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Concepts in Practice: Initiatives in Action

Themes Arising from Community Development Initiatives

There are many practical examples of how communities have worked to overcome challenges and develop successful approaches to support ongoing growth and development. These examples are presented here to illustrate and add depth to the key themes emerging from the literature: (i) the restoration and revitalisation of communities, especially urban communities; (ii) economic vitality through cultural tourism; (iii) business incubation and the stimulation of new enterprises; (iv) the link between the arts and a creative workforce; (v) the use of the arts in creating vibrant public spaces to enhance community life; (vi) the role of new technologies in supporting community development through the arts; (vii) the role of the arts in enhancing social cohesion and building community image and identity; (viii) the role of the arts in reducing antisocial behaviour; and (ix) the role of the arts in developing self-confidence. Exemplars have been selected from numerous initiatives implemented across the world over the last 20 years and are presented as snapshots to showcase these themes. In a small number of cases, the initiatives are no longer operating but have been included in order illustrate the scope and depth of activities as well as their evolution over time. (Further generic examples covering the 50 years from 1960 to 2010 are provided in Appendix B.)

Restoration and Revitalisation of Communities

Artists and arts organisations have always added vitality and character to communities, especially urban communities; however, as already acknowledged, the arts now play an increasingly important role in community regeneration and revitalisation. Initially, arts-based projects and programs focused on capital works such as the building of arts centres and facilities, but recent developments have focused on the capacity of the arts to support community-led renewal, seeing people rather than buildings as the principal asset through which renewal can be achieved (Landry et al., 1996; Markusen & Schrock, 2006; Yigitcanlar, 2010).

Some 30 years ago, several American cities seeking to relaunch the image of their deteriorating downtown areas responded to opportunities arising from two trends: (i) arts organisations began looking for less expensive urban venues to house new headquarters; and (ii) urban developers started showing interest in city-centre projects. One example of this early activity in urban regeneration is the city of Newark, New Jersey.

Newark, New Jersey

Newark suffered devastating urban riots in the 1960s, which had lasting negative impacts of the growth and development of the city centre for several decades. However, during the 1990s it underwent significant revitalisation after becoming home to the seventh largest arts centre in the United States, the New Jersey Performing Arts Centre (NJPAC). The centre was established with a vision that it would provide a catalyst for the evolution of a major new cultural precinct in Newark, spurring the growth of other institutions and encouraging the development of facilities including restaurants, cafes, retail establishments and office buildings (Psilos & Rapp, 2001). The plan has been successful with NJPAC contributing to the reversal of the prevalent image of Newark as a moribund city. The centre provides a venue for world-class artists and attracts audiences from all over New Jersey (approximately 4.5 million people live within a 35 kilometre radius of Newark). It has spurred an unprecedented revitalisation of Newark with developers and tenants recognising its new potential, and now the city is witnessing the return of several sports teams, new restaurants, the development of an underground high-tech culture and the opening of new small business enterprises (Psilos & Rapp, 2001).

Such early approaches to community regeneration in North America provided a model for future activities around the world. In Europe, on the other hand, the regeneration process was motivated not only by the fiscal objective to stimulate economic development of declining inner-city neighbourhoods but also by the desire to reclaim and protect social traditions and heritage. Spain's Barcelona exemplifies urban regeneration that aimed to stimulate economic growth while protecting and revitalising social and cultural traditions.

Barcelona, Spain

The Ajuntament (Barcelona's city council) aimed to create a lively, dynamic city that valued its social and cultural traditions. It prioritised the use of lands for parks and created temporary orders for the use of specified land as parks. It then adopted the concept of allowing artists and architects a great deal of freedom, thus stimulating creative and imaginative approaches to the design and planning of parks. Coupled with the Catalan tradition of and love for the surreal and the colourful, the concept of temporary parks encouraged artists to design and build quirky, humorous spaces and works in the city's parks. Parks and sculptures now link the whole of Barcelona and the city has the largest public art program of any city in Europe. The city has also secured its place as a new world international capital, while retaining and protecting its distinct regional identity (Landry et al., 1996).

Melbourne, Australia, is a city acknowledged as an international leader in innovative urban design that has recognised the connection between urban design and liveability.

Melbourne, Australia

Over 20 years ago, Melbourne recognised the importance of good urban design when it launched the Save Collins Street campaign. The character of Collins Street, a major city street famed for its unique architecture and Victorian streetscapes, was being threatened by high-rise development. The Victorian Government responded to community concerns by introducing planning procedures to safeguard the street frontage by ensuring new buildings maintain the original Victorian façades. This philosophy has provided the framework to ensure planning sensitivity in other developments including the development of Southbank, which opened up pedestrian access along Melbourne's river, and, more recently, the redevelopment of the Docklands (Landry & Wood, 2003).

