Support Systems
some scenarios for supporting the arts in India

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Abstract

- **The Scenario -** an overview of the governmental and non-governmental cultural organizations working in India

- **What works -** self-organizing to set precedents and experience to advocate for policy change

- **Gaps -** lapses + unmet needs of practitioners and society

- **Possibilities** for alternative support structures for the arts and grassroot art promoters

The Scenario

Governmental

The Ministry of Culture [http://indiaculture.nic.in]: Lalit Kala Akademis, Museums, Fellowship programmes for junior and senior artists. Media supported: painting, sculpture, print-making, research

Policy: None / draft / under progress

Non-governmental / self-organized

Khoj International Arts Association, Foundation for Indian Contemporary Arts (FICA), India Foundation for the Arts (IFA), Sarai/CSDS, Art India Magazine, Center For Experimental Media Arts (CEMA), Numerous private galleries. Media supported: Media art, public art, sound art, performance art, arts research, experimental and inter-disciplinary projects.

Association / inter-organizational think-tank: None

Source of funds: Grants (indian, foreign), donations, corporate sponsorship

Self-organized initiatives ⟷ **national cultural policy**

initiating and scaling-up self-organized initiatives

↓

set social precedent in terms of a workable + sustainable institutional model

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use insights from experience for research to drive a policy-level advocacy effort
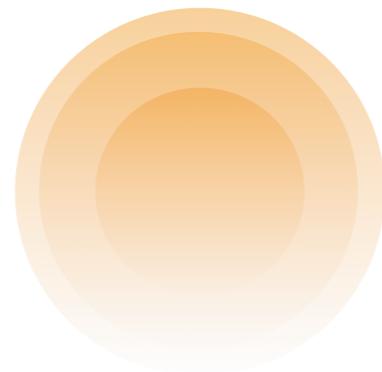
example

Research @ Khoj

Khoj International Artists' Association is a 10-years-young artist led, alternative space for experimentation and international exchange based in India.

- baseline study of the funding models of all the cultural non-profits in the country.

- "virtual residency" for artists to understand the place/role of technology in their artistic workflow

- host a business plan competition for arts organizations

eco art sound art public art
experimental art network public art
residencies support emerging artists
community art bio art
develop audiences
performance art science + art

↓

possible recommendations for India's upcoming cultural/creative industries policy

