

Connecting Arts and Local Government to lead future creative regions.

Ros Derrett

Southern Cross University, Lismore NSW

Patrick Mitchell

Strategic Facilitator, Queensland Arts Council

Abstract

A project to inspire creative regions provided local government personnel an opportunity to appreciate the challenges facing the arts in regional Queensland. Regional arts workers can and do make a palpable and essential contribution to the quality of life in their communities. A series of facilitated workshops utilising 'conversations' offered regional participants connected to the Queensland Arts Council (QAC) through local arts council groups and Arts Queensland (AQ) through membership of Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) Committees with space for conversations. These three-day conversations provided a framework to explore shared visions and passions for arts practice, community well-being and community leadership.

Introduction

Crisp white tablecloths covered wooden trestle tables, freshly baked cookies wafted on warm air, friendly voices from a kitchen full of young mums from the local preschool settling in for a busy weekend of gourmet cooking greeted a collection of 70 delegates at a serious arts development seminar in Barcaldine, Qld. These sensual experiences provided a symbolic and real introduction to the business of a Regional Leadership Forum. There was 'an earner' in it for the mums, there were extra pounds to accompany the squeals of delight that emanated each break of the proceedings as the delegate networking was undertaken in earnest. The culinary menu went blow for blow with the revelations with the animated conversations that filled the two days for those who had traveled far, from Birdsville and near up the road in Tambo to Barkie's Civic Centre. Later entertainers gathered in the delegates, local children and residents for a night of unrivalled hilarity and wonder at the local talent. Delegates felt comfortable in the bosom of regional hospitality. The tone and transactions clearly demonstrated the values and beliefs of the host community, encouraging and supporting involvement in creative activities.

This paper was subject to a double-blind peer review process.

ISBN number 1920948848

Published on-line by the Centre for Sustainable Regional Communities, La Trobe University

www.latrobe.edu.au/csdc/2ndconference/refereed

In 2004 an exciting series of regional conversations provided an opportunity for people from regional communities to meet, to reflect on their connection with place, the arts, their own activities and those of others around them. By creating a shared space over two days participants were able to engage one another, not to just talk or chat idly, but to experiment and take good risks (Stewart, 1998) through animated exchange and listening for a common purpose. Trust built and ideas and passions were expressed respectfully. Confidence was built as a collective intelligence was created from the interaction fostered by each workshop. An awareness grew among participants that they were not alone in their pursuit of solutions for managing the arts in regional areas and that by becoming part of a process to address concerns for regional cultural development, they readily moved to work collaboratively and creatively with their new contacts. Participants resolved this was a most useful exercise and needed to be replicated regularly in their host communities.

The initiative from the Queensland Arts Council (QAC) and Arts Queensland (AQ) with support from the federal Regional Arts Fund (RAF) sought to build a better understanding of existing people, projects and processes involved in regional arts practice. The Leadership Forums were seen to provide assistance with connecting Arts and Local Government to lead future creative regions. The Forums did bring people together who had experiences, ideas and aspirations pertinent to this focus; encourage a strong focus on local experiences, local attitudes, local ideas and local implementation; provide local government with the opportunity to not only hear what has been done in other regions, but a chance to speak publicly about their own achievements and experiences. They provided many examples of how the arts can assist and provide leadership in regional communities and acted as a forum for local government representatives to discuss various community objectives and how the arts could provide a focus and a forum for these.

The word conversation was and is used deliberately and often to describe these events. A different sort of relationship between the participants and the metropolitan arts professionals was established. Each wanted to be part of the conversation. The visiting members of the wider arts networks in the capital cities had not decided that people in the bush had a problem and that they could fix it with some training and access to our experience. Rather, they were interested to learn of the challenges and the successes first hand. What needed to be avoided was the standard practice of ‘problematising’ regional communities and, instead, establish a relationship that acknowledged the skills, experience and commitment that already existed within the communities and, most particularly the participants. The workshop structure allowed the locals to be the ‘experts’ and the lead be taken from them in terms of what had and could happen in their communities.

The word ‘conversation’ therefore became a powerful indicator of our intent and our practice. In this case it could be said that the relationship is the conversation! (Scott, 2002). In addition the conversations were designed to alert delegates, via the collective experience to the significant benefits accrued from collaboration through strategic regional alliances. By developing and delivering quality arts experiences and negotiating effective partnerships, regions can look toward enhanced prosperity. The quality of life enjoyed by residents and shared with visitors is a direct result of careful acknowledgment of the region’s cultural capital. Issues, trends and challenges all need to be openly and dynamically debated, documented and, where possible celebrated.

