

Just Culture Arts and Social Change Symposium

Tuesday 25th October, 3.50 pm-4.45pm

Report back from small groups.

This segment was coordinated by Mandy Press and facilitation of small group discussions was kindly provided by Judy Spokes. Jerril Rechter, Meme McDonald, Jared Osborne, Clare Murrell, Richard Holt, Jenny Macaffer & Daryl Taylor

Participant Profile

A mix of arts, and cultural and community workers and a few elected representatives from across the country. A total of 80 people participated in this part of the symposium.

Aims of small group exercise

- To get ‘buy in’ for the adoption of community cultural development approach in their work.
- To gather participants’ views on what constitutes best (or promising) community cultural development practice.

Session format

Mandy Press provided a brief introduction to the session.

This covered the key themes for consideration with a best practice charter derived from a series of roundtable discussions conducted by the Cultural Development Network leading up to the symposium.

The basis for this presentation is attached as Appendix A

The program for the small groups was as follows

1. Telling stories (35 minutes)

Participants were asked to describe a practice or project in which they were involved or observed which they feel worked well.

What was the practice-how was it done?

What was intended-what happened?

What is promising about this practice?

There wasn’t time for everyone to tell their story but everyone was engaged in questioning and identifying the essential elements of good practice.

2. The groups then summarised the key ideas for consideration with the proposed charter.(5 minutes)

The attached notes reflect the ideas emerging from each of the groups . As you can see there is a great deal of agreement about the critical issues.(Appendix B)

Appendix A

Themes for a charter of best practice for community cultural development.

Background

For some time now the Cultural Development Network (CDN) has been advocating for the inclusion of cultural vitality to the accepted ‘triple bottom line’ planning goals for economic, social and environmental sustainability.

The CDN’s recently released discussion paper-*Strengthening Communities through the Arts*, highlights the current enabling policy context for achieving wider support for community cultural development across all levels of government. It is clear that both state and federal governments’ community strengthening agendas can be significantly enhanced through the application of effective community cultural development.

In order to reflect the views of its constituency in the current policy arena, five roundtable discussions with artists, arts managers, community developers and researchers involved in community cultural development were conducted by the CDN in August/September 2005. The purpose of the roundtable discussions was to gather ideas about the critical issues and concerns for the field in promoting community cultural development in their work and to identify the principles and practices that might be described as ‘best practice’.

The outcome of these discussions was to inform the symposium conducted by the CDN and the Community and Social Planners Network (CASPN) *Just Culture-Arts and Social Change* on October 25th, and provide a starting point for the development of a charter of best practice for community cultural development.

Emerging themes

The following is a summary of the 4 key themes emerging from the roundtable discussions. These to be developed further at the symposium by those attending. The themes can then be drafted into a set of principles for best practice. The themes are grouped as follows

Rationale - Why engage in CCD?

Culture breathes richness and vitality into our lives:it animates those things which make us human – meaning-making, identity, belonging... LeBaron, M *Bridging Cultural Conflicts* 2003

- Cultural aspirations are as important as economic, social and environmental aspirations for the development of vibrant and sustainable communities.
- Arts practice and creative expression are at the heart of cultural vitality.
- Community cultural development is the most effective way of building bridges across difference and promoting social inclusion and community empowerment.
- Community cultural development processes can provide a useful instrumental tool for the development and delivery of councils’ vision but more importantly, when a cultural framework is integrated and embedded across council, transformative outcomes will be the result.

Shared Vision and Leadership

- Effective community cultural development is more likely when there is a clear and shared vision which is enshrined in government/ council/agency policy.
- Leadership from management and councillors is as essential as is grass roots community involvement in developing the vision
- Transformative outcomes are more likely to occur when there has been a willingness to take risks, try something new.
- Different communities will benefit from different approaches
- There needs to be as much investment in the quality of the process as in the quality of the artistic outcome –both are critical prerequisites for effective practice.