However, the impact of regeneration activities is not only experienced by whole cities; it also impacts neighbourhoods and small communities within cities. The Aurora Arts project provides an example of how arts activities can create new productive uses for underutilised neighbourhood spaces.

Aurora Arts, Chicago

Aurora Arts operates in the Chicago neighbourhood of Logan Square and seeks to provide connections between adults and children, and residents and artists through arts activities. To overcome its major challenge, which was to find venues in which to conduct its activities, Aurora Arts forged an alliance with local churches that were, at that time, facing significant declines in the use of their facilities. The partnership served the needs of both the arts organisations and the local church groups. The arts programming bought new people to the church facilities while providing Aurora Arts with the space to fulfil its community mission (Grams & Warr, 2003).

In Manhattan, a park created on an old, crumbling railway line has become a major tourist attraction, transforming the line itself and bringing new life to surrounding areas.

The High Line, New York City

The High Line Park has been created on a heavy, black steel structure supporting an elevated rail line that once brought freight cars into factories and warehouses. Until recently, the High Line was a crumbling urban relic that many residents and public officials wanted to tear down. Early demolition orders were challenged and residents of the neighbourhoods around the line formed a non-profit organisation, Friends of the High Line. They advocated for the line's preservation and reuse as public open space and commenced fundraising to save the line. In total, funders of the High Line Park raised more than $150 million and, as public support grew, the New York City government committed $50 million.

As a result, the old freight line has been turned into one of the most innovative and inviting public spaces in New York City. The black steel columns that once supported abandoned train tracks now hold up an elevated park — part promenade, part town square, part botanical garden. Walking on the High Line is unlike any other experience in New York. You float about 25 feet above the ground, at once connected to street life and far away from it. You can sit surrounded by carefully tended plantings and take in the sun and the Hudson River views, or you can walk the line as it slices between old buildings and past striking new ones (Goldberger, 2011).

The success of the High Line has spawned similar initiatives throughout the United States. One example is in Indiana, where the small city of Bloomington has created the B-line trail along a disused rail corridor. The trail incorporates design features such as street name paver treatments at each crossing, a human/pet drinking fountain, park benches, limestone accents, trees, and landscaping.

Economic Vitality through Cultural Tourism

While almost all approaches to community development recognise and value the economic potential of tourism, some programs focus explicitly on supporting and promoting local tourism. For example, the rural community of Tifton in South Georgia has focused on developing specific venues to attract tourists to spend at least one or two days in the community exploring the local arts and crafts.

Tifton, South Georgia

In a bid to attract tourists, Tifton developed two new venues: the Tifton Museum of Arts and Heritage, and the Georgia Agriama. The Georgia Agriama provides a concrete example of the way the arts can be used to directly stimulate community development through tourism. It was conceived and developed as a living history museum and incorporates exhibits of the traditional arts and crafts of Georgia. It attracts over 60,000 visitors a year to Tifton. Both the Agriama and the Tifton Museum of Arts and Heritage have prompted the redevelopment of nearby properties as galleries, retail outlets, cafes and restaurants and other services to cater for increasing tourist numbers (Phillips, 2004).

The arts and culture, history and heritage are also central to the development of Tasmanian tourism.

Hobart, Tasmania

The Tasmanian Government has supported several interlocking projects including the revitalisation of the Hobart waterfront as a 'cultural quarter', which encompasses the redevelopment of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the redevelopment of Princes Wharf as a flexible multi-use arts and events space. The revitalisation has also stimulated the development of luxury accommodation and high-end retail outlets. The government has supported the development of the Glenorchy Arts and Sculpture Park linking the Elwick Bay area of Hobart from Wilkinson's Point through to Montrose Bay and the new Museum of Old and New Art. The government has lead the

World Heritage listing of five of Tasmania's most significant convict sites, including the Port Arthur Historic Site and the Brickendon and Woolmers Estates. While these state-based initiatives in cultural tourism are impressive, there are also some interesting locally managed examples of arts and heritage tourism experiences in Tasmania. For example, the Trail of the Tin Dragon is a major project that celebrates the history of tin mining and the cultural contribution of the Chinese to North East Tasmania (Lebski, 2010).

Perhaps the most significant Tasmanian Tourism initiative is the Museum of Old and New Art, which was officially opened in January 2012.

