children engaged throughout the corridor to feed into the project and creating a forum through which they can connect and have a voice. These groups or chapters could help identify ways for the transnational corridor to come together in strategic shared activities, as well as choose local moments and issues to coalesce around.
- Storytelling (media, social media) around this secondary cast of real-life Amals would help energise and educate other 'necklaces of friends'.

At a time when children and young adults are on the frontlines of activism, from climate change to gun ownership, the project could help create a high-profile group of youth advocates on refugee issues.

5.2.2 Welcome Amal, welcome her ideas

Amal has an ability to access meetings with political, religious and cultural influencers that are out of reach for most in the refugee sector, however there is a perception amongst some that these meetings could be leveraged more impactfully.

While Amal does not literally speak, these encounters provide an opportunity for Amal to share the stories and asks of the countless other Amals across the world, young asylum seekers and refugees who are shut out of the corridors of power.

Rather than assume that Amal would find these meetings with adults boring, it would be interesting to see these as an opportunity for her to convey the wishes, hopes and demands of young people to adults in power, and hold them accountable after her departure. This is especially important given that The Walk’s existing theory of change depends heavily on contact theory and parasocial contact theory.

While creative consideration should be given to what form this takes, illustrative ideas are:

- Prior to the meeting the project advisory group of young people would be consulted and asked what role Amal will play. How does she feel about it? In partnership with the creative team they could consider how the demands, asks and stories will be communicated. After her departure, The Walk team would check in with the group to see what had been achieved and the group can hold Civic, cultural or religious leader accountable for any commitments they may have made.
- After Amal’s visit, schools/youth groups/families could write a charter of welcome specific to their spaces. The central project question ‘how would you welcome her’ would now morph into ‘how would you ensure others receive the welcome she did’. This could be adapted for specific audiences but the ask is that this is adopted/acted upon and post-event communications from Amal could stimulate reflection on and activation of these commitments.
- In her meetings, Amal could be accompanied by young people (refugees and non-refugees) from the local area who share their stories, experiences of welcome and ideas for building more welcoming spaces relevant to those they are meeting.

A good example of an existing initiative in this vein, was the letter writing project delivered by Amal to the European Parliament as part of the Théâtre National Wallonie-Bruxelles’ creative idea for The Walk. However, perhaps a more localised project in this vein would increase accountability and build bridges at community levels - eg rather than asking ‘What do you wish you could change in the world for children like you and Little Amal?’, asking “What do you wish you could change in your neighbourhood for children like you and Little Amal?” might yield actions that local decision makers could commit to and that local families could coalesce around, e.g. creating welcome charters in local schools and council buildings, new community artworks.



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5.3—FORMULATING A US IMPACT STRATEGY FOR THE WALK 2023



Little Amal walks through New York City, September 2022
©Arturo Holmes / Getty Images

As Little Amal embarks on her US tour, she crosses a threshold into a new context, with new levers to push and communities to engage with the benefit of two years of experience. Her story and her presence has a profound resonance and deep emotional impact on those experiencing The Walk, as so clearly evidenced by her celebrity-like status and massive audience greeting her in her recent trip to New York City in Fall 2022.

With popularity across broad cross sections of the public sphere - welcomed by almost 1 million people in Europe and the UK, welcomed by hundreds of artists and community organizations in all five boroughs of New York on a 17 day tour - The Walk is **a reminder of the galvanizing power of spectacle**. Divorced from the story at the heart of the project, the public is drawn to Little Amal's visual presence. Artists are drawn to collaborate and build on the scene set by her. Her narrative - one of “potential, success, respect, hospitality and kindness” provides an inviting and neutral backdrop for public engagement with organizations and individuals working in varying aspects of the advocacy, civil service, education and community health sectors.

Looking towards Little Amal's continued journey in the United States in 2023, this section builds on the rare opportunity for deep reflection on impact strategy and implementation afforded here, with ideas, suggestions and provocations, focused on applying the learnings reflected in this report to the United States context. **An actionable impact campaign and strategy is born out of collaboration between artistic teams and impact professionals** who, as shared previously in this report, can take the theoretical to the practical - value-based goals and desired outcomes become drilled-down tactics and on-the-ground activities in the hands of an experienced impact strategy and production team.