The values, interests and aspirations of all participants at each of five Regional Leadership Forums conducted in 2004 informed the conversations. The positive feedback from this

initiative has led to planning for another five in 2005 to consolidate the optimum factors for effective community engagement.

Background

The Regional Leadership Forums undertook to acknowledge the skills, experience, activities and commitment that currently exist in regional communities. These events also sought to demonstrate the value of collaboration through a partnership with Arts Queensland, Queensland Arts Council and the national Regional Arts Fund to deliver face to face exchange between its regional constituents in the centres of Townsville, Mitchell, Stanthorpe, Biloela and Barcaldine.

‘Go to the People
Live with them
Learn from them,
Love them.

Start with what they know,
Build with what they have.

But with the best leaders
When the work is done
The task is accomplished
The people will say,
‘We have done this ourselves.’
Laozi, China 700 BC

The conversations provided an opportunity for delegates to reflect on their connection with place and landscape; to build a better understanding of the living culture through people, projects and processes involved in regional arts practice. Issues and trends identified included the encouragement of non-traditional partnerships, collaboration on project management, integrated strategic planning through careful acknowledgment of the region’s cultural capital, celebration of best practice and shared resources. The portfolio of community cultural activities responded to included festivals and events, public art, civic design, infrastructure investment, parks, gardens and streetscape developments, cultural precincts, asset audits, life-long learning and community consultation.

Collaborators

Queensland Arts Council (QAC) seeks to tangibly enrich the lives of Queenslanders, no matter how geographically isolated, no matter how culturally diverse, with arts experiences which make relevant their sense of place in Australian society in the 21st century. QAC is Australia’s largest not-for-profit community based arts organization (www.qac.org.au). It provides a broad range of performances, exhibitions, workshops, master classes, scholarships, awards, funding opportunities and arts related services to regional, rural and remote Queenslanders. QAC represents Queensland’s interests nationally through membership of Regional Arts Australia (RAA) and plays a significant role in regional arts access and development.

QAC services a network of over 60 volunteer Local Arts Councils with a collective membership of over 6,000 people. These Local Arts Councils work to invigorate the cultural life of their communities. Through this network, and its core programs QAC provides arts

access statewide and is committed to supporting the creativity of regional Queenslanders and the empowerment of regional communities to develop and express their identity, diversity and cohesion through cultural activity. QAC plays a pivotal role in the culturally led revitalisation of regional communities. QAC's 2003 Protocol with Local Government extends and enhances this formal relationship, which has been in place for the past seven years.

QAC's three year Strategic Plan sets a number of important goals. Of particular significance to this project is the devising and acceptance of the goal – to develop the capacity of regional communities to achieve social, creative and entrepreneurial capital through arts enterprise. This may be achieved by:

- Mentoring Local Arts Councils and individuals in communities to build leadership in the Arts at a regional level
- Recognising the impact of locally driven issues in building social capital through the Arts.
- Encouraging advocacy for the Arts at all levels of the community.
- Facilitating community participation in local arts events.
- Demonstrating how arts and cultural activities can revitalise communities.
- Developing the entrepreneurial skills of arts workers in regional communities.
- Develop further the skills and resources of Local Arts Councils to initiate and present arts product and services (www.qac.org.au).

The organisation is concerned with its relationship with its Local Arts Council network. It commits both to a process of capacity building – to deal with increasing the abilities and resources of individuals, organisations and communities to manage changing circumstances better.

Local Arts Councils

'Right now, in many communities, at this very moment, there is someone who is dreaming about doing something to improve the life of their communities. If we could learn who that person is and what their dream is we could help that person to transform that dream into a meaningful project or work. We could be half way to changing or adding to the economic and cultural life in the community.' (Sirolli, 1996).

A good place to look for this person is the Local Arts Council (LAC). LACs are a community-based organisation, full of individuals who want to do something creative and positive for their community. It is local people who most know what is feasible, suitable and affordable in their community. The Regional Leadership Forums were developed at a time of change and challenge, where communities, most particularly regional ones, are continually asked to find new ways to survive. This process of community revitalisation and renewal requires contributions from all levels of the community. It has been shown time and time again, that arts and related activities can make a profound contribution to the social and material well-being of communities.