The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA), Hobart, Tasmania

The Museum of Old and New Art (MONA) is the largest privately funded museum in Australia. The museum presents antiquities, modern and contemporary art from the David Walsh collection. Since opening, Mona has seen 1.4 million people through its doors, 65 per cent of them interstate and overseas visitors. According to Tourism Tasmania, in 2014 it attracted 330,000 visitors, or around 28 per cent of all visitors to Tasmania. Crucially, these tourists are also spending money elsewhere in the state. In the period from its opening to June 2004, visitors to MONA in that period spent $606 million locally during their trip — $244 million on accommodation and $254 million on other items — a 13 per cent increase from previous years. Research conducted for Tourism Tasmania shows that MONA has created a new conversation about Tasmania and what the island state is all about. It has also stimulated the development of a range of new cultural and food experiences in Hobart and throughout Tasmania (Teaque, 2015).

The Queensland Government has also invested significantly in the development of tourism through its Heritage Trails Network.

Heritage Trails Network, Queensland

The Queensland Heritage Trails Networks links important historical and cultural sites throughout western Queensland, allowing tourists to plan their journeys to incorporate key attractions. A major aspect of the network is the Matilda Highway journey, which allows tourists to visit attractions including the Charleville Cosmos Centre, which enables visitors to study crystal clear night skies and learn how Aborigines used them for food gathering and navigation. The centre includes an observatory with four telescopes and a multimedia Indigenous theatre. Another feature is the Australian Stockman's Hall of Fame, which celebrates, through displays and exhibits, the icons

of the Queensland outback and their contribution to Australia's pastoral industry. The network also includes the Winton Lark Quarry – Dinosaur Trackways, which is believed to be the only preserved evidence in the world of a dinosaur stampede. A major conservation work has been carried out to preserve this prehistoric marvel for future generations (Cook, 2001).

Not all cultural tourism projects are linked to major government initiatives; the Ulysses Link Pathway Project demonstrates how a small-scale activity managed within a community can have major impacts not only on the promotion of local tourism but also on the development and maintenance of community pride and cohesion.

The Ulysses Link, Mission Beach, Queensland

Named after the brilliant blue Ulysses butterflies that inhabit the area, a 1.5-kilometre Ulysses Link Tourist Walking Track has been created along the foreshore at Mission Beach. The history of the Mission Beach area has been interwoven along the walk with both Indigenous and historical stories expressed through mosaics, carvings and ceramic sculptures created by local artists. Fourteen local North Queensland artists worked together to develop the walkway. The artists worked with fruit farmers, tourist operators, steel fabricators, conservation groups and other members of the local community. The link has become a major tourist attraction and has stimulated further community infrastructure/public art initiatives including a children's playground, a meeting piazza and a sculpture park (Arts Queensland, 2007a).

However, the link between culture tourism, the arts and economic vitality may not always be direct, and the experience of Singapore is instructive in this respect.

Singapore

Singapore's commercial success during the latter part of the last century as a major transport hub and a shopping capital resulted in a significant part of its heritage and culture being destroyed, and there was very little reinvestment in culture and the arts. 'It didn't take long for the government to realise that it had created a city that was super shiny and commercially successful, but lacked soul' (Archer, 2009, p. 6). During the last two decades, the Singapore Government has begun to invest in the arts by renovating galleries and museums; establishing arts grants programs for small contemporary companies and individual artists; assisting companies and artists to find studio space in the city; renovating and building new Esplanade Theatres on the bay; and establishing an international festival of the arts. Now the arts are thriving in Singapore,

making it again an interesting place to stop over and visitor numbers are increasing. The reclamation of the soul of commercially focused Singapore through the arts demonstrates not only the power of the arts to create ambiance, atmosphere, passion, and a sense of identity and purpose, but also clearly illustrates the link between the arts and economic growth and sustainability (Archer, 2009).

The link between cultural tourism and economic vitality is not, however, limited to the arts. Singapore has also used its scientific and architectural achievements to stimulate tourism.

Marina Barrage, Singapore

The Marina Barrage is considered Singapore's latest downtown icon. It is a 350-metre-wide dam built across the Marina Channel to keep out seawater. This colossal architectural masterpiece allows tourists to walk through the barrage's vast compounds and come face to face with stunning engineering equipment. Tourists can visit the gallery and discover how the Marina Barrage ingeniously prevents flooding to the city's low-lying areas. Or simply stand atop the green roof to take in the sweeping Singapore city skyline. The Barrage combines tourism, architecture, science and education into a unique visitor experience (Singapore Travel Guide, 2012).