With that in mind, what is offered here is not an impact strategy or campaign, but an inquiry into what is possible with investment and collaboration, as The Walk enters this new phase.

We grounded this work with the following guiding questions:

- What challenges and opportunities are presented by the US context?
- How can The Walk provide space for ongoing positive contact between refugees and host community members, as an investment in long-term attitudinal shift?
- With the defined theory of change in hand, where are the enthusiastic and strategic partnership matches for this work?

5.3.1 Challenges and opportunities of the US context

Within the United States, it's impossible to ethically and substantively participate in a conversation about the global refugee crisis without engaging with politics.¹ The various immigration and asylum crises at play in the United States today are inextricably linked to one another through the country's deep-set history of xenophobia, racism and white supremacy. The policy debate around immigration and asylum has been routinely weaponized by politicians to stoke fear and hostility for electoral gain. The false narrative of the U.S. as a "nation of immigrants" is at odds with the racism and xenophobia present in some Americans' views of immigration, migration and asylum. As such, it is crucial to acknowledge and be in dialogue with the full diversity of asylum seekers, whether they are afforded the dignity of acknowledgement of their asylum or not.

The world's attention turned towards the plight of Syrian refugees first in 2015, as Syrian refugees entered Europe, and again in 2017 as former US President Donald Trump barred Syrian immigrants and immigrants from 7 other Muslim countries from entering the United States.² This was one of many acts of the former President that abandoned the mask of diplomatic jargon and policy discussions to present in plain words the xenophobia, racism and growing threat of nationalistic extremism that carried him to the Presidency: "You aren't welcome here."

***"The immeasurable impact of art as activism walks a fine line between catering to and challenging the viewer."*³**

Narrative shift in the US context

In a study released in 2022 by the Migration Policy Institute, *From Fear to Solidarity: The Difficulty in Shifting Public Narratives about Refugees*, [Natalia Banulescu-Bogdan](#) emphasizes the challenge of narrative shift on this topic in particular: "Public narratives on humanitarian migrants are often pulled to the extremes: refugees and asylum seekers are depicted as heroes or security threats, victims or exceptional contributors, exemplary neighbors or opportunists, with little gray area in between...Amid this fractured and ever-changing narrative landscape, big questions remain around how to harness emerging examples of solidarity toward refugees and asylum seekers and defuse anxieties before they become dominant, or even existential, fears."

Rather than seeking to allay all anxieties and biases towards refugees and immigrants, the report concludes that one of the most productive tools in this regard is direct positive contact between refugees and community members. How can The Walk strike this iron of opportunity between spectacle and community? How can the space created remain once Little Amal moves on?

***"Amid a fractured policy response to record displacement and public opinion that can shift from initial warm welcome to compassion fatigue and xenophobia, big questions remain around how emerging examples of solidarity toward refugees and asylum seekers can be harnessed and defuse anxieties before they become dominant fears."*⁴**

Compassion fatigue

The Walk is already an excellent tool for re-engaging and buoying those engaged with issues of displacement and migration. For those working directly to support refugees and immigrants in the United States, inspiration and spectacle play an essential role in breaking out of day-to-day frustrations or disappointments to reconnect to humanity and the broader context. Compassion fatigue is not a uniquely American phenomenon, but it is at the heart of the national mood which Little Amal is entering. A grand public display of solidarity can be a powerful reminder of the support their work has in their community.

Support workers for refugees and immigrants are facing secondary post-traumatic stress disorder and other long-term impacts. In a 2019 interview with the American Psychological Association, clinician Annabel Raymond articulates it thus, "This trauma treatment is different because there's no end in sight."⁵

1 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/us/politics/trump-syrian-refugees.html>

2 <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/01/27/us/politics/trump-syrian-refugees.html>

3 <https://povmagazine.com/documenting-migration/>

4 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/news/strategies-sustain-solidarity-refugees>

5 <https://www.apa.org/members/content/compassion-fatigue>

“Seven-in-ten Americans (72%) say taking in civilian refugees from countries where people are trying to escape violence and war should be a very or somewhat important goal for immigration policy in the United States.”⁶

In this context, there is an opportunity for The Walk’s proven capacity to leverage the power of spectacle to reignite community support for those working directly with impacted people to be uplifted and amplified.

