conceptualising community cultural development

The Role of Cultural Planning in Community Change

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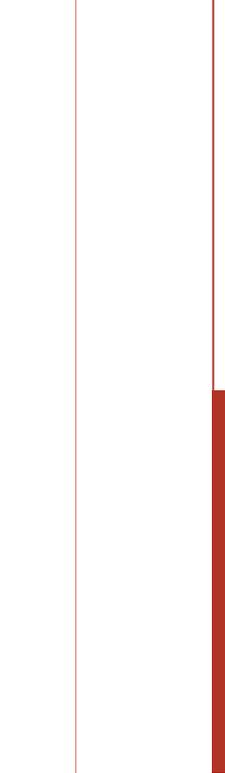*Edith Cowan University*
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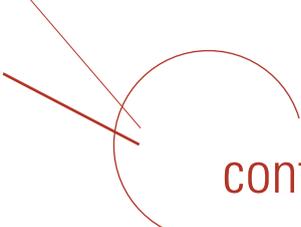*Community Arts Network WA*
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contents

foreword

Changes to Community Arts Network WA (CAN WA), over the past six years, have influenced the development of Community Cultural Development (CCD) and cultural planning in Western Australia (WA).

It is seventeen years since CAN WA was incorporated as an organisation, the peak body for community arts and CCD. In 1996, CAN WA undertook a major review of its operation and services. This resulted in a restructure of the organisation through the development of a 12-year business and cultural plan. The plan incorporated a future-based visioning process, involving, as part of the organisational restructure, professionals from fields other than the arts. These professionals, from such diverse areas as town planning, psychology, local government, marketing, research and technology, had one thing in common. They had direct involvement in community building.

This was the first time in CAN WA's history that such a high level of diversity was represented within the organisation. Another important factor in the 1996 restructure was the multiplicity of global work experiences that were brought into the organisation. These professionals, from other than arts fields, worked alongside longstanding CCD practitioners and arts-workers. The introduction of a range of professionals with differing global experiences created the need to articulate better CAN WA's methods and processes. It challenged existing CCD methodology, terminology and concepts.

It is from this cross-sector and cross-cultural environment that CAN WA's approach to CCD and cultural planning has been formed. It is six years since, for the first time, five local governments partnered with CAN WA in a Cultural Planning Program. Whilst many communities have provided feedback on the impact of these initiatives, CAN WA has not previously had the opportunity to substantiate this information.

CAN WA's partnership with the disciplinary stream known as Community Psychology began in 1997 through Dr Christopher Sonn and, later, Associate Professor Neil Drew. Community and Environmental Psychology students have undertaken professional placements with CAN WA. These links began a familiarisation phase between the two fields. A research project on CCD was then seen as the best way to move forward and it is indeed thrilling that this has now happened. This is the first significant cross-sector research on CCD that has been done in WA.

Much credit for this project must go to Dr Christopher Sonn for maintaining his inquiry into CCD and CAN WA, leading to this publication. It is another first for CCD in Western Australia. Hopefully, this is only the beginning and many more research projects will ensue. Associate Professor Neil Drew's contribution to the study was invaluable, not least for the many opportunities for partnerships. Past and present CAN WA Board and staff members are gratefully acknowledged for it is they who have made CAN WA such a rich and inspiring environment in which to work.

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executive summary

Rural, regional and remote communities are in crisis. Many face a very real threat to their existence. Declining populations and the withdrawal of key services such as banking, health and transport have placed communities under increasing pressure. The emphasis in community development initiatives has focussed on enhancing individual, family and community capacity to build capable, vital communities. Yet, there remains a need for clearly articulated conceptual and theoretical models for understanding the processes of civic engagement that lead to positive outcomes for communities and individuals.

Community Cultural Development (CCD) is a process used by the Community Arts Network WA (CAN WA) to foster participation in community life, mediated through culture and the arts, to achieve community-building outcomes. In this collaborative research project a conceptual model of the CCD process, in particular cultural planning, was developed using a contextualist research framework. Key participants were interviewed to ascertain the key dimensions of their experience of the CCD process, and a model for CCD was derived.

The key findings are:

- CCD is quintessentially an enabling practice.
- CAN WA's involvement is through a political process of engaging local government and the community in the promotion of community voice, participation and the importance of culture in community.
- CAN WA facilitates a deep and different understanding of culture. This includes an understanding of self as a cultural agent.

Three phases of CAN WA's involvement were identified: Initial Contact, Engagement and Sustainability. The key points are summarised under each phase.

Phase one: Initial Contact

- Facilitated through local government.
- Participants attracted by the CAN WA philosophy.
- The level of knowledge about CAN WA's formal organisational structure was low.
- Sponsorship by community leaders was important for initial contact.

Phase two: Engagement

- Characterised by formal workshop structure that creates enabling activity settings.
- Workshops are guided by a set of principles and values.

Phase three: Sustainability

- Sustaining community capacity to enact the cultural plan is difficult.
- This is a crucial issue for communities once CAN WA disengages.
- There is a need for more time to develop sustainable structures in partnership with CAN WA.
- Sustainability is related to the issues of community leadership and burn-out.

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A number of individual and community-level outcomes were identified, which are reflected in concepts such as sense of place, sense of community, participation and social capital.

Individuals benefited from:

- Development of personal networks.

- Enhanced feelings of being part of a growing community.

- Opportunities for dialogue to break down barriers.

- The creation of shared understandings.

- A broader understanding of culture and the potential of culture for community building.

Perceived benefits for the community included:

- Creation of a shared vision.

- Creation of common goals and purpose (expressed in the cultural plan).

- Enhanced awareness of community resources.

- Formation of partnerships to achieve the goals of the plan.

Recommendations

The following key recommendations for research were made:

- Future research should focus on longitudinal studies of communities as they engage in cultural planning processes with CAN WA. The research should investigate both cultural planning processes and outcomes, using the concepts outlined in this report. This should include survey research and participatory action research.