Business Incubation and the Stimulation of New Enterprises

Business incubation has become a widely recognised and well-utilised economic development tool designed to foster and stimulate economic growth through new business opportunities. It has been successfully applied by governments and private enterprises. Governments have usually adopted business incubation processes to stimulate the achievement of broad economic goals such as job creation and economic diversification. Private enterprises have used business incubators to test and pilot new products and services not only to check viability but also to facilitate the development of new markets. The approach often includes shared administrative and other services, centralised space and business development assistance provided in a facility where new and experienced businesses operate (Phillips, 2004). While there is little evidence that business incubation has been widely adopted in rural and remote communities as a strategy to support economic development, there are some examples of how

the arts have provided a context for successful business incubation. Through business incubation approaches, artists and craftspeople can achieve lower costs by accessing shared services and facilities. More importantly, they can access advice and resources in a way that allows them to develop new business skills and make sound business decisions, drawing on the knowledge and understanding of experienced business people.

One interesting example is the Jubilee Business Incubator, which was funded and operated by a community coalition in Sneedville, Tennessee.

Jubilee Business Incubator, Sneedville, Tennessee

Skilled craftsmanship is a key part of the history and heritage of the small Tennessee community of Sneedville. The Jubilee Business Incubator project emerged as a way to preserve and protect local arts and crafts while addressing broader community concerns. The incubator program provides (i) affordable rent to small arts-based businesses, (ii) access to shared office facilities such as computers, internet, printers and copiers, (iii) the provision of business advice and counselling from experienced business people, and (iv) access to market intelligence including the timing and location of local markets and festivals. The Jubilee Incubator is housed in a centrally located, renovated building and includes a retail store for arts and crafts products, a classroom for small business development programs and a computer training room for business training and market research (Phillips, 2004).

The Entergy Arts Business Centre in New Orleans, Louisiana, which aims to help local artists learn fundamental skills necessary to operate small businesses, is another such example.

Entergy Arts Business Centre, New Orleans, Louisiana

The Arts Business Centre is funded and supported by the Entergy Corporation, local arts councils and revenues generated from centre programs. The goal of the centre is to support the creation and development of arts-based business. It offers rental space and shared office services to small arts-based start-up businesses. Also available are business development programs including business planning, financial management, marketing and legal programs focusing on commercial propriety and copyright law. The centre also provides initial market tests for artists by linking with commercial agents who advise on market demand for new arts products (Phillips, 2004).

Business incubation is simply one mechanism to stimulate and support the development of new enterprises. Other mechanisms include the development of collaborative partnerships, the operation of business networks, the creation of regional hubs and the operation of franchise agreements. One example of a successful collaborative partnership is the venture between Aboriginal artists in South Australia's remote Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara lands, 500 kilometres south-west of Alice Springs, and the traditional craftspeople of Kashmir, in India's north.

Arts Partnership — Australian Aboriginal Artists and Kashmir Craftspeople

Both groups (South Australia's remote Aṉangu Pitjantjatjara Yankunytjatjara people and the traditional craftspeople of Kashmir, in India's north) share not only a love of arts and crafts but also a determination to improve life in their respective communities. From these mutual interests sprung a unique business collaboration through which the Aboriginal artists send their traditional designs to Kashmir where the local craftspeople apply them to handmade rugs, cushions and lacquer boxes. The unique products are sold worldwide and have provided the base for a thriving business. The rugs are sold as limited editions and have been purchased by galleries and museums, including the National Museum of Canberra (Williams, 2005).

As well as incubators, arts cooperatives can be an effective conduit for arts-based business development. These are typically formed by groups of local artists organising non-profit organisations to market and promote their works. The Craftsman's Guild of Mississippi in Jackson provides one such successful example.

Jackson, Mississippi

The Craftsman's Guild of Mississippi was formed to preserve and protect the folk, traditional and contemporary crafts of the Mississippi area. The guild set high standards of excellence in arts and crafts. By ensuring high standards, the guild developed a reputation as one of the best arts cooperatives in the regions. In turn, the guild has impacted on the community of Jackson in positive ways. Their projects have attracted visitors to the areas, generating new revenue streams. The guild has also sponsored community-based continuing education programs, and has created a strong market for local arts and crafts (Phillips, 2004).

Other communities have attempted to use arts-based business development as an overall community development strategy. That is, rather than serving as one component of the plan, the arts becomes the foundation of the plan.

Bellows Falls, Vermont

Bellows Falls was a town suffering serious economic decline. The Vermont Community Development Association sought to redevelop and revitalise the community through creative ideas and the arts. As a result, the Rockingham Arts and Museum Project (RAMP) was developed to stimulate the village of Bellows Falls to take charge of their future. RAMP did not just organise arts events but integrated art into the overall community development plans, including infrastructure development. For example, RAMP renovated an historic building in the community that was considered one the Vermont's most important architectural legacies. The renovation allowed the building to provide affordable space for artists' studios and arts retail places (Phillips, 2004).