Majority support for welcoming refugees

The majority of Americans support the United States welcoming civilian refugees - yet we continue to see devastating acts betraying this conviction. The “intentional cruelty”⁷ of the Trump administration’s “zero tolerance” family separation policy instituted in the Spring of 2018 continues to reverberate, with many families still torn apart, without compensation. The recent withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan remains a fresh example. With no comprehensive plan or response for supporting civilian refugees, those able to flee and enter the United States do so primarily through personal contacts and advocacy by United States citizens on their behalf, a cruel and banal lack of federal support.⁸

“In real time, we watched the beginning of a new refugee crisis. The destabilization of the country meant a new stream of people outward. Afghanistan may be fresh in most of our minds, but it only represents a small fraction of the migrations happening every day across the world.”⁹

Questions arising

With the above context, two questions arise: What is the utility of Little Amal’s story in a country with broad public support for civilian refugees, yet numerous betrayals of that support by government policy? How might The Walk utilize its broad reach to manifest tangible outcomes for people with lived experience of the asylum system?

“Facilitating positive contact between refugees and other members of society may be a more promising approach to reduce prejudice and foster cooperation and trust, though the quality and context of the contact are critical determinants of success.”¹⁰



Refugee Day at the Capitol 2020
Weave Tales

6 <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2022/09/19/most-americans-express-support-for-taking-in-refugees-but-opinions-vary-by-party-and-other-factors/>
7 https://judiciary.house.gov/uploadedfiles/the_trump_administration_family_separation_policy_trauma_destruction_and_chaos.pdf?utm_campaign=4526-519
8 <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/2022/07/10/afghanistan-refugees-taliban-us/9722816002/?gnt-cfr=1>
9 <https://povmagazine.com/documenting-migration/>
10 <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/research/shifting-public-narratives-refugees>

5.3.2 Creating and cultivating space for long-term engagement

How can The Walk provide space for ongoing positive contact between refugees and host community members, as an investment in long-term attitudinal shift? What are the creative strategies that can seed long term work? Can community partners act as ambassadors to embrace the table that Little Amal has set for more direct political asks? The following recommendations are prompts for further inquiry, conversation starters and provocations with the goal of creating a shared set of desired outcomes.

To make the world a more welcoming place, one community at a time.

“It is because the attention of the world is elsewhere right now that it is more important than ever to reignite the conversation about the refugee crisis and to change the narrative around it. Yes, refugees need food and blankets, but they also need dignity and a voice. The purpose of The Walk is to highlight the potential of the refugee, not just their dire circumstances. Little Amal is 3.5 metres tall because we want the world to grow big enough to greet her. We want her to inspire us to think big and to act bigger.”

—Amir Nizar Zuabi, Artistic Director of The Walk

Approach Little Amal’s inherent human and political context in the US with intentionality:

The political context of the United States would benefit from a more explicit political message from Little Amal or her ambassadors. Little Amal’s unique ability to unite people is a catalyst for deeper ideological conversations. While Little Amal’s visits are inherently political, in so far as the personal is political, in the US it is important to understand and engage more intentionally with the political context surrounding refugees and immigration. Without engaging more directly with advocates, and leveraging interactions with high profile individuals and entities to serve their goals, the team is not only passing on an opportunity - they are opening the project up to use as narrative cover for those with a heavy interest in maintaining the status quo. While Little Amal may not make any explicitly political statements, her presence could be leveraged by others to share testimony, experiences and feedback to those in power. It may be helpful to inform audiences about current policies in regards to immigration, as it has an inescapable impact on all those who seek asylum. It is not necessary to endorse specific politicians to engage with politically and socially influential ideas, a line that many nonprofits in the US are familiar with toeing. National non-profit partners can be a very helpful resource for finding the middle ground between direct political advocacy, endorsement or electioneering - and diluting Little Amal’s message.