- Further work should be undertaken to explicate the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of the CAN WA philosophy.

- Case study research should be initiated to document the ways in which specific cultural projects emerge from the CCD process.

- Further research is needed to explore fully the processes of change in rural communities.

community

acknowledgements

introduction

There is a growing recognition of the importance of engaging grassroots communities in all aspects of community building and other initiatives to address concerns about declining community well-being. Within the domain of community development there is an emphasis on building individual, family and community strengths to build capable communities. Although, there is this shift in focus among service deliverers and policy-makers, Campbell and Jovchelovitch (2000) have suggested that there are no clear theoretical models that specify the processes through which participation and engagement with local communities translate into benefits for individuals and communities. Community Cultural Development (CCD) is one of the methodologies used by the Community Arts Network WA (CAN WA) to foster local community participation, using culture and arts as means for promoting community capacity and sense of community. However, even though CCD has the potential to contribute to community capacity, there is still a lack of clarity about the mechanisms and processes through which that is achieved. Therefore, the aim of this research was to develop a clearer conceptual understanding of how CCD activities impact on community.

cultural deve

broader context
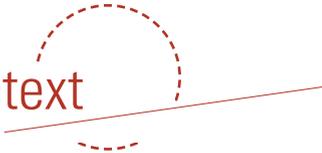
Many observers believe that rural Australia is in crisis (Bourke & Lockie, 2001, Gray & Lawrence, 2001). Many rural communities around Australia currently confront the likely and actual reduction of services and facilities due to declining local populations (Beal & Ralston, 1997; Harrison, 1997). A combination of factors, such as the severe rural economic downturn; young people aspiring for different careers and moving from farms; and government streamlining of services; have brought about changes in population structures and sizes. A key issue involves changes to agricultural practices and the decline of the family farm (Pritchard & McManus, 2000). Globalisation, too, has added to the economic press in rural areas (Gray & Lawrence, 2001; McMichael & Lawrence, 2001). Depopulation has led, in turn, to the loss of important economic infrastructure and services in rural towns including health facilities, educational services, banks, transport and housing (Tonts & Jones, 1997). Recent government data also reveal equity issues with respect to many important indicators of well-being.

Compared to their urban counterparts, rural people tend to be disadvantaged with respect to indices of, for example, employment, health, mental health and cost of living. This, in turn, affects voluntary organisations, self-help groups and community networks. There is a continuous loss of people to fill community roles in a situation where there is already role strain due to the small population size (Bishop, Pellegrini, Syme, & Sherperdson, 1993). These issues and changes have resulted in decline in the well-being of many rural communities.

However, it would be remiss to characterise rural communities as passive victims of external forces (Bourke & Lockie, 2001). For many, rural communities are at the heart of Australia's national identity and, particularly in times of natural crisis, display the resilience that embodies a strong national spirit. Rural communities are also at the vanguard of attempts to resolve important questions of sustainability in the production of primary goods. Some responses have proven problematic such as the rise (and subsequent demise) of Pauline Hanson's One Nation; however, all signify the raising of the political voice in rural, regional and remote Australia.

elopment

theoretical concepts for understanding responses to the rural crises

There is a strong body of knowledge in the social sciences that is concerned with researching, theorising and responding to the challenges facing rural communities. Within this, there is a set of discourses around concepts such as capacity building, social capital and sense of community that have been employed to understand the issues and to guide the search for solutions to pressing problems (Black & Hughes, 2001). These are introduced here to provide a brief overview of some concepts that are relevant to understanding the processes and outcomes related to CCD.

Capacity building can be defined as "Strategies which seek to empower, motivate and enable regional communities and provide them with the necessary skills, resources, networks and information to allow them to pursue their own development goals (Department of Commerce and Trade, 2000, p.1). In WA, capacity building is central to the WA Regional Development Policy (Department of Commerce and Trade, 2000). Capacity building informs the key strategies of the policy including adaptive communities, enriched lifestyles, and developing wealth and employment (Department of Commerce and Trade, 1999).

Social capital has been identified as a key concept in the sociological literature for explaining changes in a society's level of social and economic activities (Cox, 1995; Labonte, 1999; Portes, 1998; Putman, 1993; Walker, 2000). Putnam (1993) defined social capital as "those stocks of social trust, norms, and networks that people can draw upon to solve common problems" (p. 57) - the glue that holds society together. Social capital research (Kawachi, Kennedy & Lochner, 1997; Putnam, 1993) raises important issues concerning the mobilisation of networks to enhance capacity building skills and to empower communities (Nelson, Prilleltensky & MacGillivary, 2001; Prilleltensky, 2001).

Perkins, Speer, and Hughey (in press) have argued that community psychology can contribute to our understanding of social capital by reframing it within an ecological framework. In that framework, conceptualisations of social capital and community development can be expanded to consider multiple levels of analyses including psychological, organisational and community levels. The work in social capital provides some important indicators that can be used to develop measures of community functioning and well-being. These include trust and network development.

Sense of community is another concept that is often used in the context of social change and is portrayed as a panacea to the threats posed by change (Bess, Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002). Unfortunately, the notion is often misused, without much attention paid to developing a clear conceptual understanding which is rooted in the local social, political and historical realities of a community. However, there is a strong body of research anchored in a theoretical tradition that shows the utility of sense of community as both an outcome and process that is tied to community well-being (Fisher, Sonn & Bishop, 2002).

Sarason (1974) introduced the notion of psychological sense of community (SOC) and argued that it is central to well-being because it reflects membership and interrelationships within a wider network of people. In defining SOC, McMillan and Chavis (1986) emphasised not only the importance of the sense of belonging that goes with community membership, but also the necessity for all members of the community to contribute to the greater good. Their model contains a number of elements including: membership, integration and fulfilment of needs, influence, and shared emotional connection.