Link between the Arts and a Creative Workforce

Another strong theme identified in earlier chapters is the growing importance of the arts and culture to a region's attractiveness to companies and their potential workforces. The success of some cities and regions in marketing their cultural offerings to lure new companies to establish or relocate their operations has been well documented (Florida, 2002; Gertler, 2004; Psilos, 2002). The recognition that the factors in attracting firms and jobs to cities or regions are now much more complex than just bottom line concerns such as office space, transport and tax benefits is well established. The local government of Austin, Texas, recognised at an early stage that its unique cultural environment was a competitive asset to the new economy. Austin has built a world-class high-technology economy on the base of a thriving cultural life (Psilos & Rapp, 2001).

Austin, Texas

Austin adopted a deliberate strategy to grow high-tech industry and employment while preserving cultural vibrancy as a key competitive asset. In order to attract and retain high-tech workers, the Austin community leadership recognised the need to ensure a high-quality lifestyle based on the arts.

> The Austin community leveraged state funds to support local arts and raised $3.5 million through a hotel-based bed tax. As a result, overall funding for the arts increased and Austin now has a vibrant and sustainable arts community that contributes to a quality of life that makes working and living in Austin an attractive proposition for new economy workers (Psilos & Rapp, 2001).

Other cities, such as Stavanger in Norway, are working towards creating a vibrant cultural sector as a way of attracting and retaining a creative workforce for the future.

Stavanger, Norway

Stavanger is Norway's fourth largest city and its oil capital. While it has a fairly small population of 110,000 people, it has the youngest demographic profile in Norway and the population includes citizens from over 90 countries. The wages and career opportunities in the oil industry are attractive to many workers.

Stavanger is aware that the oil advantage has a limited time span and the local council is promoting its development as a cultural city. It is deliberately developing a cultural sector to appeal to high-earning global workers as it believes that a vibrant cultural life is a key way to attract a creative workforce to contribute to the long-term future of Stavanger.

Specifically, Stavanger is building a world-class concert hall for its renowned symphony orchestra. The city also hosts the annual Stavanger International Festival of Literature and Freedom of Speech (Landry & Wood, 2003).

Perhaps one of the most successful cities in attracting and retaining creative workers is Portland, Oregon. Portland ranks very high on a variety of creative indices (Bulick et al., 2003) and provides an interesting example of how communities are using culture to attract talent and build creative economies.

Portland, Oregon

Portland has developed a larger and more diverse mix of cultural organisations, artists and cultural projects than any other like-sized city in the United States. There are a high number of small organisations encompassing avant-garde theatre, film, video, new media, new music and contemporary dance. These have added enormous range, interest and quality to the robust and diverse cultural scene.

Portland's public art program, which is one of the largest and most innovative in the United States, has changed the face of the built environment and provided enormous opportunities for artists.

While this vibrant cultural scene is critical in attracting new workers to Portland, another key advantage over other cities and towns is its informal civic culture. People, including newcomers, feel they can get involved and have impact across politics, community development, planning and the cultural scene. Access and participation are welcomed. New community organisations, coalitions and movements are continually developing (Bulick et al., 2003).

The Role of the Arts in Creating Vibrant Community Spaces

Public buildings and spaces are critical to shaping our environments and send powerful messages to communities about values and beliefs. The arts and artists have a key role to play in working with governments to create vibrant public spaces that contribute significantly to the liveability and amenity of communities. There are many examples demonstrating the role of public art in contributing not only to liveability but also to the development of social and economic growth in communities. Indeed, many of the examples already showcased have a public art component to their success (e.g. the parks of Barcelona and the Ulysses Link in Mission Beach). The East Perth Public Art Project provides another example.

East Perth Public Art Project

Claisebrook Cove in East Perth has been transformed from an industrial wasteland into a thriving waterfront community, combining quality residential and commercial development with beautiful parkland, waterways and public art. Five minutes from the Perth CBD, it is an example of how urban designers, landscape architects and artists have created imaginative buildings, street furniture, landscape features and stand-alone works of art.

Many pieces express East Perth's history and some are made from materials found on the redevelopment site or salvaged from old buildings. The area also has pathways and cycleways that provide views of the Swan River and city skyline. It has a unique mix of restaurants, cafés and a variety of great specialty stores (Active Healthy Communities Initiative, 2009).

A more systemic approach to the provision of public art is provided by the Queensland Government's Art Built-in project.