Roles and Relationships

- The process is always dependent on the development of cross sectoral partnerships, and building trusting and supportive relationships for collaborative action.
- Artists should be recognised as multi-skilled practitioners- they have partnership and project management skills as well as the artistic/technical skills which they bring to the work.
- Artists as sole practitioners often need support, revitalisation and the opportunity for ongoing learning.
- Arts administrators best operate as facilitators, not blockers-they can build partnerships and provide access to required resources – people, space, materials, equipment and support. They need assistance to move beyond the service or event driven imperatives of their role.
- Elected members have a significant role as community leaders in the championing of community cultural development and will be more effective in setting the principles and goals than getting involved in the detail.

Integrating and embedding community cultural development.

- ‘Joined - up’ approaches to planning, implementation and accountability will lead to more effective practice. A single program/project focus makes it difficult to have people communicate across program boundaries.
- Need to look beyond the project focus to embed the practices in all of the work.
- There needs to be a consistent approach to evaluation in order to build knowledge, share ideas and promote effective practices more widely.
- Creativity indicators are important for measuring and communicating effective practice.

Appendix B

CDN Symposium- 25th October 2005

Feedback from small group discussions.

Following introductions, participants were asked to describe a practice or project in which they were involved or observed which they feel worked well.

What was the practice-how was it done?

What was intended-what happened?

What is promising about this practice?

The following is a summary of the discussion from each of the small groups. There is some variation in the quality of the reporting but there is considerable agreement re the critical issues.

Table 1

Kaureen Project.

A project to establish four community centres in different areas of Queensland. Major community involvement in the design of the buildings which reflected the cultural identity of each area and were well utilised. Centres provided a meeting place, information, festivals, employment for local women and family support.

The key to its success included

- The people involved, the inclusive consultation process which resulted in a high level of ownership by the locals.
- And capacity building for the staff and the community.

Museum Victoria

Working with local rural networks.

Using multimedia to promote and utilise museum artifacts in a way that is more relevant and meaningful for people.

Table 2

Summary of key ideas for best practice

- Partnerships
- Place
- Empowerment
- Diversity
- Belonging & Contested belonging
- Ownership
- Some years later the project is still resonating
- Capacity building
- Community engagement
- Community planning
- Grants
- Training program
- Pilot projects
- Enable
- Record and evaluate
- Use multimedia
- Professional development
- Support, sponsorship, pay
- Spaces to be in –office, phone, workshop space
- Artist engaged from the outset

Promising reference material

Mastering Civic Engagement- American Association of Museums

Comeback Cities- Paul Grogan

From Subjects to Citizens Mathew Pike

Alliance for Cultural Democracy Linda Burnham and Steven Durland

Table 3

Links Project

A CCD project for emerging artists to display their work in shop windows as part of the lead up to a community festival. Strong inclusive focus particularly for multicultural community and people with disabilities.

Focus on linking the community with improved relationships resulting between local traders and residents of Ozanam House. Marginalised participants felt empowered by the project.

Hume Winter Music Festival

The first Hume wide festival initially designed to create a stronger sense of identity within and across the city.

Funding via council community grants for local community groups to participate, along with local business support. Successful applicants required to undertake training and mentoring. Festival initially funded by Dept of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development but it is now funded by Hume Council

The festival provided opportunities for Hume's very diverse community to participate and helped to promote intercultural understanding.

Members of community groups who have been through the training are now mentoring others.

This model is now being utilised for the development of a Learning Festival for Hume.

Childrens Hub- St Arnaud-

Summary of key best practice ideas

- Need a 'driver' to help get over the hurdles.
- The 'driver' can be a group of people but they have to be able to 'maintain the faith'
- Work hard at building community ownership- need a lot of meetings and consultations to achieve this.
- Need to allow people to make mistakes.
- You need to go wider than your own community to get resources but also to demonstrate the successes.

Childrens Park –Moonee Valley.

Some years ago an artist was engaged to work with children to design a maze as part of the Childrens Park.. Amazing sculptures were produced as part of the project. Two years later, council depot staff removed the work without any consultation with locals or other areas of council.

Story highlighted the importance of building both community and council commitment- there should be a code of practice for removing/ dismantling community arts installations.

Table 4

- Trust that the project will work- but being prepared to change direction and aims if necessary
- Build on successes and demonstrate outcomes
- Often valuable to look more broadly than the local community – look for resources and expertise from anywhere to increase local resource base and raise skill levels.

- Sustain the faith develop strategies to build community ownership in the project.
- Need both community and local government ownership to succeed.
- Demonstrate the benefit of the projects for all the key organisations/ groups in the community.