The SOC framework has been used to investigate SOC in localities and neighbourhoods. It has also been argued that it can be used as a tool in efforts to increase participation and feelings of belonging in different communities (Bishop, Coakes & D' Rozario, 2002; Felton & Shinn, 1992). Some have said that SOC might be the component that holds together community development efforts (Chavis, 1983; Chavis & Wandersman, 1990). While research has been undertaken to examine the correlates of SOC with variables such as psychological health and community participation (Chavis, 1983; Chavis & Pretty, 1999; McMillan & Chavis, 1986; Pretty, 1990), there are promising opportunities to link SOC theory with CCD. Perkins and Long (2002) have argued that SOC can be linked with social capital and showed that SOC predicts an aspect of social capital and collective efficacy. Specifically, SOC provides the opportunity to understand how CCD processes facilitate SOC and, subsequently, well-being in a changing Australian context.

development

the community arts network wa

Overview

There has been a host of different community development initiatives such as agribusiness, e-commerce and community builders programs aimed at revitalising rural communities and enhancing community capacity to deal with social change. Among these are the activities of the CAN WA that focus on CCD in rural and remote regions as well as in metropolitan areas.

CAN WA is an incorporated organisation that has operated in Perth since 1985 (CAN WA, 2002). The organisation originated as a result of a community empowerment process, starting with a community initiative by a group of non-mainstream artists and artsworkers. This group identified the need for better representation of their skills and contributions in the community. A strong lack of representation was identified, as they believed that their interests were lost and non- understood under the umbrella of high arts practice. This "fringe group" consequently banded together and advocated for recognition of community arts as a valid and legitimate way to communicate collective artistic expression. The outcome resulted in the formation of Community Arts Network (WA) Inc. in 1985. The organisation attracted funding to establish projects and infrastructure to support community arts practice in the State. CAN WA was the first arts organisation to employ an Aboriginal Community Arts Officer.

In the mid 1990s the original organisation regrouped, and the current CAN WA was reinvented to reflect people in the community with a common story in arts (CAN WA, 2000, 2002). By definition, arts in this context is a direct reference to human skills. One of CAN WA's new aims was to facilitate communities in working together to bring about changes in mainstream mindsets, using arts and culture (CAN WA, 2002).

Philosophical Underpinnings

CAN WA has a clear underlying worldview that informs its vision and practice. According to the current Director of CAN WA, a guiding aim for CAN is to reinvest in human potential through reframing the nature of engagement with people in communities (Sandra Krempl, personal communication, November 22, 2001). The worldview of CAN WA is informed by the experiences and knowledge of those in the organisation as well as a documented history in countries such as the United States, England, Canada and Australia since the 1960s. In these countries community arts has been about "getting people to participate, to collaborate and so on and over the years has been primarily project driven ..." (Sandra Krempl, personal communication, November 22, 2001).

cultural planning

CAN WA has a guiding philosophy that can be captured through contrasting oral tradition and corporate structure, or first person and third person orientations (Sandra Krempl, personal communication, November 22, 2001). The third person orientation privileges professional knowledge and undervalues local knowledge. In this orientation people are seen as independent from their environments and objective modes of inquiry are valued. In contrast, the first person orientation values local knowledge; it has a spiritual basis for thinking and behaving, and favours multiple ways of knowing. This orientation is holistic - people and their environments are seen as intertwined; that is, social, cultural and psychological phenomena are co-constructed and interpenetrating. In a sense, the third person orientation reflects a mechanistic view of the world, while the first person orientation reflects a transactional or contextualist view of the world (Altman, 1993; Altman & Rogoff, 1984; Bishop, *et al.,* in press).

In addition to this epistemological positioning, CAN WA is also concerned with the implications of broader processes of social change, including those commonly referred to as globalisation, for individuals and communities. As part of the commitment to social justice, "to breed access and equity, [community arts] has been a voice for the so-perceived marginalised" (Sandra Krempl, personal communication, November 22, 2001). Rather than be reactive, CAN WA advocates a proactive stance aimed at engaging those who are marginalised in processes of change. It advocates collaboration with communities in order to develop strategies and opportunities for change and for individual and community empowerment. In this respect, CAN WA takes a critical stance that is informed by the Latin American traditions of social change. These include Freierian notions of consciousness-raising and problematisation that emphasise the ability of people to create their own destiny through valuing local knowledge and deconstructing taken-for-granted social and political realities (Freire, 1972, 1994; Sandercock, 1998). There is an emphasis on addressing inequalities in power and knowledge through a form of praxis that upholds everyday experiences and realities; that is, there is a concern with explicating local resources to achieve change. Thus, the activities of CAN WA are informed by an explicit worldview and set of principles. These are about empowerment and valuing of local knowledge and expertise. This is reflected in the documentation of the agency as well as the interviews with key informants. This view is consistent with a number of emergent critical traditions in sociology and community psychology (for an overview, Fox & Prilleltensky, 1996; Sloan, 2001). According to these perspectives, research and action must aim to remove conditions of oppression, be cognizant of the role of power in the experiences of social exclusion, and be anchored in the social and political realities of those who strive for empowerment.
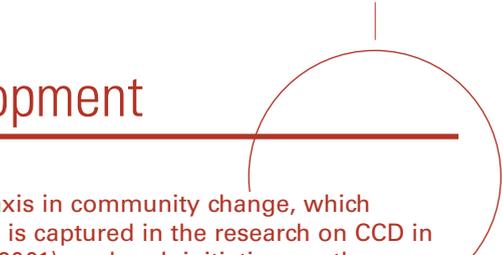
community cultural development

There is a growing recognition of CCD as praxis in community change, which requires coordination and consolidation. This is captured in the research on CCD in Australia (The Centre for Popular Education, 2001), and such initiatives as the establishment on-line of a CCD network (Adams & Goldbard, 2001). Within this broader context of CCD activity, CAN WA engages with local government and community groups to develop strategies to optimise a community's cultural resources for social, environmental and economic development - it is concerned with building social capital and community capacity.