Art Built-in, Queensland Government

The Queensland Government established Art Build-in to stimulate the inclusion of public art in public buildings and spaces. The Art Built-in policy determines that 2 per cent of each capital works building budget over $250,000 will be allocated for the inclusion of public art. In this way, the program integrates art and design into public buildings and spaces rather than simply adding pictures and sculptures after the building project is completed. To achieve this, the project actively encourages the involvement of Queensland artists in the planning, design and development stages of building projects. Such involvement might include the design of gardens and other open spaces, the design of fabric for use in interiors, the creation of murals, tiles or other decorative or functional features, and the creation of sculptures and painting integrated with the building design. Not only do the outcomes enhance people's experiences of government buildings, it also provides opportunities to showcase Queensland artists (Queensland Government Public Art Policy, 2001).

Using New Technologies to Support Community Development

The role of technology in supporting and facilitating growth opportunities has emerged as an important new aspect to community development. Technology can provide opportunities to expand access to markets and support business development in small and micro businesses, especially those remote from major business hubs. This has been demonstrated through a recent project that examined how e-commerce technologies can be used to help small Aboriginal arts businesses in Gippsland and the Yarra Valley region expand their offerings in the Australian mainstream arts market.

Art and e-commerce — Australian Aboriginal Art Businesses, Gippsland and Yarra Valley, Victoria

Aboriginal businesses in rural Victoria face specific difficulties in managing their businesses including limited business infrastructure (e.g. credit card facilities, PCs, telephone lines) and poor customer management skills. Businesses were further disadvantaged in developing wholesale channels because of their distance from

metropolitan consumers. This project provided technologies (and training in their use) to Aboriginal art businesses. The project allowed the businesses to expand their markets to include consumers across Australia and overseas at a minimal cost through e-commerce. Sales increased significantly over the term of the project (Choi & O'Brien, 2002).

There are many more examples of how new technologies are being used by communities to enhance their economic competitiveness. However, these examples must be treated with caution, as generalisations of the benefits of technologies in community development may be misleading. Many community-building programs with a focus on the application of technology are seeking to achieve broad objectives relating to economic development, job growth and business development. The technology is not an end in itself but rather 'a means to a larger end with clear and compelling benefits to communities' (Eger, 2003, p. 7).

An interesting example that uses technology to document and record local points of cultural interests is the CHIMER Project involving children living across Europe.

CHIMER Project

CHIMER capitalises on the natural enthusiasm and curiosity of children by using technologies to document items of cultural interest in local communities. Children aged nine to 12 from different parts of Europe build 'digital maps' of cultural points of interest by combining geographical coordinates detected using GPS devices, mobile technologies and digital cameras. Children combine drawings and photographic images with their own comments explaining the significance of the places and items of interest. In this way, the children create a digital archive of their towns, villages and surrounding communities. For example, children create in digital space their own understandings and images of Lithuanian cultural heritage objects, which other children (and adults) throughout Europe (and the world) can access and use (Weiss, 2004).

The Role of the Arts in Enhancing Social Cohesion and Community Building

Since Deidre Williams' (2000) landmark study outlining the significant social benefits of the arts to communities, multiple studies have reported and elaborated on the role of the arts in building social networks, maintaining social cohesion and building community identity (Grams & Warr, 2003).

Arts activities and programs can create a sense of belonging to a community by providing processes and structures for social interaction. They can contribute to the development of social skills such as collaboration and cooperation, as exemplified by the Scrap Mettle Soul project.

Scrap Mettle Soul, Uptown, Chicago

The Scrap Mettle Soul project gathers community stories from diverse people, employs professionals to write scripts, builds sets in partnership with community residents, and produces an annual production featuring residents. The actors are everyday citizens of different races and classes. The productions are also intergenerational, involving people from ages four to 91.

The activity of putting on a play is a way for diverse members of the community to get to know each other in a relatively neutral context. People who start out as strangers, wary of each other, become associates, colleagues and even friends as they work to put on the play (Grams & Warr, 2003).

The potential of art to integrate isolated and marginalised communities is also evident through work undertaken with the community of Northcott in Sydney, which demonstrates how the arts can assist in reducing isolation, challenging entrenched stereotypes, validating individual experiences and encouraging the development of trusting relationships.

The Northcott Narratives, Northcott, Sydney

By 2002, Northcott was a seriously traumatised community; people lived in fear and were seriously disadvantaged. Due to a series of unfavourable press reports, the community and its members were stereotyped and residents were trapped in a spiral of fear, disgust and uncertainty.

The Northcott Narratives project set out to provide community members with an opportunity to make stories based on their experiences living in Northcott. The project resulted in a film, *Can you Hear Them?*, that told the real stories of the Northcott residents. The film was just the beginning and the community continued to tell their stories through text, photos and painting and drawing. More and more community members became involved and, as they did, their expectations of themselves and each other were raised and community trust increased. As confidence increased, community benefits began to flow. While the residents are still disadvantaged, they have built new levels of community involvement and engagement (Mayo, 2005).