KHŌJ INTERNATIONAL ARTISTS ASSOCIATION

national and regional network

supports artists to set-up workshops/residency spaces on their own in their own regions. these workshops define their own short and long term priorities.
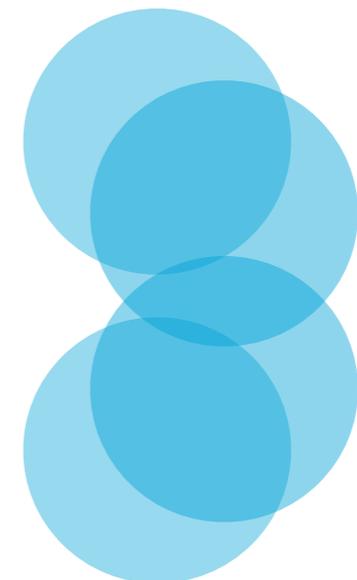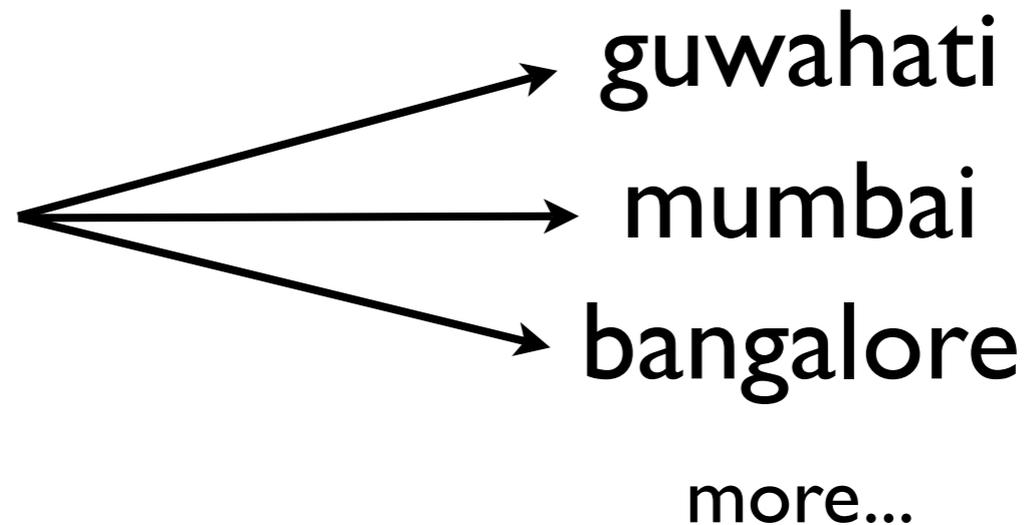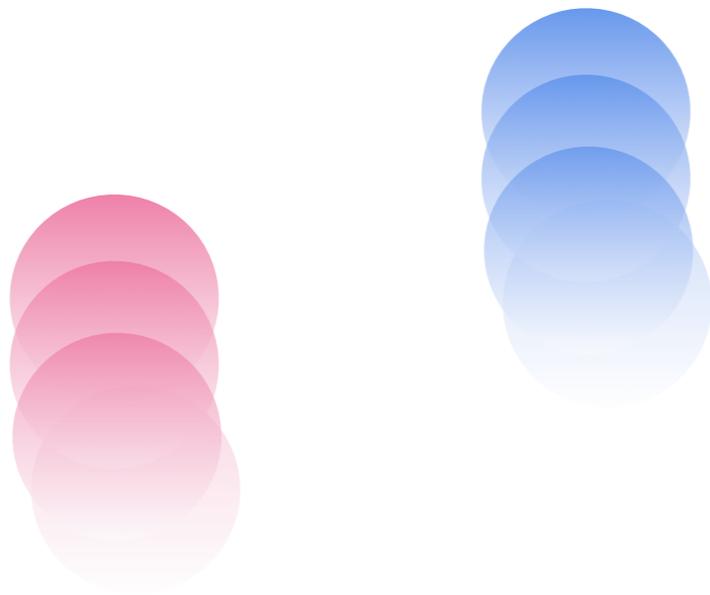
guwahati

mumbai

bangalore

more...
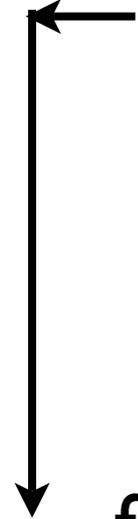
funds

Rs.7 lakhs/annum (USD17,500/annum

handholds

shares accounting/admin best practices

encourages them to form their own national/intl. networks

➡ how can it become **easier** for **self-organized**/non-governmental **arts organizations** to "**startup**" and stabilize? what **role** could the **government** play?

focus is not on a "venture capital-like" obsession with growth and revenue, but on the development of viable niches/sub-cultural markets

which commit to work with diverse local talent and innovate on sustainable models to do that

the risk of these incubation centers becoming a clique for the urban elite could be avoided by organizing business-plan writing workshops at B-schools or A-schools and by locating the incubators in rural/small-town settings