The ties that bind communities together are the events that forge a powerful creative force. There are many towns that have used the arts and arts practice to create just this sort of environment to generate community connection and revitalisation. Two recent publications from the Australia Council – *The Great Yarn Event* and *Heartland* – demonstrate this. Arts activities can make a profound contribution to the social and material well-being of communities. Another important outcome is the energy and commitment created in a local community. People recognise that by working together across cultural and political divides, they can achieve remarkable things.

Local Arts Councils and associated arts workers (whether they are professional or volunteer) can provide events that can feed the sense of achievement in a community. For the past ten years Redlands Arts Council has been commissioning photographs of eminent local senior citizens. These photos are displayed in an annual exhibition celebrating the community contribution these people have made. This activity has also resulted in the publication of a book that brings together all the photos and all the stories of those ten years. It is a powerful acknowledgment of the builders of this community.

Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF)

The Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) is a partnership program between Arts Queensland and local government to support the professional development and employment of artists and arts and cultural workers in regional Queensland. The Regional Arts Development Fund, totaling \$3 million annually, has expanded to include Aboriginal Councils, and provides ever-growing funding opportunities for people in regional Queensland. In the Major and Small Grants funding rounds in 2002-2003 financial year over 30% of the funding was allocated regionally.

Methodology

Each facilitated workshop provided an opportunity for individual and collective storytelling. It allowed for exposure of incidents, experiences, personalities and history to be shared amongst delegates. The deliberative space allowed delegates a safe, comfortable environment that was accepting of humour as well as the exploration of serious concerns. Conversations were conducted in real time and a distraction-free space was provided in public amenities. Conversations were focused and sustained. Conversations were undertaken in intimate and plenary settings. This personal spin on the human dynamic allowed for open exchanges.

The Regional Leadership Forum model

Time	Content	Presentation	Comments
Friday			
Evening	Meal for delegates and locals		Delegates travelled considerable distance. Informal, social gathering important.
Saturday			
8.30 a.m.	Meet and greet	Sign in, inspect displays, documents	Delegates brought material to describe and promote local initiatives
Session One 9 a.m. – noon			
1a	Introductory games	Facilitator	Facilitator outlined process for conversations
1b	Individual delegate items indicating 'sense of place'	Story telling, listening, gossip, commodification	
1c	Exercise on sharing destination with visiting friends and relatives (VFR 67% in regional Australia)	Discuss itineraries, experiences,	
1d	Vision/Aspiration for your town in 2020 What makes your place different?	Individual notes; conversations; feedback to plenary and white board notes.	Notes available for delegates
Noon	Lunch		Networking opportunity

Session Two 1 – 2.30 p.m.			
2a	Local case study – arts project that has made a difference	Presentation by local leader	Facilitator draws out key themes relevant for following conversations
2b	Deconstruct elements of case study; any match with (1a)	Plenary	
2c	Stakeholders – Partners in Regional prosperity	Conversations	
2d	How to structure civic dialogues	Conversations	
2e	What three new ideas have been gleaned?	Plenary, feedback, whiteboard notes	
2.30 – 2.45	Afternoon tea		
Session Three 2.45 – 4.45 p.m.			
3a	Project management – at all levels	Best practice examples from community groups	
3b	Where do inspiration come from? Who takes initiative?	Personal experiences in conversations	
3c	Who takes leadership?	Conversation to determine characteristics	
3d	Difference between leadership & management?	Plenary – list making	
3e	Role of volunteers and social entrepreneurship	Conversations of experience	
3f	Success factors	Conversation; list making	
3g	Indicators of well-being, social capital and envisioning	Plenary	
Interlude 5 – 5.30 p.m.	Wearable Art Badgemaking exercise based on personality and place	Individual craft construction to wear to FORUM DINNER	Networking, creativity, humour, relaxation and local hospitality
6 – 9 p.m.	Dinner & local entertainment	Participants & partners	
Sunday			
Session Four 8.30 – 10 a.m.			
4a	Creative problem solving	Facilitator	Outline scenario building techniques
4b	Project game	Specific resources identified, a recorder/observer taking notes; a wild card to challenge	
4c	Report back on issues and ideas from game	Plenary	
4d	Core challenges in communities, resilience, confidence, activism, survival, partnership and leadership	Plenary	
10 – 10.15	Morning tea		
Session Five 10.30 – noon			
5a	Role of monitoring and evaluation. What is the value of community cultural development?	Conversations – local experiences	
5b	Case study of QAC On Tour by Request survey	Individuals fill out survey to establish local needs for QAC	Analysis of survey instruments
5c	Evaluation practices	Conversation and plenary	Delegates go home with checklist of goals, potential

			partnerships and means to monitor success
5d	Evaluation of Regional Leadership Forum	Individual responses on survey form Showing of images shot during Forums as finale.	Useful to document follow up from delegates immediately and one month later