Target community partners with continuous engagement:

Connect with local faith-based and interfaith networks (or similarly engaged secular community groups) to co-host. These groups may already be in community with or provide aid to refugee communities. They are likely to have pre-existing regular meetings that will allow participants to continue to engage with the ideas and emotions that may arise following Little Amal’s visit, and can help provide an easy point of contact for follow up. Furthermore, they may be accustomed to discussion and connection to themes of migration and asylum from perspectives of support, service, and compassion.

Partner with orgs that are youth led and/or invest in youth voices and youth networks, giving young people autonomy and voice. One example is the Girl Scouts of America: the Girl Scouts are part of an international organization of guides and scouts as well as being both national and local, providing a strong and versatile network. Individual councils or troops are likely to have strong community ties, regular meetings, and goal-oriented community support challenges that could make them a valuable organizing and/or promotional partner.

Older scouts (at the middle or high school level) are tasked with achieving “silver” or “gold” awards which focus on a community service based project. This could be a great opportunity for young people to help organize and/or continue community work related to Little Amal’s visit.

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Younger scouts (elementary school level) may relate in a more visceral way to Little Amal, and may provoke others in the community to connect the idea of child refugees to children they know, humanizing the conversation. Partnering with an organization like the girl scouts foregrounds youth voices that could uniquely foster dialogue between Little Amal and the communities she visits.

Create evergreen supportive materials:

Leave behind resources and information with ideas about ways to take action. It could be of great service to the project to create additional materials that provide the communities Little Amal visits with important resources, information, and a kind of “menu” of ways to take action, such as local organizations to support or volunteer with, petitions to sign, or how to get involved with mutual aid opportunities. This does not need to be overly prescriptive, but can serve as a way to raise awareness for ongoing efforts in the US to support asylum seekers.

Create templates for follow up letters and outreach to the communities Little Amal visits. Planning intentional follow up with each of the communities Little Amal visits will serve as a way to underscore and remind communities of their takeaways from Little Amal’s visit. It will also help show young people who may have new emotional or social investment in Little Amal that they are cared for and not forgotten. Templates for outreach could be created in the form of postcards, letters, or a video message from Little Amal - perhaps even sharing video among the places who have been visited by Little Amal, creating tangible links between communities. These can be quickly customized to suit individual communities but will make it far more logistically manageable to “stay in touch”.

Ask questions both ways. To help facilitate reciprocal dialogue and build empathy, discussion prompts and sample questions could include questions that encourage participants to think about how they might like to be welcomed somewhere new. Though everyone will not have experienced the asylum process, many will have experienced a situation where they were new to a place or a group of people. Understanding the universal and unique experiences of asylum can be an entrypoint for conversation.

Exchange symbolic “gifts.” This could be something material or it could be a song or a dance that is exchanged between community members after Little Amal has left. Since in many cultures it is considered polite to bring a gift when you arrive somewhere new, this might be a way for Little Amal to facilitate bonding between new community members and demonstrate the inherent value we all have, that we all contribute something new to a community, even if we do not have something material to offer. This could be particularly impactful in the US, where there is a lot of rhetoric about immigrants draining resources, but not a lot about the significant contributions immigrants and refugees contribute to our material and cultural landscape.

Seek out non-traditional spaces:

Prioritize locations at the intersection of multiple refugee crises. There is an urgent need for all refugees and immigrants to be humanized without having to prove legal status or offer any kind of moral superiority. There is a powerful opportunity here to seek out interactions with communities of immigrants from many places and circumstances. Examples of these charged spaces could include towns along the US-Mexico border or along the border wall. Spaces in proximity to ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) detention centers are routinely used as sites for protest - the government agency has a sustained and well-documented track record of inhumane conditions and practice of detaining children. What opportunities arise in public spaces where both policymakers and the people affected by immigration policies gather? Capitol and city government buildings such as state legislative buildings, civic service and municipal buildings where local governments may also interact with immigrant populations present opportunities for deeper collaborative work that could remain present after Little Amal has moved through the space. These spaces provide infrastructure for community engagement that can be tapped into dependably.

Look for groups and community spaces outside of official school channels. Because of the potential hurdles to offering curricula to schools in the U.S. on such a swift timeline, it is imperative to look to alternate spaces to engage young people. This could look like community youth groups, after-school programs, or non-profits that have existing relevant programming in schools.