all support follows the "arms length" philosophy
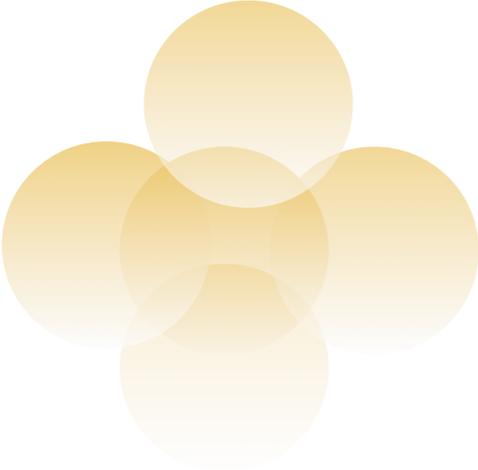
➡ setup national and regional **infrastructure** for the **incubation**, **seed funding** and **mentoring** of **startup arts organizations**
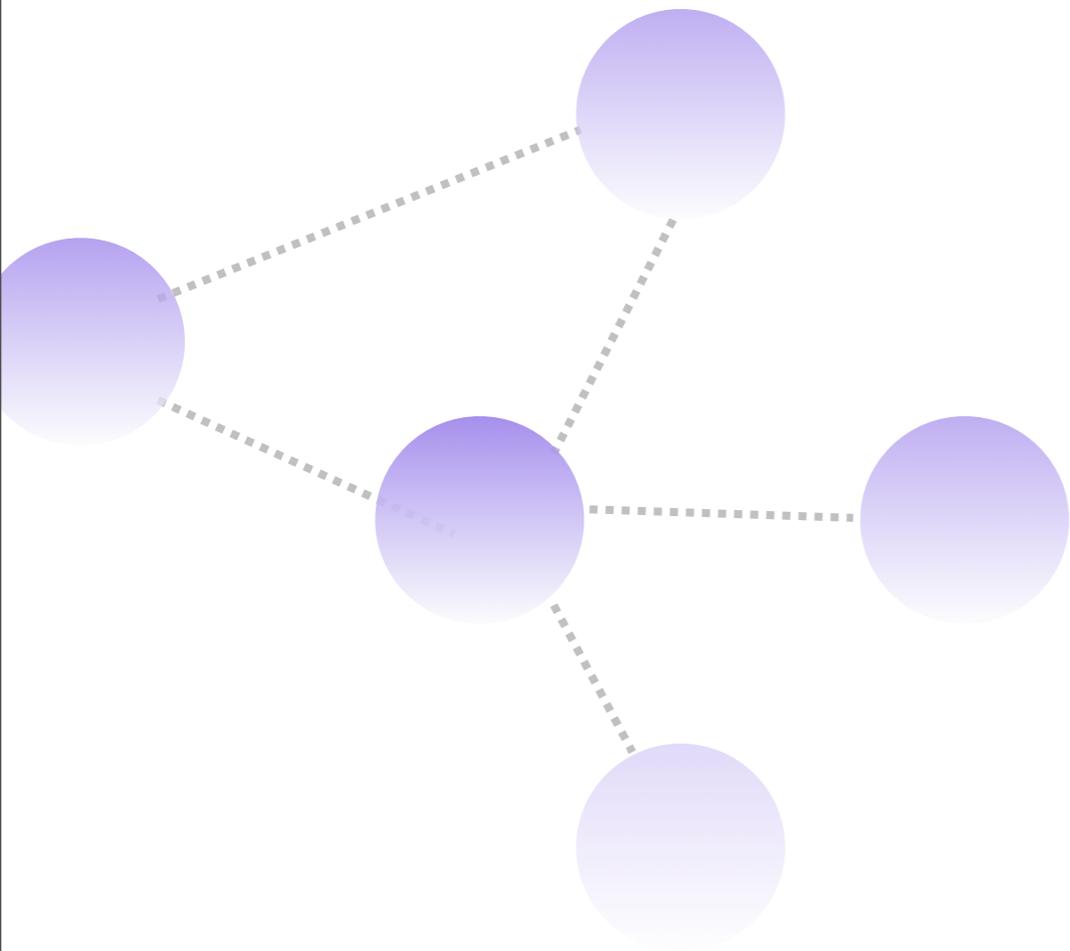
+ support/promote local publishing culture (little magazines, presses)

to collaborate
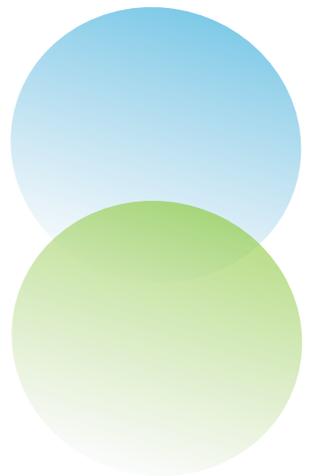
to avoid replication and overlap