(Derrett, 2004)

Feedback from 249 participants was overwhelmingly positive with 82.6% saying the Forums identified new opportunities to build on the effectiveness of their organisations, 71.6% identified new projects they could initiate in their town and 63.2% gained a better understanding of how RADF and Local Arts Councils (LACs) can work in their communities. 72.4% of participants felt the Forums helped identify new partnership opportunities for their organisations.

The attendance at the forums of a broad cross section of volunteer and professional arts workers, local government councilors, mayors and staff as well as practicing artists, community workers and business people provided a dynamic exchange of ideas and spirited debate on the role the arts in each community. This paper is based on interviews, surveys and participant observation at each facilitated Forum.

Workshops

The conversations between delegates in small groups at tables commenced with a focus on ‘place’ – their place. What emerged were the networks that existed that provided identity to residents and the base for the interpretation through local arts practice. Place provides an expression of identity. Whether representing small or marginalised elements of the local heritage, distinctive demographics, landscape, leisure pursuits, each individual project or suite of activities has established itself as part of the rich tapestry available not only to locals but to visitors. There is always a story to tell. The workshops provided an opportunity for participants (whether they had been actively involved with the processes or outputs personally) to share stories of the development with other delegates. A consistent framework was employed across all five Forums. This took delegates from the known and personal to the strategic vision and more broadly based regional perspectives.

Delegates recognised that much of their community engagement through arts activities was where space becomes place and where culture declares its presence (Carter, 1987:xxii). The hosting of community celebrations provides another function that acknowledges how residents convert physical boundaries to satisfy social and cultural needs. Through the conversations it became evident that some boundaries can readily be broken down in the interests of sharing quality cultural experiences. Discussion focused on the roles of arts in community life. *The Arts can positively affect, acknowledge, animate, astonish, brand, celebrate, complement, compensate, debate, debunk, define, determine, develop, distinguish, document, dramatise, explain, express, generate, impassion, incite, initiate, inspire, mark, mystify, observe, reconcile, reflect, represent, resist, revive, shape, simplify, surprise and so on.*

Delegates thought of examples of the impact and implications of arts practice in their host communities and discussed strategies to better manage them. Case studies provided concrete examples of how regional arts-workers can and do make a contribution to the quality of life in their communities.

Definitions of a sense of place (Stegner cited in Sandford, 1996) emphasis elements such as an appreciation of unique geography, the remembered and celebrated history and how that is carried forward into contemporary society and a cast of characters. Delegates applied this to the relationship of residents and visitors to community festivals and specific arts events they conducted as unique experiences. What emerged during the analysis of the annual portfolios of arts activities communities hosted was that most could be categorised as key celebrations of place demonstrating close personal ties and solidarity that are considered critical to the formation and maintenance of community (Huang & Stewart, 1996:26). Individual and collective connections with festivals as leisure experiences can demonstrate what Crouch (1999:257) describes as one way in which people practice space.

During discussions between delegates the following elements of the nature and role of the arts in regional life were canvassed. Examples of existing arts practice were shared and documented. Each session built on the practical aspects of designing, delivering and developing audiences for arts projects. At each stage potential partners were raised and ways to establish worthwhile working relationships discussed. Of particular interest was the contribution local government could make to the process and outcomes. The conversations acknowledged the way of life of communities, the collective behaviours of people and the rituals associated with specific locations. This embodied a common way of understanding life and their environment (Trewin, 2001). The importance of memories was identified as a key to much of regional arts practice.

This has particular significance when public art projects occupy the outdoor environment in some parts of isolated regional communities. He suggests *'space is used to transform the way of making sense of being somewhere and doing something chosen on one's own terms'* (ibid. 266). Festivals and arts events can thus assist in making sense of where people are through an understanding of the stories and unseen aspects of life in communities. Crouch (1999:260) notes the importance of photography in studying social engagement. Interestingly each Forum was thoroughly documented visual with still and video images. Delegates observed how often photographs are used in the promotion, documentation as well as art work in their community connections. The landscape was acknowledged for its biophysical, spiritual and traditional presence in the daily lives of residents.