Community festivals can also stimulate community pride and lead to higher levels of community cohesion through social networking and the development of a sense of belonging.

The Woodford Folk Festival, Woodford, Queensland

The Woodford Folk Festival is one of Australia's most famous festivals and, falling as it does between Christmas and New Year, provides a chance to review the past and plan the future in an atmosphere of communal celebration. Ritual that draws the community together is a significant part of the festival program. A sense of community arises in the three minutes silence before New Year and the evening processions that weave through the village linking the community in shared experience. The Woodford Folk Festival also maintains a deep commitment to Indigenous themes and issues. Central to Aboriginal culture is a strong sense of family and connection to the land and community, which is something that the festival aspires to create (Queensland Community Arts Network, 2003).

Other projects work to build cohesion by rallying the community to protect its resources. The Bundaleer Weekend seeks to consolidate community effort to protect the Bundaleer Forest, Australia's first plantation of pine trees, which dates back to 1876.

The Bundaleer Weekend, Jamestown, South Australia

The Bundaleer Weekend at Jamestown, South Australia, is an opportunity for a two-day immersion in fine art, music, adventure, heritage and culture. The purpose of the weekend was twofold. Firstly, it was developed to increase tourism to the Jamestown region. Secondly, it was conducted to draw attention to the need to protect and preserve a local environmental treasure, the Bundaleer Forest.

> The event takes place in the forest and includes concerts, art exhibitions and performances. A carnival atmosphere is achieved through street stalls, street bands and guided walks through the forest. Participation in the event has increased significantly over the last 10 years and the weekend attracts visitors from all over the world (Murphy, 2004).

The Role of the Arts in Reducing Antisocial Behaviour

The arts provide positive outlets and build new skills that give people, especially young people, a chance at a better life. Arts programs have proved to be an effective intervention strategy for young people who have failed to respond to more traditional education and social services programs (Birch, 2002; Fiske, 1999). Arts learning experiences can alter the perception young people have of themselves and their attitudes toward learning, even among those who have already had serious brushes with the law (Birch, 2002).

Projects such as the Skudda Arts Powerhouse program provide new opportunities for youth at risk to grow and learn.

Skudda Arts Powerhouse Program, Fitzroy Crossing, Western Australia

For Aboriginal youth in Fitzroy Crossing, 'skudda' means 'cool' or 'excellent'. The Skudda Arts Powerhouse is a community arts initiative that connects Aboriginal teenagers with art projects designed to stimulate and appeal but also to connect them with the wider community.

Arts workshops were tailored specifically to connect with the interests of the young people of the community (e.g. designing and printing T-shirts, jewellery making, music-making workshops, dance workshops, etc.). Community relationships have improved, especially between the youth and authority figures, and the local Aboriginal police liaison unit is now involved with the initiative (Murphy, 2004).

Other initiatives target specific problems including homelessness, family breakdowns and mental health problems.

Creative Youth Initiative

Mission Australia's Creative Youth Initiative provides free creative programs for young people facing serious problems in their lives. Typically, the young people participating in the program are homeless, suffering mental health problems or coming to terms with family breakdowns.

With the support of musicians, artists, photographers and social workers, students are assisted and encouraged to use art as an outlet for the issues they are confronting every day (Darling, 2008).

The Role of the Arts in Developing Self-Confidence

The role of the arts in learning and personal development is becoming increasingly important not just to teachers and educators but also to policymakers, researchers and community leaders (Gadsden, 2008; Peppler & Davis, 2010). Research now shows that children who study the arts demonstrate stronger overall academic performance. Arts programs also improve student's self-confidence, build communication and problem-solving skills, and prepare young people to be creative thinkers (Birch, 2002; Fiske, 1999; Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). Exposure to the arts provides positive general learning outcomes, particularly for young people who are Indigenous, in remote or regional communities, or from disadvantaged backgrounds (Bryce et al., 2004).

The *Pardar Kerkar Noh Erpei* Catching a Wave project was an exhibition of works from schoolchildren from the Darnley Island State School in the Torres Strait, where a new cross-curriculum learning focus was reported as dramatically raising literacy levels and the confidence and self-esteem of learners.

Pardar Kerkar Noh Erpei Catching a Wave, Darnley Island State School, Torres Strait

This project was a joint venture arrangement between the Darnley Island Art Centre, the Darnley Island State School, and the Cairns Regional Art Gallery. The core of the project was a children's art exhibition of sea themes produced by 19 Darnley Island students aged between nine and 13. But the main focus was to use the exhibition as a catalyst to support the cross-curriculum literacy initiatives at the

school, in this instance through art. Each artwork was accompanied by statements written by the artist explaining the motivation and connection with the art.