Community arts include a range of visual, theatrical and textual art forms. According to Kins and Peddie (1996), CCD is a participative process that draws out taken-for-granted knowledge and the future aspirations of a community through creative means in order to express, preserve or enhance that community's culture. Therefore, the community arts are not only end products but provide a medium through which community members engage in the joint identification and production of images, symbols and other resources which index their visions and aspirations for their community.
Thus, both the processes and the outcomes of CCD are intertwined and, together, have implications for community well-being. For example, Thomas and Rappaport (1996) discussed local community arts projects as potential resources for providing a way to index a community's experiences and to participate in the making of "their own history, their own future, and their own identity" (p. 326). They highlight the benefits in terms of empowerment, community identity and cohesion, and sense of community.

Within a CCD framework, cultural mapping and planning with local governments and communities are used to identify strengths and resources in communities that can be used to enhance community functioning (Commonwealth Department of Communication and the Arts, 1995; Grogan, Mercer & Engwicht, 1995; Kins & Peddie, 1996). For example, in one town, street theatre was used as a non-threatening medium to allow young people to explore with, and communicate to, the broader community their own issues of emotional and psychological significance.
Recent reports have shown some of the success of these processes in encouraging community participation in local government planning and development activities (e.g., Broun, 1999). It has also been shown that the processes can enhance a sense of empowerment as expressed in a commitment to finding community-based solutions to local problems. In essence, participation becomes a major vehicle for social change; people are engaged and seen as agentic and resourceful.

cultural

Cultural planning is a process aimed at interpreting what makes up a local identity, and assessing what cultural resources can be developed to improve social and economic well-being and quality of life for members of a community (Commonwealth Department of Communication and the Arts, 1995; Grogan, Mercer, & Engwicht, 1995; Kins & Peddie, 1996). The cultural planning process engages both local government and communities in mapping the histories and experiences. Also, community aspirations are documented in order to identify ways in which vibrant communities can be fostered and a sense of community restored and maintained. A central component of CAN WA strategies for developing a cultural plan is the use of creative means to communicate thoughts, feelings and aspirations. Importantly, for CAN WA, there is a shift from project-based CCD activities to an emphasis on the creation of a vision, an overarching plan, based on communities' past, present and future aspirations. Accordingly, with cultural planning CCD is given a vision that can be used as an "energy, a source to inspire community building and renewal" (Sandra Krempl, personal communication, November 22, 2001).

The work of CAN WA, especially the work within the cultural planning program, is seen as extremely valuable to communities. However, there is a lack of a clear systematic framework to determine how cultural mapping and planning influence individuals and communities. This has limited the effectiveness and transfer of CAN WA CCD approaches in other domains including economic, health and environmental planning. Furthermore, narrow understandings of the concept of culture and, therefore, CCD has meant that its potential for enhancing community has been undervalued. It follows that this inquiry was concerned with developing an understanding of the impacts of CCD processes by investigating the experiences of those who have been involved in CCD activities with CAN WA. This information will allow for the development of a better conceptual understanding of how cultural planning activities are experienced and seen to impact on individuals and communities.

development

the research approach

The aim of the research was to develop a grounded understanding of mechanisms and processes that influence community participation as a function of CCD. A contextualist approach was adopted for this research. Contextualism has become increasingly more common in community psychology and provides a framework for exploring CCD (Biglan, 1993; Bishop, et al., in press; Payne, 1996). Within this framework, the various contexts such as culture, history and social class are acknowledged as sources that give meaning to social and psychological experiences. Here, the concern is not only to describe individuals or groups, but also the processes of interaction between people and community. Moreover, this orientation is consistent with the worldview of CAN WA and lends itself to qualitative inquiry.

Social assessment guided the data collection (Taylor, Bryant & Goodrich, 1990). Social assessment provides a framework for systematically researching the social ramifications of planned change in the community. It was developed to augment the environmental impact assessment process and is now a statutory requirement in most states of Australia. In recent years, social assessment has been successfully applied to a wide range of social research including policy and program evaluation. For this project, the first two stages of social assessment were implemented. These are scoping and profiling the community. Scoping involves a thorough stakeholder analysis, identifying the major issues and concerns that may arise with respect to CCD in the community. Profiling the community, in this case using Australian Bureau of Statistics and other secondary data sources, provides a statistical and socio demographic snapshot of the community to facilitate data analysis and interpretation.

Two Communities

Two communities were selected for data collection, the Shire of Waroona and Balingup township. These communities completed the cultural planning process with CAN WA, and staff of CAN WA maintain ongoing ties with community members. The cultural planning processes undertaken by the two communities were distinctly different from each other.

The Shire of Waroona is located approximately 110 km south of Perth and stretches from the Indian Ocean to the Darling Ranges. The primary industry of Waroona was agriculture until the 1980s when, with the arrival of Alcoa, mining became the primary source of employment. The town of Balingup lies on the South West Highway, about 300 km south of Perth, within the Donnybrook-Balingup Shire. According to some of the residents of Balingup, the town was known for its alternative "hippy" life style in the 1960s and 1970s. Since then, Balingup's image has changed and it now promotes a variety of tourist attractions including arts and crafts, festivals and environmental attractions. Table 1 contains demographic information about the two communities. The information for Balingup is based on the Donnybrook-Balingup Shire. The actual population of the town of Balingup is approximately 300 people.

Table 1. Demographic Profile for Waroona and Balingup

Characteristics	SHIRE OF WAROONA			SHIRE OF DONNYBROOK-BALINGUP		
	Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total
Total people	1,710	1,568	3,278	2,015	2,014	4,029
Over 15 years of age	1,173	1,114	2,287	1,446	1,467	2,913
Unemployed	55	47	102	85	34	119
Employed	770	430	1,200	1,004	699	1,703
In Labour force	825	477	1,302	1,089	733	1,822
Not in Labour force	318	600	918	325	698	1,023
Unemployment rate	6.7%	9.9%	7.8%	7.8%	4.6%	6.5%

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census 1996.