Table 1: Personal Dimensions to Art in its Place

Personal	Live, love, learn, listen and leave a legacy, self and other,
Emotional	Spirit, mood, soul, heart, attitude, responsiveness, self esteem,
Social	Sense of community, well-being, safety and security, trust, reciprocity and collective action, empowerment, diversity
Cultural	Formal and informal, institutional, aesthetic, anthropological, ways of doing things, education, amenities, authenticity
(Bio)physical environment	Response to landscape, topography, climate, vegetation, natural cycles, infrastructure
Economic	Employment, infrastructure, enterprise, investment,

	innovation, service culture,
Political	Ethics, power, authority, governance, democracy, equity, active citizenship, social justice, policy making, accountability, top down or bottom up?
Spatial & Temporal	Visual amenity, recreation and leisure spaces, human scale, interpretation, seasonality

(Derrett, 2004)

This reflects the emphasis Tuan (1974) suggests while places can exhibit spirit or personality, but that only humans can have a sense of place. He suggests that people demonstrate their sense of place when they apply their moral and aesthetic discernment to sites and locations (Tuan, 1974; Stewart et al, 1998). What emerges, too, is that a sense of place varies for individuals over time and exposure to sites. If this can happen for residents through prolonged attachment, what is equally worthy of exploration is the experience of people visiting a place briefly for a festival, market, exhibition, and public art installation for example, and being exposed to the physical appeal and impact on their leisure experience. Their appreciation of place can become a substantial influence on repeat visitation.

Case Study - Barcaldine Picture Theatre - social entrepreneurship

The local Barcaldine, Qld cinema was built in 1920's out of corrugated iron with vaulted roof and a unique street entrance. It has been functionally refurbished and run by the Local Arts Council (LAC) as the community's own and only cinema. It operates Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights with current mainstream showings attracting solid local audiences. Income generated, along with volunteer labour from members and residents has improved the amenity of idiosyncratic canvas deckchairs, memorabilia, a refreshment outlet and hiring for community functions. The volunteer management of the enterprise by the LAC has now established a partnership with the Australian Film Commission to present film festivals. This will enhance the locals' experience, encourage visitation from the region and up-skill locals of all ages through a series of film making workshops. Support from the local business community is helping to promote the cinema and its ongoing program.

Case study - Mitchell day night festival by the Maranoa River

In Mitchell a riverside day into night series of festive activities drew locals and visitors. Many people attending the diverse activities included in the program commented on the experience caused them to reassess their connection with an extraordinary familiar landscape in a different way. The Fire and Water Festival engaged the whole community in a remarkable collaboration of arts, education, entertainment and environmental appreciation. Local government invested money and other resources to ensure the event's viability. It became evident that the river, the riverbank and access areas were under utilized by the community as a space worthy of community celebrations. School student activity was carefully integrated with community and professional arts workshops in the lead up to the event and the typical word of mouth promotion worked very effectively. It has become part of the heritage of the town, given its successful marshalling of appropriate resources.

This is not a particularly unique event in regional Australia but the Forum made it possible for the story to be told, its success and achievement to be acknowledged and for the following success factors to be acknowledged

- all parts of the community have a contribution to make, it is a matter of working out where. In this case the local council built the stage after local artists designed it. This engagement of local council and workers meant that another sector had an active engagement in the making of the event.
- it was a simple way to show people what they could do as a community – not always having to bring in the best and biggest of something to make it fantastic
- It brought arts to the community
- the stage is also now part of the community's assets. Its design stimulated much creative thinking in the community and encouraged the growth and use of all sorts of skills. This was seen across the community
- the Festival stimulated all sorts of new activities for the communities and drew out the personal and physical resources to grow them
- encouraged access to artists and funding
- generated lots of pride in community and therefore willingness to commit time and resources

Case Study - What are the skills we need to do this job well?

An important element in the Forums was the use of some 'training tools' that enabled participants to reflect on the important skills needed in successful arts events. These skills are often overlooked or taken for granted.

The hypothetical exercise used during the Forums was based on the work of Liz Andrews and David Briggs (Regional Arts Development Officers with Regional Arts Victoria). It effectively provided a framework for delegates to work collaboratively to solve problem associated with delivering an arts based scenario of value to a regional community. Delegates worked at their conversation tables in small groups. Cards identifying specific resources of funds, target audiences, artform practice, and location were distributed to stimulate discussion. One person was nominated to report purely on the process - how group operated, when was it working, why was it working, what skills were needed to help the process function creatively and constructively. Groups were given 20 – 30 minutes to develop a project and close to the end a wild card provided a substantial intervention to influence decisions the group might take.