➡ **organize** cross-disciplinary **conferences** for cultural organizations to **share ideas**, **insights** and **agendas** for action.

"investigating, questioning and celebrating
what culture actually does in and of itself"[1]
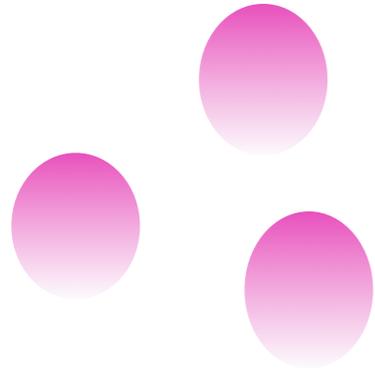is also critical

provide data for assertive, proactive action

will put culture as a parameter on the
development index of the country

➡ commission a **study** on **links** between **culture** and **development** (economic + social)

1. Tessa Jowell, Secretary of State for Culture (UK), quoted in "Don't Look Back in Anger", by R.Nesbitt, 2015 European Cultural Policies.

*to ensure a supportive environment for
self-organised art organisations over the long term*

to be competitive they'll be in touch with global
movements in the sector

*and will innovate business-models for support
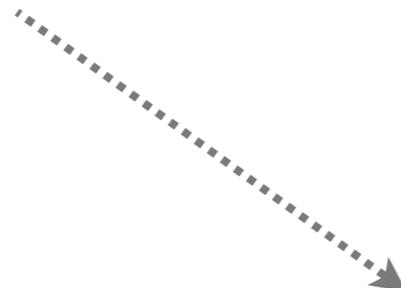for the marginal, experimental as well as mainstream
arts practices.*

artists will have autonomy in terms of critical positions they want to take, media they want to work with and distribution methods they want to adopt

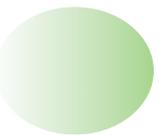➡ a **confident** but **cautious** engagement with the government

artists come together

to engage

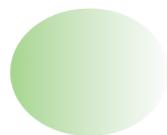with the institutions, modalities and tools of "support"

understand ways of having their concerns and needs accommodated

to reflect

on their social function and role

and who they would like to support their work and why

both learn to develop new
audiences and new ways to
distribution

artists break the saturation
of the urban mono-culture

exchange tools, techniques and contexts

urban artists
(like me)