Qualitative comments about Waroona

Participants in the study described Waroona by highlighting the changes experienced by the community due to the shifts in primary industry. Once a town based on agriculture; now mining is the primary industry. This has contributed to disparities in the income distribution. Also, long hours at work have impacted on the social life of the community. Participants said they enjoyed the "honesty of people", "that the family is in Waroona", and that it has a "country atmosphere where everyone knows everyone, and it has a slower pace of living". On the other hand, participants also said that they did not like the isolation of the community, "the lack of flexibility to look at things with an open mind", and the fact that everyone knows everyone's business. For most of the participants, key issues facing the community related to the lack of infrastructure, such as education and public transport, and the struggle to keep business in town.

Qualitative comments about Balingup

Most of the participants in the study described Balingup positively. They described it as a "friendly", "welcoming", "close knit", and "community-oriented" town. It was also described as a small community characterised by "rolling hills". When asked about likes and dislikes, the respondents' main concerns related to major social changes reflected by depopulation, the limited infrastructure for supporting elderly people in town, a lack of professional employment opportunities for younger people, and the loss of young people to cities. Participants also mentioned that they did not like the social divisions that were apparent in the community. They said that the perceived divisions were often drawn along the lines of newcomers to the community and the farming community.

data gathering and analysis

Individual and Group Interviews

A list of participants who were involved in the CCD process was obtained from CAN WA. Everyone was contacted, informed about the research and invited to participate. In Balingup, a total of 12 people participated and eight agreed to be interviewed about their involvement in the cultural planning process. In Waroona, 10 were contacted and eight were interviewed. In both communities the same interview questions guided the interviews (Appendix 1).
The topics for questioning included:

1) the general perceptions of community character;

2) knowledge about CAN WA and CCD;

3) involvement and experiences with CCD; and

4) views about CAN WA and CCD impacts.

Questions were developed around these topics to gather information about the community and, specifically, peoples' understanding of, and experiences with, the CAN WA and CCD.

Data analyses involved thematic content analysis and were guided by the processes outlined by Miles and Huberman (1994). The data were recorded in a question-ordered matrix to assist with data management. A questioned-ordered matrix was constructed by having the first column represent individual participants and each of the subsequent columns headed by one of the specific questions asked of them. The cells of the matrix were used to record participant responses, including quotations and keywords. The rows represented the set of responses for an individual participant, and the columns listed all participants' responses to specific questions. By using such a matrix, the researcher can view the sets of responses and examine them for consistencies across questions that might reflect themes emerging from the data, independent of the questions the data originally belonged to. The researcher also examined the data in order to determine if there were counter themes or ideas that might assist in the understanding of the findings.

In qualitative research, the process of analysis and interpretation is cyclical and in line with the substantive and grounded theorising approach adopted in this project (see Wicker, 1989). Thus, issues emerging in the substantive domain were identified and then brought into conversation with the conceptual and theoretical domains relevant to CCD. Once initial data analysis was completed, participants in Balingup were invited to participate in a focused group discussion. Six of the original eight participants were able to attend this session. The purpose of the group discussion was to collect further data and to confirm the interpretations of the interview data. A focus group was not conducted in Waroona because it was difficult to organise a sufficient number of participants. Instead, participants were sent a summary of the findings and asked for additional feedback and to comment on the accuracy of the interpretations.

an emerging understanding of the role of cultural planning in community cultural development

Based on the analysis of the data, the researchers identified a major theme related to the nature of CAN WA's engagement with communities that can be construed as enabling practice. The study also identified two other themes that were related to processes and outcomes associated with cultural planning. These processes and outcomes can be explicated at both the individual and group levels, and the outcomes are both subjective and objective. Figure 1 represents a schematic of the way CCD, especially cultural planning, was experienced and seen to impact on individuals and communities by those who participated in the process. Although the communities were quite distinct from each other and became involved in different ways with CAN WA, it was clear from the data that there were similarities in the participants' experiences and perceptions of involvement in the cultural planning process. Furthermore, although the processes are presented in a linear manner, this is not necessarily the way change takes place in communities and is experienced by community members.

At one level, CAN WA's involvement is a political process aimed at engendering community participation in community-building activity through engagement with local government. It is specifically concerned with promoting community voice and participation, and the importance of culture in community through local government. At another level, there is the explicit engagement with grassroots communities in specific settings. Analysis of the data shows that the creation of settings in which people engage in the development of a cultural plan is at the heart of the CCD process. Because of this, the analysis has focused on people's understanding of CAN WA; and, specifically, their experiences and perceptions of how CAN WA, through the cultural planning processes, influences individuals and community. As noted earlier, concepts such as sense of community, social capital and capacity building informed the researchers' interpretation of the data.

development

Phase One: Initial Contact

CAN WA promotes its cultural planning program throughout local government authorities in the State of Western Australia. Consequently, communities often learn about CAN WA through their local councils. The organisation is concerned with promoting culture as a central element of community planning. As such, local governments are targeted as being best placed to promote culture and arts as resources that are central to community life, and that can be used to enhance community identity and participation. Thus, the typical path for engagement with local communities is often through community development and artsworkers.

When participants were asked about their knowledge of CAN WA, most said they had limited knowledge about the formal structure of the organisation. Some said they had not had anything to do with CAN WA. This is an interesting observation that will be discussed below. Those involved with CAN WA previously had been attracted by its philosophy. For example, a participant stated that the "new slogan about growing community spirit" was appealing. The participant continued, stating: "I think that's a good aspect to focus on arts, arts has a place in peoples' lives as they grow".