The exercise or game explores how a project is taken from go to whoa - many other activities/industries have training techniques to prepare participants, this is the first time we have used a training game to look at how we work. With this exercise participants are offered an opportunity to self evaluate. What was their personal style within a group and its process? How did they respond to new ideas? Did the group demonstrate an understanding of process of growing, of nurturing, of feeding, of protecting and of promoting? Acknowledgement of how teams work, what skills and experiences individuals and how these contribute each group's process and outcomes are investigated through the game. How creative and constructive was the exchange?

Community & Leadership

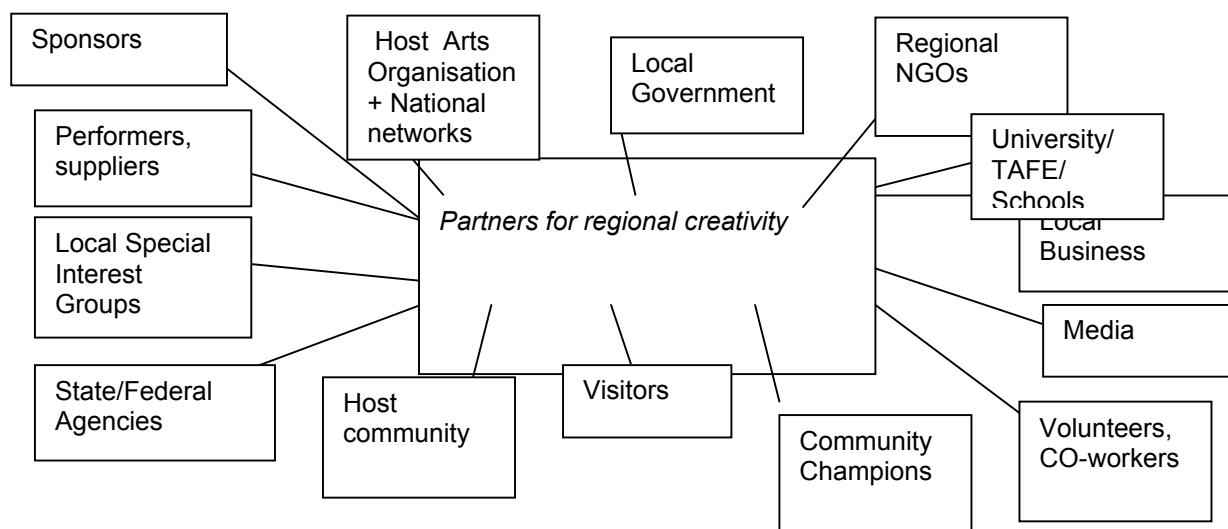
The term 'community' has social and spatial dimensions. An aggregate of people occupying a common and bounded territory within which they establish and participate in common institutions comes close to describing the participants at the workshops. Just because people feel they are a community, doesn't necessarily mean they are. The essential ingredient in achieving community appears to be a commitment by the group to meaningful communication. It is now commonplace to talk of creating community.

There was agreement that the role of leadership is central for effective regional development, whether social, cultural, economic or political. Delegates raised the importance of a leadership group, not just individuals. Leaders were people drawn from all parts of the community (McKinsey 1994: 25). They could *make change happen*, could change attitudes. The leadership group may be formally organised or not. Leadership is not ... *a secret art. It is a discipline that can be taught and learnt. Effective leadership has less to do with inherent personal qualities than with a major commitment to action* (McKinsey 1994: 30).

Delegates offered their experience of leadership. Like Epps and Sorensen many reflected on the nature of community leadership that recognizes the capacity to formulate a realistic vision of the community's economic and social development; can achieve a high level of community acceptance of, if not active commitment to, the vision; can motivate key community business-persons, administrators and social activists to work systematically and in a coordinated way towards the vision; and lead by example (Epps and Sorensen 1995: 45). Groups of delegates brainstormed key personal attributes of leaders from their experience. Traits such as vision, intelligence, knowledge, respect, resources, energy, originality, persuasiveness reflected other research (Epps and Sorensen 1995: 46; Fulop and Brennan, 1997). Ellyard's (2003) core leadership qualities of confidence, courage, commitment, consideration, courtesy and conciliation were recognized as part of the challenges discussed. This led to an understanding of the reasons individuals and groups do things that they do, the way they currently do them and exploring the possibility that there are alternatives.