interaction

rural/remote craft
communities and artists
in india
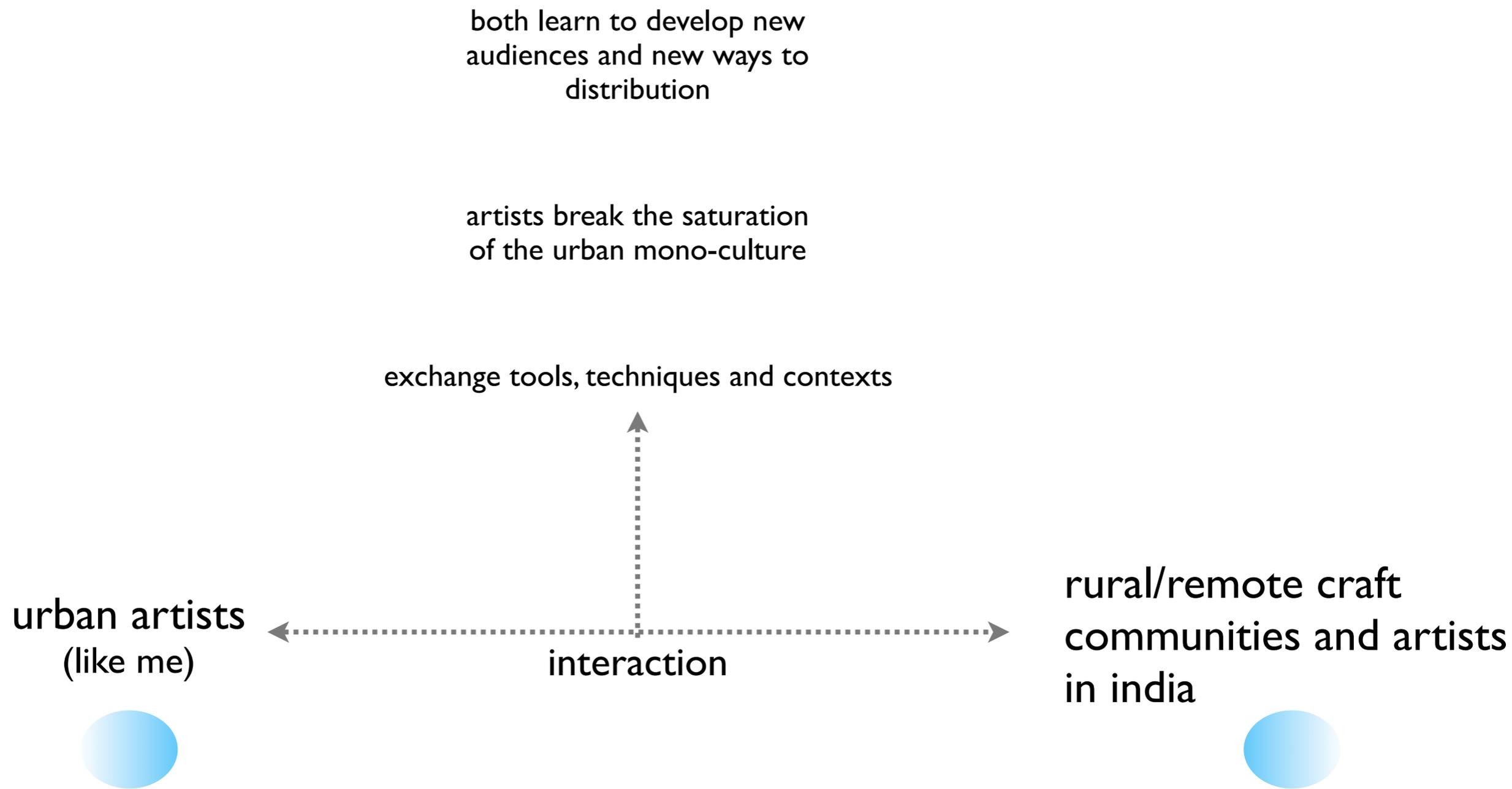
➡ artists need to acknowledge the numerous craft communities in India