PHASE ONE
Initial contact

PHASE TWO
Engagement

PHASE THREE
Sustainability

OUTCOMES

Local Council

CAN WA

Community

Creating Settings

Cultural Planning

Individual
Belonging
Relatedness
Identification

Community
Networks
Identity
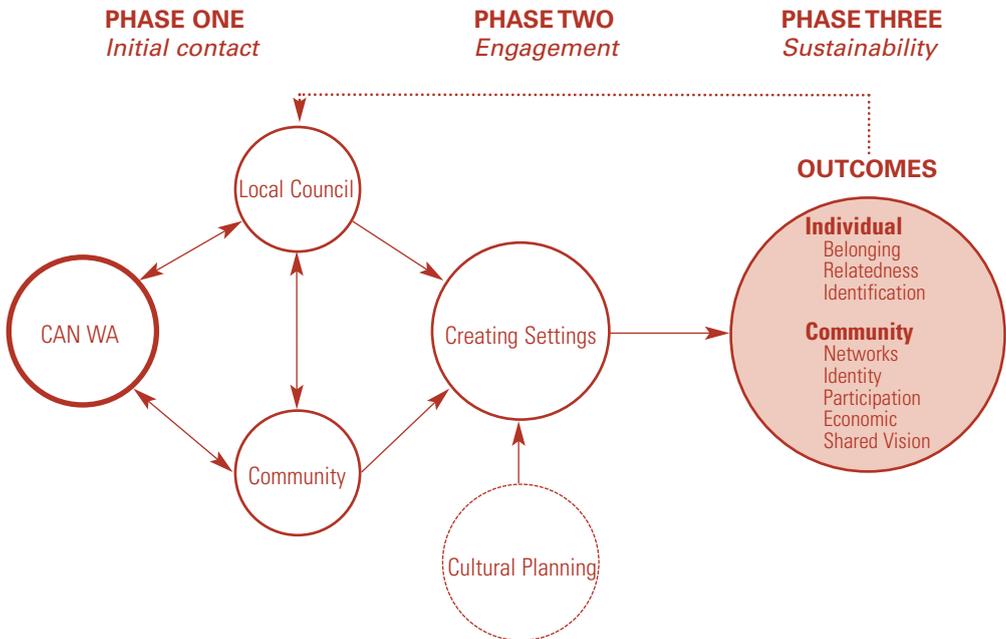Participation
Economic
Shared Vision

Figure 1: CCD as Enabling Process

When participants were asked how they became involved with CAN WA, they stated that it was often through sponsorship by community leaders - people who had some involvement with the council. Others said that it was by word-of-mouth or through personal contact with others who had some involvement. For example, in one community a participant stated: "I was told about CAN WA by John who thought that was what the community needed". Another said, "I don't really know a great deal. Anne invited me and got me to organise a meeting...". Others said that they did not know how the members of their community became involved.

In considering these comments, it is obvious that the lack of knowledge about CAN WA may be attributed to the fact that CAN WA does not actively promote itself to communities as an organisation for implementing change. Rather, CAN WA informs councils about its roles and functions and, through these institutions, negotiates processes to promote community involvement. In a sense, this process is an enactment of the philosophy that encourages an empowerment agenda. At the same time, it can also mean CAN WA is not promoted as widely and effectively as possible as a resource for mobilising grassroots participation and for engaging the voices of local communities in planning processes.

concentualising

Phase Two: Engagement

Cultural planning workshops as the creation of settings

After CAN WA has been invited to a community, members of that community are invited to participate in cultural planning workshops. These workshops are structured, facilitated activities. In fact, CAN WA facilitates the creation of an activity setting in which people engage in workshops aimed at generating a community cultural plan. According to O' Donnell, Tharp and Wilson (1993), activity settings are made up of both objective and subjective features including people, resources, symbols, time and values. Thus, the workshops are activity settings in which an external facilitator works with community members towards a cultural plan that is informed by the aspirations and visions of those members.

Importantly, the nature of the activities that guides the cultural planning workshops is informed by a set of principles and values that characterises CAN WA. An expressed aim of the activity is to work towards a cultural plan because social and cultural resources are seen as central to individual and community well-being. Culture and arts are used as a way of knowing and experiencing a community - it is a means of explicating and legitimising local knowledge (Sandercock, 1998). In this view, all communities have taken-for-granted cultural resources that can be made explicit and be mobilised to achieve community well-being. This is consistent with the writings of others who have written about community arts projects. For example, Thomas and Rappaport (1996) wrote about the social and psychological benefits of local community arts projects. They argued that it is a potential resource that allows one to capture a community's experiences and provide a sense of identification and empowerment. Therefore, the activities are guided by these principles and the intention is to deconstruct limiting understandings of culture in order to identify taken-for-granted resources in communities.

In the interviews for this research, participants shared their experiences and perceptions of CCD processes, especially those related to cultural planning. The researchers were interested in clarifying the perceived benefits, and were able to identify a number of benefits that flowed from involvement in the cultural planning process. Both individual and group benefits were identified.

Individual-level outcomes

For most participants the personal benefits of participating in the process with CAN WA generally included the development of personal social networks, an increased feeling of being part of a growing community, and opportunities to meet new people and get to know them better. For example, a participant stated: "involvement breaks down barriers, it makes you realise we're all people who enjoy similar things, it made people approachable, and made me feel I can approach people". Another said: "You realise through the meetings there is a bunch of people from different walks of life; that they are all in the community because they want to be here, they all want to make something of the community". Lastly, another stated: "[involvement] made me feel that some people who didn't accept me before, do now. I don't feel any more ownership of community than before, I was looking for partnership…"

The aim of the workshopping process ultimately was to develop a cultural plan. However, the workshops delivered more in that they reflected social and psychological processes that were related to participation and dialogue. In a sense, the setting provided an opportunity for dialogue and breaking down of barriers. In O'Donnell et al.'s (1993) terms, dialogue contributes to the creation of intersubjectivity; that is, the similarities in the ways a group thinks, experiences and feels about the community. This intersubjectivity that flows from the joint activity is an important element for community building; it is, in a sense, a vehicle for creating a sense of "we-ness" and belonging. In line with Zacharakis-Jutz's (2001) observation, participation engenders a sense of community, "where people feel they have more ownership in community activities and therefore greater responsibility to each other" (p.147). Engagement fosters a shared connection through providing opportunities for networking and support, bonding, and developing shared outcomes (McMillan & Chavis, 1986). These outcomes can be thought of as creating for participants a mindfulness of themselves as barometers of change in their community (Sarason, 1996, 2000). This mindfulness is crucial because the embeddedness of people within their community often means that they become less able to perceive and monitor incremental, though potentially profound, change (Sarason, 2000).