Delegates looked particularly at the partnerships that could be made to enhance the creativity of the region. They noted that each of the players (See Figure 1.) influences the process as well as being affected by the finished product. The emphasis and level of participation by each partner in each community varies. The interaction is influenced by the individuals involved, the organisational structures in place, traditions inherent in each community's socio-cultural exchange, the history of public engagement by public authorities and the appeal of the region to potential visitors wishing to take advantage of the region's creativity they can access by *doing what the locals do*. Regional arts practitioners acknowledged the value of their relationship with the Queensland arts Council and links established through their Regional Arts Development Fund committees.

Figure 1: Partnerships identified for creative regions



Source: (Derrett, 2005 adapted from Allen et al 2002)

Local Government

Of particular interest was the contribution local government makes to reflecting and expressing the unique identity of their constituency. Delegates noted the shifts in recent years from local government's role as purely administrative to practice now demonstrating greater connectedness with the community and the non-government sector. With a broader range of responsibilities delegates recognized that local government alone can't satisfy the expectations and aspirations of residents and that the cultural sector has an important role to play in potential partnerships. Local government is now faced with competing policy interests and it was determined that the cultural sector could collaborate with other sectors like, health, tourism, education and recreation to actively engage with Councils.

Local government delegates had underestimated the value and expressed surprise at the potential the arts offered their communities. The leadership debate emphasized the core qualities expected from local government – whether at individual, group or corporate levels. According to Ellyard (2003) the components include the heart, as well as the intellect. Local government participants recognized their leadership capacity to encourage active participation by their constituents, to minimise impediments and to advocate best practice in their annual programs. Delegates expressed the strong desire to embed an understanding of a sense of place and community that promotes the image and identity of the host communities into Council policies and plans.

Conversations acknowledged that the leadership might be offered from the arts community, as long as other stakeholders, including local government were able to deliver within their statutory frameworks. It was recognized that each community, let alone region had distinctive characteristics that required working through to establish a prioritized agenda. Designing and implementing processes and strategies that engage individuals, groups and institutions was seen to be a valuable route to satisfying the call for partnerships. Comments were made regarding the intimacies created from participation in community cultural activities from festivals to streetscape enhancement. By connecting people with places through access to specialist arts practice and skills development, exhibitions of local arts and craft and the social entrepreneurship that can deliver a variety of arts services, strong community relationships were demonstrated and sustained.

Globally local government often focuses on building better communities and local economies (Duxbury, 2004). From a cultural planning perspective, their priority is to get the arts, culture and heritage fully recognized at decision-making forums and urban and regional planning processes. This requires the incorporation of the community's vision into the 'official' mindset and it be reflected in effective support structures and initiatives to nurture and build the vibrancy and strength of the arts and cultural sector.

The uniqueness of each community's situation means that such cultural plans must be tailored to the conditions prevailing in each municipality. Increasing attention is being paid to the connection between community cultural development and cultural tourism. Strategically this leads LGAs to encourage creative activity in order to build their tourism industry. In some communities, priorities for cultural activities and community vibrancy are located within larger economic development plans emphasizing tourism. A clear incentive is in place for municipalities to increase their support for arts and heritage development. It is important that residents understand the roles and responsibilities of local government to ensure the

range of arts, cultural and heritage activities aspired to can be accommodated within specific Council plans and practice.

Regional cultural organisations are seeking ways to best deliver opportunities for their constituencies to participate, be creative, and excel in their pursuit of new skills. By strengthening regional cultural networks through internal and external investment, through collaboration, a more sustainable approach to representing the diversity of existing and future practice may be delivered. Local government can offer leadership by giving a voice to sections of the local community that are less well represented by mainstream cultural expression by putting contemporary social issues on the arts agenda – theirs or those of cultural organizations conducted by residents. They can encourage the exploration of arts practice new and challenging by incorporating these into Council projects.

Maroochy Shire's elegant public participation manual (Rogan and Tennant, 2003) clearly identifies the level and type of participation appropriate in the public participation process within a community. There are different levels of participation to choose from - depending on the issues, impacts on stakeholders and the desired level of public influence in the decision making process. The Maroochy Public Participation Spectrum (p.17) offers a model adapted from national and international consultations and suggests that each community can develop a process appropriate to their needs.