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5.3.3 Partnership matchmaking based on desired outcomes

With the defined theory of change in hand, where are the enthusiastic and strategic partnership matches for this work in the US? Who might be able to either advise as The Walk is being planned, or carry on the work after Little Amal has left? What types of organizations could carry the mantle of Little Amal’s legacy moving forward? Seeking partnerships with organizations that share values and perspective, as well as offer complementary resources, skillsets and/or approaches, grows the breadth and depth of the campaign.

Focusing on just a few potential desired outcomes of a campaign, the organizations noted below bring credibility, consistent community engagement and longevity to the table.

Potential desired outcome: *People with lived experience of claiming asylum and migration, and organizations who support them would collaborate and strategize in the planning of The Walk, to ensure that refugee communities are equal partners in the delivery of welcome events.*

National Immigration Law Center (NILC)

Established in 1979, the National Immigration Law Center (NILC) is one of the leading organizations in the U.S. exclusively dedicated to defending and advancing the rights of immigrants with low income. At NILC, we believe that all people who live in the U.S. should have the opportunity to achieve their full potential. Over the years, we’ve been at the forefront of many of the country’s greatest challenges when it comes to immigration issues, and we play a major leadership role in addressing the real-life impact of policies that affect the ability of low-income immigrants to prosper and thrive. See their extensive list of [local immigrant rights’ coalitions](#).

Refugee Congress

Refugee Congress is a national nonpartisan organization built and led by former refugees, asylum-seekers, and other vulnerable migrants to promote the well-being and dignity of all vulnerable migrants.

Potential desired outcome: *The creative team would work with children with first-hand experience of forced displacement, with refugee heritage, or with a background in community-based activism to prepare Little Amal for her entry into the world.*

The [U.S. The Department of Health & Human Services](#) Office of Refugee Resettlement offers an extensive list of [direct support providers by state](#) (see [this example](#) of New York listing). Connecting directly with service organizations who will be able to provide insight into local context, and youth open to engagement by the team.

Weave Tales

We collect and share the stories of refugees. Our work transcends geography and incorporates the stories of refugees and immigrants from every corner of the globe thanks to the new online and mobile technologies. At the same time, we believe in the power of inducing meaningful policy and cultural changes surrounding refugees through direct storytelling and hold various events to create opportunities for the public to learn more about refugees and their journeys. We are also a proud partner of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) through their #WithRefugee Coalition.

Potential desired outcome: *The Walk’s values-based approach to change aligns with the work of a swathe of strategic communications experts working in the field who could support the impact vision with the kind of clear messaging that is key to delivering impact campaigns.*

Welcoming America

Welcoming America is a nonprofit leading a movement of inclusive communities becoming more prosperous by ensuring everyone belongs, including immigrants. [Learn more](#) about how we connect a broad network of nonprofits and local governments and support them in becoming truly welcoming places.

We Are All America

We Are All America works to uphold and strengthen our nation’s commitment to welcome and protect those seeking freedom, safety and refuge in the United States. We organize people across religious

and cultural differences to build inclusive communities where we all belong. Over the past several years, We Are All America has led the emergence of an effective national organizing infrastructure that can mobilize public support for people fleeing violence and persecution, counter nativist forces, and develop more welcoming policies and practices in this area at the federal and state levels. We Are All America was founded in direct response to the hate and vitriol attacks of the Trump administration by leading resettlement agencies and other national partners, including; Church World Service, Lutheran Immigration & Refugee Services, National Partnership for New Americans, Refugee Congress, Refugee Council USA, Alianza Americas and International Rescue Committee.

Conclusion

“The artistic directive they were given was “to create compassion rather than be political... but the issues that it raises are too political and too important to NOT try to use the enormous visibility that is [achieved by] an art project.”
—Manchester Focus Group

Rather than a series of challenges to be addressed, The Walk’s next chapter presents rife opportunity for deep, community-based work that, while staying committed to the perspective, values and mission of the project on the whole, present clear ways to deepen and lengthen Little Amal’s impression and impact on the communities she visits and the people she meets. By investing in a collaboration with an impact producing team, the creative team simply stands to deepen its commitment to the work already seeded.



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6.