A more strategic outcome for CAN WA is the extent to which people express a "different" understanding of culture and the potential of culture for community building. This outcome is consistent with CAN WA's view of the centrality of culture and arts in providing meaning and identity for individuals and communities. It is therefore essential that people are encouraged to recognise the importance of culture in providing sources of identity and community. For example, a participant commented: "many believe we are cultureless, ... rather it is a validation of a way of life. Once we recognised that [about culture] we can appreciate and build on it". Another said, "[the CCD process was about] discovering the true culture of community, the diversity, and that culture is what you do and the way you live. People didn't know the true meaning - it is something that belonged to someone else". Through the process, people develop a greater appreciation and awareness of their own heritage and culture. This process of deconstruction is about getting people to explicate and take ownership of cultural heritage, symbols, stories, icons and other resources that are central to their community and individual identities (Fisher & Sonn, in press; Jones, 1988; Rappaport, 1993, 1995; Thomas & Rappaport, 1996). McMillan and Chavis (1986) highlighted that common symbol systems play a central role in providing sources of identity and community for group members. This, in itself, illustrates the interpenetration of individual and group phenomena.

In addition to participants' developing an alternative understanding of culture and recognising the importance of culture for identity and community, they also mentioned that the actual process allowed them to think "outside the square". One participant said that in one session they were asked to think of their community as a living organism, as something with a head and a heart. This allowed for shifts in how the community was viewed and valued; in particular the enhanced sense of awareness and appreciation of the culture and heritage in the community. This, in essence, challenges mechanistic understandings of community and community functioning. It shifts the focus to a more organic view, where creativity becomes the vehicle for knowing and experiencing community.

Community-level outcomes

The community-level benefits that flowed from involvement were not necessarily independent of individual-level outcomes. In terms of broader community benefits, participants stated that they created a shared vision; constructed a common goal and had a shared purpose that was articulated in the community cultural plan. The cultural plan is one of the main objectives of the process, and it is returned to the council for incorporation into the broader community development plan. It is this plan that provides dimensions against which outcomes of community-building initiatives can be assessed. Engagement in community arts projects flows from the development of a community plan. This may mean the creation of a range of new and different settings where members of the community come together to engage in joint productive activity (O'Donnell, Tharp & Wilson, 1993).

In analysing the data, there was a general impression that, apart from the cultural plans, there were few tangible outcomes in one community. It was clear that participants often defined tangible benefits in terms of short-term economic gains and not longer-term social and cultural gains. For example, a participant said: "I think it is a long-term thing, all these things take years". However, the data showed that participants mentioned a host of social and cultural benefits that can be viewed in terms of social capital and aspects of capacity enhancement. These benefits can be thought of in terms of social capital (Perkins, Hughey & Speer, in press; Portes, 1998, Putnam, 1993; Walker, 2000) because they are about the development of networks and opportunities for resource. In a sense, it is more accurate to say that CAN WA offers an opportunity for capacity building by creating settings in which sense of community is generated.

In Balingup there were tangible benefits reflected in the extent to which the community and the local shire managed to achieve the objectives of the cultural plan (Balingup Cultural Planning Group, 2001). The community has been able to attract funding to support community arts projects from external bodies such as Healthway, the South West Development Commission, and the Lotteries Commission. One of the more recent outcomes reported by the participants in Balingup was the successful application for a one-year position to develop the local Golden Valley Tree Park. This suggests that, over time, as the community works toward realising the plan, it is able to create tangible outcomes reflected in increased financial resources and, potentially, employment opportunities. This is in line with Perkins and Long's (2002) suggestion that attachment to place can lead to economic benefits because residents "through their history in, and attachments to, a place discover what is unique about their community, they can preserve or develop places and events that generate tourism and other business opportunities" (p. 297).

conceptualising

Participants stated that CAN WA created awareness of personal and community resources by bringing people into conversation with each other. The process of dialogue is essential for community building. Out of the dialogues emerge a shared vision and purpose. Some participants mentioned that involvement in the CCD process did not necessarily contribute to the development of new leaders; rather, it provided a focus and a resource for existing leaders. Thus, CAN WA functions as a resource setting that enhances the capacity of those in the community. It achieves this in different ways such as providing information about funding bodies that can be approached for support, providing opportunities for training, and assisting with grant writing. Thus, through the cultural planning process, networks are developed and resources and opportunities within and outside the community are identified. This is consistent with some aspects of capacitating, including networking and awareness-raising about resources. It is also consistent with the idea of social capital. However, the authors believe that the activity setting theory provides a very useful way of understanding the internal dynamics of CCD activity, and the subsequent ways in which the community engages with government and resource settings such as CAN WA. In this respect, there are multiple outcomes for individuals and communities. The primary outcomes, however, must be considered in light of CAN WA's agenda and also the needs, aspirations and goals of the community.

community cultural development

Phase Three: Sustainability

Phase three relates to the way in which communities sustain the initiatives that were developed through engagement with CAN WA, after the agency withdraws. The issue of sustainability is crucial for external agencies that enter communities for short periods and then leave. In both communities, participants spoke positively of their involvement with CAN WA. However, they also identified a number of aspects that can be considered issues of sustainability. The core questions that emerged: how do the communities maintain initiatives and in what capacity can agencies continue to be involved?

In both communities, participants expressed that they would have liked to have had more time to work with the facilitator and the agency. Participants felt that the time-frame for involvement had been too short and they would have liked to have an ongoing relationship with CAN WA. Some observed that their community needed ongoing access to grants and information resources to implement and maintain initiatives. These are important issues with direct resource implications for CAN WA. Importantly, they also have implications for CAN WA's broader brief; which must account for what happens once cultural plans are developed and people are aware of the potential of arts for community building. How can CAN WA's role be transformed to ensure ongoing involvement with a limited resource impact?