Conclusion

During the conversations it became evident that regional partnerships can assist in the policy and planning frameworks required to assist in increasing participation and culture and leisure activities in regional areas. Regular, deliberate communication needs to be established. Providing opportunities for residents and visitors in regional communities to access diverse experiences, to ensure freedom of cultural expression and develop and improve the viability of cultural enterprises were recognized as practical strategies to be worked on collaboratively. Projects that preserved the region's cultural heritage through connecting individuals, arts organizations with local government and the private sector we identified and it was anticipated that gradually a more cohesive approach to regional cultural development would result.

Bibliography

Adams, D and Goldbard, A,
2001, *Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development*, Rockefeller Foundation
Creativity & Culture Development

Andersen, L., O'Loughlin, P. and Salt, A.,
2001, *Community Leadership programs in NSW*, UTS Shopfront for Strengthening
Communities Unit, NSW Premier's Department
www.communitybuilders.nsw.gov.au/builders/leaders/lship.html

Bayside City Council,
The Creative Community - An Arts Strategy for 1998-2001,
www.bayside.vic.gov.au

Browne, B and Jain, S.,
2002, *Imagine Chicago, Ten Years of Imagination in Action*

Published by Imagine Chicago
www.imaginechicago.org

Carter, P.,
1987, *The Road to Botany Bay*, Faber and Faber, London

Crouch, D. (ed)
1999, *Leisure/Tourism geographies*, Practices and geographical knowledge, Routledge, London, Ch 18, pp 257

Duxbury, N,
2004, *Creative Cities: Principles and Practices*, Background Paper F|47
Family Network, Canadian Policy Research Networks,
www.culturalcommons.org/index.cfm

Ellyard, P.,
2003, *Strategies for Creating 21st Century Learning Communities*, background paper to
Address to Strategic Partnerships Program, Department of Education and Training,
Melbourne

Epps R, and Sorensen A.,
1995 *Local Leadership in the Rural Heartland*, Central Queensland Journal of Regional
Development, Vol3, No 4

Flannery, T,
2002, *The day, the land, the people*, Australia Day Address 2002,
www.australiaday.com.au/tim_welcome.html

Fulop L, and Brennan M.,
1997 *Meeting the Challenge: Regional Economic Development Organisations (REDOs) in
Australia*, National Study for the Australian Local Government Association

Huang, Y-H., and Stewart, W., P.,
1996, *Rural Tourism Development: Shifting Basis of Community Solidarity*, Journal of Travel
Research, Spring, pp 26 – 31

Keating, C
2003, *Evaluating Community Arts and Community Well Being*, prepared for: Arts Victoria,
Darebin City Council, City of Whittlesea and VicHealth, Effective Change
www.effectivechange.com.au

McKinsey and Company
1994, *Lead Local Compete Global: Unlocking the Growth potential of Australia's Regions*,
Final Report to the Commonwealth Department of Housing and Regional Development

Plowman, I, Ashkanasy, N.M., Gardner, J. and Letts, M.,
2003, *Innovation in rural Queensland, Why some towns thrive while others languish*,
University of Queensland and Department of Primary Industries, Queensland

Queensland Arts Council
www.qac.org.au

- Rogan B & Tennant, M
2003, *Maroochy Shire Council Public Participation Program Manual*, Designing and implementing public participation... How to integrate public participation in your project, plan or strategy, Maroochy Shire Council; Queensland
- Sandford, R.W.
1996, *A Local's Sense of Place in the Canadian Rockies*, January 14
www.digitalbanff.com./sandford/place
- Scott, S.,
2002, *Fierce Conversations*, Piatkus Books (UK), Viking Penguin (USA)
- Sirolli, E.,
1996, *Ripples in the Zambezi*, Institute for Science and Technology, Murdoch University WA
- Stewart, A.,
1998, *Conversation as an energiser of new ways of being and new ways of doing*, in *The Slim Book, Reworking Tomorrow*
www.creativestate.biz
- Stewart, E. J., Hayward, B.M., Devlin, P.J. & Kirby, V.G.,
1998, *The 'place' of interpretation: a new approach to the value of interpretation*, *Tourism Management*, Vol 19, No 3, pp 257 – 266.
- Trewin, D.,
2001, *Measuring Wellbeing, Frameworks for Australian Social Statistics*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, (cat no.4160.0) pp 270 – 297.
- Tuan, Y.-F.
1974. *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perceptions, Attitudes and Values*. Prentice-Hall Inc, New Jersey.