Self help groups (SHGs)
and co-operatives

form

artists

publish

peer-reviewed journals

to fund arts too radical etc. to
qualify for other forms of
support

to have conversations amongst themselves
and produce knowledge
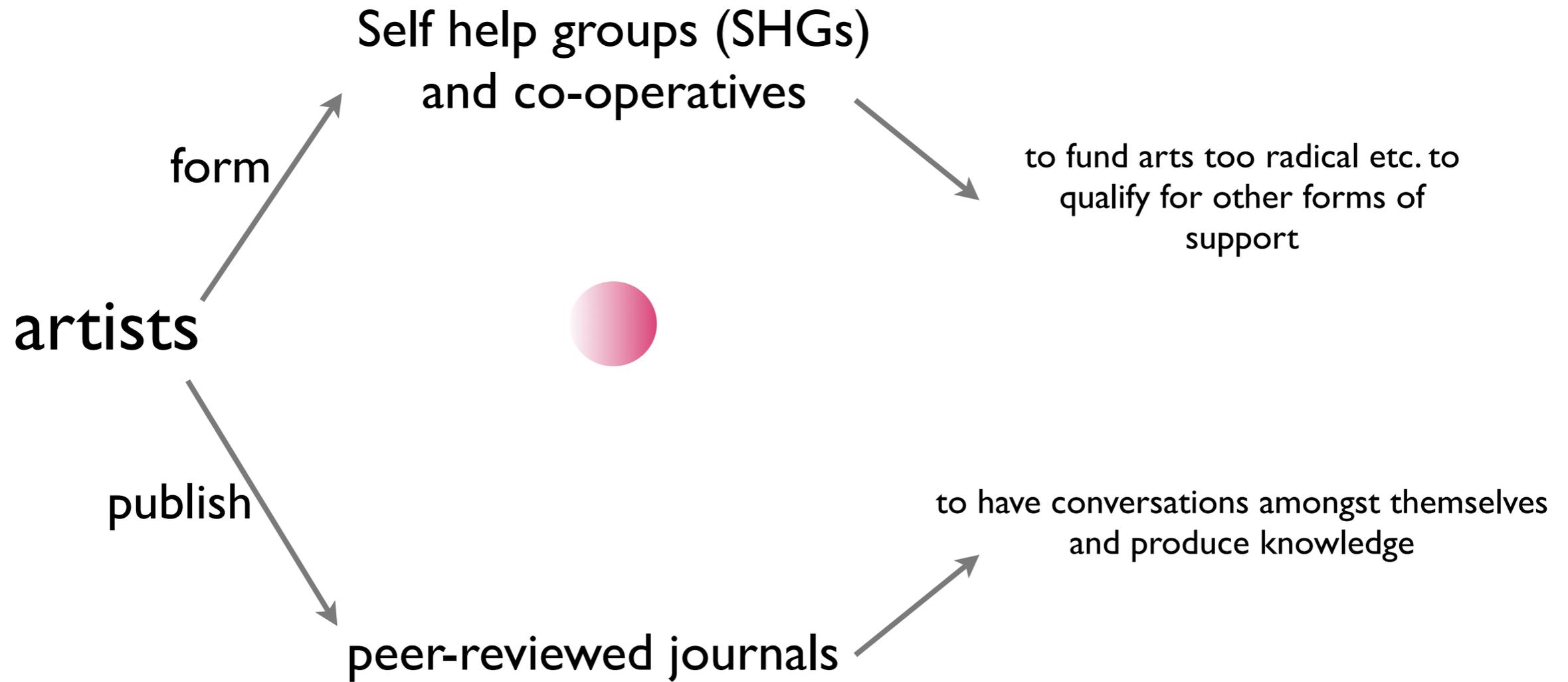
open cultural archives

the digital records of our **national cultural archives** (film, natural history, history) need to have a **web repository**. this will make it possible for people at large to **explore** their recent and past **cultural heritage**.

being part of a contextualized web archive will allow people to **draw** and **add** their own **meanings** to the **digital records** in the form of comments, annotations, re-mixes etc.

crowd-sourced digital heritage [2]

a **participatory curation** program with folk art, music and craft communities to appropriately **document** and **archive** their works can creative an **equitable** and accountable **model** for sharing and **distributing** folk art forms

Thanks:

Pooja Sood,
Curator & Founder, Khoj International Artists Association

Uma Chandru and Dr. Vijay Chandru,
Founders, International Institute of Art, Culture and Democracy (IIACD)

Prof. Anil K. Gupta,
Founder, Honeybee Network & SRISTI

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2. "How Does Culture Matter", Amartya Sen. *Culture & Public Action,* Ed. Vijayendra Rao & Michael Walton; New Delhi: Permanent Black, 2005
3. "Should the Government Subsidize the Arts," *The Economics of Art and Culture*, by James Heilbrun and Charles M. Gray; UK: Cambridge University Press, 2001