Importantly, in both communities people expressed a great concern over the disparity in the number of roles and initiatives created and the number of people available to undertake them. This is an issue of 'undermanning' [sic] (Barker, 1978). Chronic 'undermanning' and the overextension of volunteers as a community resource can often lead to issues of burn-out which have direct implications for the success of community-building initiatives. For CAN WA, this raises questions related to the delivery of services beyond the phase of engagement. CAN WA needs to be aware of raising community expectations, which may be difficult to support once the agency withdraws, if participants are not adequately resourced at the local level. This is an ongoing issue that cannot necessarily be solved by this agency because it reflects a much broader issue related to the lack of resources in those contexts that will ensure voice and participation in important community-building activity.

All these issues, to some degree, suggest that there are people in these communities who are actively engaged in creating community through the creation of settings. However, the effectiveness and sustainability of these initiatives are, by and large, contingent on the extent to which communities have access to resources including time, finance, knowledge and opportunity for development. In marginalised communities these are crucial concerns which may require organisations like CAN WA to assess more carefully the way in which it develops relationships with these communities. It is important to consider how these partnerships can be sustained because there are social, cultural and political factors that may impact on CAN WA and the communities in which they work.

issues in the research

There are a number of issues that have implications for the interpretations put forward in this research. Firstly, CAN WA uses culture and the arts as its primary tools. Yet community misperception, and stereotypical views of art and culture as phenomena pertaining only to those concerned with arts and crafts, appear to work as barriers to broader community involvement. This means that, even though CCD has the potential to impact on the whole community through the cultural plan, not everyone necessarily participates in its construction.

There is another issue relating to CAN WA's engagement with a community and community building. While some may choose not to participate, it is important to consider the natural penetration of these kinds of programs into the fabric of a community. There seems to be a surface (visible) penetration and a deeper level that is not always evident, which seems to be a part of the ripples of enabling practice within the systemic framework.

summary

The aim of this research was to develop a clearer understanding of the process of cultural planning and the multiple ways it impacts on individuals and community. A transactional framework was adopted that views people as embedded in context and regards knowledge as socially constructed. Within this framework, qualitative methods were used to gather information about participant perceptions and experiences of CCD, especially cultural planning. This knowledge formed the foundation for theorising cultural planning. The study offered an understanding of cultural planning as an ongoing process that has, at the core, the creation of an activity setting within which joint activity fosters participation by community members in community development. These settings contribute to sense of community for those involved and have broader community-level benefits as well. Community members participate in social change activity. Importantly, it was argued that there is a phase of sustainability that requires much greater attention, to ensure the longevity of cultural planning initiatives and community empowerment.

future research <u>directions</u>

Based on this research, at least three core areas of inquiry are proposed from the perspective of cultural planning.

- The first is to implement different systematic research projects with new communities that become involved in the cultural planning program with CAN WA. Such research would focus on investigating both the processes and outcomes of the overall activity, with specific attention to delineating the ways cultural planning impacts on different communities in different locations. There are different conceptual frameworks that can guide this inquiry, including those linked to the model developed in this research. These include sense of community, sense of place, and social capital. In light of CAN WA's ideology and praxis, it seems reasonable to suggest that participatory action research models would be ideal to understand processes of community change.

- CAN WA advocates a particular form of community-based praxis. It is vital that the epistemology informing this praxis is articulated because it is unique and innovative. Participants in this research said they were attracted to the CAN WA approach not only because of the art, but also because of how CAN WA worked. A beneficial intellectual contribution could be made by explicating the epistemological and theoretical underpinnings of the CAN WA philosophy in the broader community psychology and community development literature.

- Finally, there are opportunities for case study research to document the ways in which cultural projects that develop out of the cultural plan become part of the social and psychological mechanisms for individual and community identity.

A further recommendation, beyond CCD and cultural planning, relates to the process of social change in rural communities. There is a need for research that is aimed at understanding the way in which rural communities manage the challenges of rapid social change; that is, how do these communities transform in the face of major change to ensure their own well-being and survival?

cultural planning

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appendix 1

Interview Schedule for Waroona and Balingup

1.1. Can you tell me what words you would use to describe the character of Waroona?

1.2. What things do you like most about Waroona?

1.3. What are some of the things that you don't like about the Waroona community?

1.4. Can you tell me what other features of life in the community makes you feel like you belong here?

1.5. Are there things that make you feel different from or set you apart from other people in Waroona community?

1.6. Looking back over the years, in what ways have this community changed since you first settled here?

1.7. In your view what are some of the key factors that have contributed to the changes?

1.8. Can you identify some key issues facing the Waroona community in the next 5 years?

1.9. How can these issues be addressed? (So how do people deal with the housing issues and that stuff)

2. The Community Arts Network and CCD

2.1. Can you tell me what you know of the Community Arts Network?

2.2. Why did people in Waroona become involved with the CAN? (So one of the main reason for Waroona becoming involved with CAN was?)

2.3. CAN engages in a process called community cultural development, can you tell me your understanding of the purpose of this process?

2.4. The Waroona Community became involved with CAN in different projects. Can you briefly describe the sort of activities or projects that you were involved with? (What was the process)

2.5. What were your roles in the different projects? (What roles did you play in the things that were developed)

2.6. What would you say were the main benefits of participating in the activities for you personally?

2.7. What were the benefits of participating in the activities for your (Waroona) Community?

2.8. Thinking back to before your involvement with CAN, how do you think the activities with CAN influenced Waroona?

2.9. How did involvement in CCD activities influence your feelings of belonging in this community?

3. How would a new person become part of the local community?

3.1 How would your community sustain the initiatives generated through involvement with CAN?

3.2 Is there anything else that you would like to add or comment on about Waroona or CCD or CAN?

conceptualising