CONC- LUSION

Typically, the work of a social impact producer working with documentary film, is to activate and engage multiple audiences, key influencers and policy makers based on a single encounter with a film; the story is locked, immutable, replicable, distributable. Through this retrospective impact case study of a live art work, a new kind of impact work can be envisaged. The Walk 2021 was constantly being re-created and re-imagined in new localised environments, through an immersive collaboration with interdisciplinary, co-producing communities working to deliver Little Amal’s welcome events. This prolonged engagement, over weeks or even months, demonstrated the capacity to activate all of the four change dynamics in Doc Society’s impact formula: changing attitudes – bringing people together around shared values and hopefulness; changing behaviour – working together to create something beautiful and hopeful; building communities – forging new alliances and connections across different sectors in society and across borders; changing structures – creating direct access to key influencers and policy makers. The co-creation model itself laid the foundations for lasting impact, and the people involved emerged as energised collaborators and motivated change-makers - a “corridor of friends” - with an appetite for ongoing connection. On top of that, the delivery of the welcome events generated unprecedented profile and media interest, as thousands of people of all ages came to the events, civic and religious leaders welcomed her, and hundreds of thousands more connected to her story on social media.

However, Little Amal’s sudden departure after such an intense collaborative experience brought these nascent change-making possibilities to an abrupt end, leaving co-producing communities feeling disconnected and the creative team frustrated by having to move on so quickly. There was no mechanism or infrastructure to keep this new connectivity and hopefulness alive and to support the critical work of building the bridge from the world of the imagination to the real world where hostile asylum policies, racism and social marginalisation thwart positive interaction between host and refugee communities. This deficit was compounded by unequal representation between host and refugee communities involved in the planning and delivery of the events. Similarly, although Little Amal had huge potential as a conduit between those living on the margins of societies she represented, with the most powerful she encountered on her journey, her potential to leverage influence was limited by the creative team’s ambivalence about Little Amal’s advocacy role. Accordingly, activating the corridor of friends to continue the work that Little Amal’s welcome event began, and developing her role as a child/peer-led advocate are offered as the two key recommendations to build on The Walk’s impact capabilities.



Little Amal is in every regard a towering figure; the extent of her capacity to catalyse, inspire, connect to people of all ages around the values of welcome was unexpected by the team, and exceptional by any standard. As a puppet she solicits an easier kind of expression and communication than is sometimes possible between real people who are different from each other. As such she is in a unique position to contribute to the narrative shift The Walk aspires to. But one story, one intervention will never be enough on its own; what is needed are “coordinated narrative oceans of content and experiences that conspire together to create the sense of new reality.”⁸ Given the scale Little Amal operates on, the numbers of people she reaches and the ambition of the creative team, she could potentially open up a vast array of content and experience. This requires a shift in focus: it is not just what the communities do to welcome Little Amal that is important, but how the project narrates and communicates what they have done to wider audiences.

8 Bridgit Antoinette Evans, chief executive officer of Pop Culture Collaborative, Cited in Sachrajda and Zukowska (2021)

By intentionally and explicitly uplifting stories of welcome and amplifying the asks and aspirations of the displaced children she represents, Little Amal’s story could contribute more effectively to the discursive shifts that can eventually lead to policy change. To do this in a coordinated and intentional way, goes beyond the resources and capacity of the creative team, and another team, with different skills and experience would be needed to take on the work. An impact strategy with such a profound narrative shift in its sights would take the long view, and ensure that the outstanding strengths of the artwork would interact effectively with the needs of the change-makers in the field, in this case an active corridor of friends and the young advocates who engage with Little Amal, to deliver on her hopeful vision of creating a more welcoming world.

“Pop culture is a powerful vehicle for propelling progressive social justice narratives to mainstream audiences. Culture is a shared space where people make sense of the world, where ideas are introduced and values are inculcated. It is a key place for campaigners to win hearts and minds. Cultural change is often the precursor to political and policy change. Culture moves issues into the mainstream and provokes us to think about how we view the world. It may not write the legislation, but culture can create the conditions for political change to become inevitable.”⁹



9 https://unboundphilanthropy.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Riding-the-waves-Oct-2017_0.pdf

7

APPENDICES

7.1—PROJECT BRIEF

7.2—ROLE OF THE IMPACT PRODUCER/ IMPACT TEAM

7.3—UK-BASED ORGANISATIONS WORKING ACROSS MIGRATION, IDENTITY, COMMUNICATIONS, ARTS AND CULTURE ETC.