While the exhibition succeeded in its intention to introduce Indigenous culture to gallery visitors, the real achievement was in the lives of the Darnley Island community. It was a source of wonder and pride for the children to see their artworks carefully packed in modular containers and stacked on board the barge for Cairns. The need to produce signage and a book for the exhibition motivated the students to higher literacy standards (Murphy, 2004).

Similar arts-based programs have been shown to help students feel more confident about themselves and the contribution they can make, which, in turn, helps them feel more positive about themselves as learners.

Boys Business Program, Northern Territory

Boys Business is a music program that focuses on using music to develop learning skills and enhance self-esteem. While the program is essentially a music and movement program, its influence extends well beyond music. The program is designed to help young men feel good about themselves; there is plenty of time for talking and the program encourages learners to reflect on their strengths and weaknesses. Evaluations of the program have indicated that students participating in the program have improved self-confidence and have developed meta-cognitive skills, such as reflection. There is also evidence that literacy and numeracy skills have improved and that students have a new purpose for learning that is authentic and, as a consequence, they feel good about being at school.

Specific attributes of the program that have been identified as contributing to positive learning include the provision of a positive role model and a learning environment that is non-threatening, where all learners are respected, and where tolerance and self-control are fostered (Bryce et al., 2004).

Broader Impacts of the Arts on Communities

There are many other ways the arts can impact on communities. They can provide a springboard for new skills and new opportunities, they can help communities celebrate place and history, and they can stimulate creativity and diversity in communities.

The Alice Springs Beanie Festival provides an example of how the arts can celebrate and add value to existing community products.

Alice Springs Beanie Festival, Alice Springs, Northern Territory

From humble beginnings, the Alice Springs Beanie Festival now attracts over 3,000 entries. It attracts interest from craft groups and fibre art associations from around Australia. The Alice Springs festival celebrates traditional Indigenous and non-Indigenous women's crafts, as well as bringing together a community of fibre artists from around Australia. While most items are for sale, the festival organisers have worked hard to ensure the festival spirit is not overtaken by an emphasis on retail — a festival celebrating craft rather than a craft market.

The activity started in 1996 as an opportunity to sell excess beanies crocheted by local Aboriginal women and has grown into a significant festival. The beanie has become a fashion statement and a central Australian art form. It grew through commitment and hard work and has not been subsidised. It is run on good will and friendships (Murphy, 2004).

Despite the best intentions, the arts do not always result in positive outcomes for communities. The following example from Santa Ana illustrates how programs and initiatives may lead to community divisions.

Santa Ana, California

Santa Ana is Orange County's largest and poorest city. There is a deep division between the city's poor, Hispanic majority population and its affluent, white minority. Over 10 years ago, Santa Ana proclaimed itself the arts and culture city of Orange County and aimed to use the arts to promote development through the revitalisation of the downtown district, increasing commercial activity, and improving intercultural relations.

The project focused on the development of infrastructure to support and accommodate the arts — specifically, the development of the artists' village and the Bowers Museum. These developments house a range of venues and regularly attract audiences and visitors to the areas. However, many of these visitors are from other towns and cities and the majority are white middle-class people. This generates economic activity that impacts positively on property values and development, and achieves encouraging outcomes. But it further

isolates the poor Hispanic population and, far from achieving its aim of improving intercultural relations, the project has further divided the community.

The project has not influenced this divide and has, in fact, effectively excluded Hispanics from development efforts. The art programs have further divided the community along class and ethnic lines. (Note that this refers only to those initiatives planned and implemented by the city; the Hispanic population has rich organic, grass roots art practices that contribute to their quality of life.) (Mattern, 2001)

Other projects are novel and provide entertainment and enjoyment while bringing communities together as an audience for special events.

Bobcat Dancing, Mt Isa, Queensland

The project staged a ballet in the dry bed of the Leichhardt River in Mt Isa, Queensland. The ballet was performed by several three-tonne bobcat machines that spun, twirled and balanced to a live band. The ballet's backdrop was the Mt Isa Mines smoke stacks and was a tribute to the town's lifeblood industry. The project aimed to make music accessible to regional communities. There were three performances that attracted 18,000 people (Queensland Community Arts Network, 2003).

Urban Versus Rural and Remote

The initiatives demonstrate creativity and illustrate how various communities have worked successfully to overcome challenges and develop innovative and often inspirational approaches to support renewal and development. However, the majority are to be found in urban communities. While some may stimulate ideas that could be applied in rural and remote communities, there are few existing models directly applicable to the specific contemporary challenges faced by rural and remote communities.