In summary

- Training
- Networking
- Collaboration
- Momentum
- Vision
- Communication
- Key driver/skilled worker

Art Collection- identifying significant pieces.

- Strengthening networks-skill sharing b/w small volunteer groups
- Key facilitator
- Support from local/State Government
- Making things meaningful
- Collaboration
- Keep checking back with key community contacts
- Celebrate the milestones.

key requirements

- Shared vision
- Project ‘drivers’ with faith and preparedness to take risks, make mistakes
- Artists engaged to work with the community
- Engagement /Collaboration-strengthen networks and involve everyone, including children
- Celebration- articulating the benefits.

Table 5

- Individually driven based on a great artistic idea.
- Vision and passion around a community of interest
- Community driven projects the most successful
- Art and creativity isn’t defined by us- be open to other forms of expression.
- May need to compromise to achieve the best community outcome
- Work with established as well as emerging artists.
- Work with everyone in the community , young to elders.
- Link key individuals to projects/ communities
- Understand the community context.
- Find the best person who knows about the community context

Table 6

Project in Portland an isolated mining town in WA

The local TAFE college invested in a local CCD program, engaged multiple partners from industry, government and the community.

The projects(which included a community quilt, banners and a tile project) were developed by building on resources that were already in place, drawing on the skills of locals.

Sustainability was achieved by the establishment of a trust to run and finance the work

Bendigo 'identity' project.- a project that challenged cultural stereotypes and bridged different cultural groups. Multicultural artists in Bendigo told their stories about their migrant experience and mentored young people /artists. culminating in a multi media performance. The project had transformative outcomes, led to the establishment of an ethnic communities council in the area and generally built greater cultural awareness and celebration of difference.

The qualities which made this project successful included

- The skills and experience of locals was drawn on, rather than people being imported from 'outside'
- Whatever the project- it needs to have meaning for the community
- The work should be fun and people should have a good time.

In summary re both projects the key elements include

- Strong leadership and vision
- Time to develop the idea, build relationships and commitment.
- Partnerships established
- The idea should capture the imagination, and challenge prevailing stereotypes.
- Community leaders should be recruited early to help articulate the issues for locals.
- Pain and conflict can occur- be open to this and work to resolve it.
- Leave space for relationships to be built.
- Engage people to be the creators themselves
- The people who are facilitating the project need to have passion and love this kind of work. They also need to have integrity.

Table 7

Wagga Wagga Music Projects

The Significance Project

- Collaboration
- Networking
- Learning new skills
- Providing a venue for telling local stories

Pointers for best practice

- You need a key mover and shaker-vision maker
- Local and State government support
- Making things meaningful- collaboration

Gumbry White Dove Exhibition-City of Darebin

A local indigenous art prize

- Confidence when it looks as though nothing is going to happen- keeping the faith in whatever happens and persevering no matter what
- Flexibility

Result was that indigenous committee have ownership of the project

Best Practice summary

- Talk to everyone and particularly the appropriate ones(?)
- Don't be put off if it doesn't appear to be abig priority with the community
- Keep checking in with key community contacts
- Confidence to take aleap is critical- allow it to be organic, be prepared to change directionLong term beneficial outcomes can often come from shaky beginnings
- Build on little successes along the way- celebrate the small milestones.

In summary the group felt the critical things for achieving best practice were

- A vision
- Drivers with vision
- Good and open communication
- Organic and flexible structures and processes.
- Maintain momentum
- Have sense of timing and political intelligence
- Engage the community and let them make mistakes
- Acknowledge and work with stakeholders with conflicting agendas

Table 8

- Balance and partnerships
- ‘Right ‘ artist for the ‘right’ project
- Recognise artist as an enabler
- Recognition of the relationship of the artist with the community
- Clear and articulated rights and responsibilities for both artists and the group(s) working with them.
- Decent pay for artists
- Artists to be challenged to ‘move outside the box’
- Balancing community aspirations with the artist(s) aspirations
- Power base is equal
- Sustainability
- Training for those not previously involved in ccd as to what ccd is and for artists who are new to the practice to be mentored- there is a place for complementary skills.

Mandy Press-Nov 14th 2005