7.4—ACTIVATING THE CORRIDOR OF FRIENDS: FURTHER ILLUSTRATIVE IDEAS

7.1—PROJECT BRIEF

The project didn’t set out impact goals with an impact strategy to achieve them at the start, but implicit was a desire to have a cultural impact with social and political outcomes in the countries that Amal visited. Little Amal received enormous attention - large crowds coming to see her, buy-in from political, social and faith leadership and large press and social media imprints as well as a much-downloaded schools programme.

This research project seeks to draw out the main lessons from what was achieved and not achieved so far. We will use the report already written for funders to provide us with data on impact already achieved. In addition we will create a record of what the team would have done differently, if they had had an impact strategy in place from the start of the project. This would lead to a different project design were they able to go back in time. Crucially, as the project is still continuing, with the US leg of her journey yet to be begun, we are particularly interested in insights which could reshape future plans both for the US and for the places that Amal has already visited.

The scope of this project is therefore limited to those outcomes, and limited by the timescale of 12 weeks work. There will be a focus on key learnings from three stops along the journey - Chios, Naples and Manchester.

Key deliverables:

- Report on key learnings from The Walk Part One, with illustrations from three stops along the way - covering both what happened and what could have been done differently.
- Support in the design of an impact strategy for the US leg of the journey, with ideas and contacts - potentially focused on Amal’s role in red states.

What will not be covered:

- Capturing the qualitative and quantitative impacts of the project in all 8 countries she passed through.
- Designing of complete impact strategies that could have been implemented in all 8 countries.

Research questions:

1. What were the most significant impacts in the three chosen research locations of The Walk?
2. What difference would it have made if we had developed these as impact goals with associated strategy from the start?
3. How can we ensure that The Walk creates more than a transitory¹ experience?
4. What is it about Little Amal that gives her the power to reach across political divides? [Or is she just as vulnerable to political divisiveness as everything else?]

Research Activities:

- Interviews with:
 - Production team
 - Country producers in our three research sites
 - Partner organisations in our three research sites
- Run focus groups with:
 - Audience, including refugees, in our three research sites
 - Stakeholder, including refugees, in our three research sites
- Undertake impact planning exercises with:
 - A small representative group taken from the above list and a US based Impact Producer

7.2—ROLE OF THE IMPACT PRODUCER/IMPACT TEAM

Strategy development for the impact campaign

Written strategic plan with defined goals, objectives, action steps and timeline. Including assessment of current political/social climate around issue.

Budgeting for impact

Research and writing the campaign production budget.

Grantwriting

Primary or support grantwriter

Partner outreach

Research, identify, initiate and preserve ongoing important campaign relationships.

Subject relations

Relationship building with film subjects for screening preparation, ‘bridge’ to filmmakers, conflict mediation, etc.

Creating screening guides

Includes discussion and house party guides.

Devising educational materials

Content and material development for online, classroom, or continuing education purposes.

Management of consultants working on the campaign

Press & PR, Social Media, Community Outreach, Evaluators, etc.

Attending festivals, live events etc

Travelling and attending events with or on behalf of filmmakers.

Social media

Set up, manage and develop content for social media platforms.

Managing community screenings, conference requests etc

Planning, logistics and distribution.

Organising legislative events + policy partnerships

Screening events designed to support specific legislation or use film to enhance national debate.

Evaluation of the campaign

Including simple qualitative measures (pre/post screening surveys); development of areas of measurement.

7.3—UK-BASED ORGANISATIONS WORKING ACROSS MIGRATION, IDENTITY, COMMUNICATIONS, ARTS AND CULTURE ETC.

Organisations working on strategic communications, values and framing:

IMIX - professional communications experts who want to change the conversation about migration and refugees to create a more welcoming society. Trusted by the refugee and migrant sector and have wide reach through their daily media emails to a wide audience within the sector.

More in Common - understanding the forces that drive us apart, in order to find common ground and come together to tackle shared challenges. Good understanding of public perceptions about integration and refugee issues due to extensive polling.

Common Cause - non-profit that works to champion and reflect the human values that underpin our care for one another and our living planet in mainstream culture. Good understanding of how to elevate shared intrinsic values and the role of culture in creating change.

Public Interest Resource Centre (PIRC) - working with civil society to strengthen the stories that unite us. Strong understanding of strategic communications, framing and the role narratives play in creating change.

Frameworks UK - in-depth research into public understanding of social issues, including developing and testing framing strategies. Breadth of experience across a range of social and cultural issues.

British Future - engaging people’s hopes and fears about integration and immigration, identity and race. Consensus driven organisation looking to find common ground and explore constructive solutions to issues around migration and race. Good understanding of public attitudes, hold events and convenings and produce detailed publications.

Organisations working in migration and the arts:

Counterpoints Arts - leading national organisation in the field of arts, migration and cultural change. Central to their mission is the belief that the arts can inspire social change and enhance inclusion and cultural integration. Working with a large range of partners with a broad geographical reach. Elevating multiple narratives and experiences of migration through multiple art forms.

On Road Media - supporting people and media to create content that changes the world. Supporting and training people with lived experience to communicate safely and effectively. The **Media Movers** project is changing the way media and popular culture tell stories about young people with migrant backgrounds.

OKRE - opening knowledge across research and entertainment. Connecting creative industries with knowledge sectors.

Organisations supporting and working with grassroots refugee charities and support groups:

Solidarity with Refugees - building networks between grassroots organisations serving refugees and asylum seekers, helping to build effective collaborations that amplify collective impact and voice. Trusted organisation with direct access and engagement with multiple small scale grassroots refugee initiatives across the UK.

Organisations focused on local welcome and community sponsorship

i.e. organisations working proactively on the ‘What can I do to help refugees?’ question - fostering strong community connections and a sense of local welcome:

Reset - the UK’s community sponsorship learning hub. Coordinating and growing the UK’s community sponsorship movement to ensure it realises its full, transformative, potential.

Sponsor Refugees - Working with community groups across the UK to welcome and resettle a refugee family to their area. A practical way to make a difference to a refugee family and to foster connection and sense of welcome in local communities.

Local Welcome - An initiative to enable people to connect up with refugees in their area to share a meal and get to know one another. Fostering connections and enabling people to play an active role in being welcoming.

Organisations working with children and young people:

Safe Passage - helping child refugees reach safety. Specialising in supporting lone child refugees in Europe who are looking to reunite with their families.

We Belong - fighting for the rights of young migrants to be treated fairly. Working to end the hostile environment around immigration and ensuring barriers preventing full integration for migrants are removed.

Save the Children - campaigning in the UK and globally to ensure children keep safe, healthy and learning.

7.4—ACTIVATING THE CORRIDOR OF FRIENDS: FURTHER ILLUSTRATIVE IDEAS

Narrating, social proofing and rewarding ‘welcome’

- Building partnerships with the heritage sector to ensure that the very rich archive of **artefacts of welcome** created by ‘friends’ and the story of The Walk can be displayed to the public in some way (eg Migration Museum or V&A collaborations of **this type**)
- Giving relevant ‘friends’ a new single creative brief that can work towards an impactful ‘moment’ or iconic ‘thing’ that can be exhibited in a high profile place (physically and/or online) - in the vein of the AIDS memorial quilt.
- Explore ways to connect the places Amal visits, not just visually (e.g. interactive map) but linking this into the legacy of welcome, e.g the last town/city she visits offers forward a symbol of what Amal and her visit represents to them, the essence of their own ‘welcome’. Reminiscent of the twinning towns schemes, this could offer an opportunity to offer a creative expression/installation of some kind that represents the essence of what Amal represented to that last place, and could provide a conversation opener regarding specific challenges/opportunities that are comparable/contrasting between those settings.
- Explore a one-off partnership with existing awards schemes (e.g. Nansen, Women on the Move, Prince’s Trust, Cities of Sanctuary) where a special award from Amal can be given to young people who encapsulate the spirit of welcome in their communities.

