TECH2503-18 Community Media Production

Workshop Eighteen: Creative Evaluation of Community Projects

1   Activity – How Can We Use Creative Approaches to Support Community Development?
- What lessons can we take from the community media activities that we are engaged in?
- How can we use our experience of what works well and what goes wrong?
- How can we share our insight about what is good practice in our activities?
- Read through the following discussion points and note the issues that are suggested as the founding principles for creative engagement in community media projects.
- Are you able to evaluate your community media activities in relation to these points?
- What tips or ideas can you recommend that you think might be useful when learning from your community media projects?

1.1   Six creative ways artists can improve communities
From income inequality and unemployment to poverty, education and healthcare, communities around the world are facing critical challenges that require creative ideas and solutions. Any of these challenges could use an artist's mind, a creative question or a critical thinker to help us find our way to a more healthy and just future. Artists can illuminate truth, offer transcendent experience in a far too literal world, challenge us to feel, and connect us to our common humanity. https://www.theguardian.com/culture-professionals-network/2015/feb/12/creative-ways-artists-improve-communities

1.2   Creative Exchange
"Creative Exchange is the national program of Springboard for the Arts, an artist-led nonprofit based in Minnesota. On this platform we share stories of artists and their impact in community, and free, practical toolkits for artist-engaged programs, from professional development to creative placemaking to fun projects to bring people together. By freely sharing our work and creating connections among artists and communities, we work to make substantial, system-wide change." http://springboardexchange.org/toolkits/

1.3   Neighbourhood Postcard Project
"The Neighborhood Postcard Project is a global participatory art project that fosters community connection through storytelling exchange. Residents share personal positive stories about their neighborhood on a postcard and those postcards are delivered to random people in different neighborhoods within that same city to break down stereotypes and build community" http://www.neighborhoodpostcardproject.com/about

1.4   Gap Filler
Gap Filler is a creative urban regeneration initiative that facilitates a wide range of temporary projects, events, installations and amenities in the city. These short-term and comparatively small-scale projects are far less risky than new permanent developments – and consequently open up opportunities for experimentation: trying new ideas, pushing social boundaries, adopting participatory processes to get everyday people involved in creating their city. Working with local community groups, artists, architects, landowners, librarians, designers, students, engineers, dancers – anyone with an idea and initiative – we activate city spaces for temporary, creative, people-centered purposes. By recycling materials, teaming up with suppliers, harnessing volunteer power and being creative, Gap Filler proves that the regeneration of the city does not rely solely on large-scale developments by the private or public sectors. Great things can be achieved with community power and resourcefulness; we can be flexible and swift in adapting to our changing city, meaning our projects will always provide contemporary reflection on the state of society. Ultimately, Gap Filler aims to innovate, lead and nurture people and ideas; contributing to conversations about city-making and urbanism in the 21st century. http://gap-filler.org.nz/

1.5   The Laundromat Project
Our flagship program, Create Change, is designed to connect communities and artists in meaningful ways. We envision building a corps of artists inspired and equipped to work alongside everyday folks in creative endeavors right where they live. The program recognizes that artists and the roles they play within their own communities ultimately improve the holistic quality of life in New York City's diverse communities, particularly those

of color and modest income. Over the long-term, we intend to foster and support artist-leaders who are empowered by, committed to, and fully conversant in community-attuned art practices. http://laundromatproject.org/

1.6 Theatre of the Oppressed
The Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) describes theatrical forms that the Brazilian theatre practitioner Augusto Boal first elaborated in the 1970s, initially in Brazil and later in Europe. Boal was influenced by the work of the educator and theorist Paulo Freire. Boal's techniques use theatre as means of promoting social and political change. In the Theatre of the Oppressed, the audience becomes active, such that as "spectactors" they explore, show, analyse and transform the reality in which they are living. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Theatre_of_the_Oppressed

1.7 Planting Creativity: Artists, Place & Transit
Faced with major light rail construction, neighborhood businesses and artists revitalize distressed communities through art and collaboration in the Irrigate Creative Placemaking project. Hundreds of creative projects, from massive murals to small cabaret performances, change public perception from doom-and-gloom to surprise and possibility. Includes stories from Old Rondo, Little Mekong, and Lowertown. Irrigate is a partnership of Springboard for the Arts, Local Initiatives Support Corporation - Twin Cities and the City of Saint Paul, with major funding from ArtPlace. https://youtu.be/dQmUlCGjKrk

2 Discussion - Basic Group Techniques
- What creative techniques can you use in the development of your community media projects?
- How will these techniques build and support a sense of collaborative engagement?
- What will be the outcome of these creative sessions?
- How can you measure and evaluate the success of these techniques?
- Read through the links and following sections and identify any issues that you think need to be explored in order to manage the use of creative techniques.
- Create a mind map, photograph it and share it on DMU Talk https://talk.our.dmu.ac.uk

2.1 Community Project Guidelines
This section provides some simple ideas to help groups work more effectively:

- Icebreakers
- Recording
- Using and creating maps
- On-site and small group discussions
- Brainstorming
- Rounds
- Mind mapping
- Workshopping

http://www.doc.govt.nz/get-involved/run-a-project/community-project-guidelines/basic-group-techniques/

2.2 Informing and Educating
Examples of informing and educating might be:
- Sharing the vision, values and goals that inform your project's design and future operations
- Keeping the community up to date on the process and progress of the project's development
- Providing information about opportunities for further consultation and participation.

Many of the methods for informing and educating are able to reach many people at once, providing a good way to kick-off a community process, and to keep neighbourhoods updated on a periodic basis. Some methods include:

- **Newsletters/Flyers**: These can be dropped off on postal walks to all households and businesses in a neighbourhood. A good way to widely advertise a schedule of consultation events or timeline for construction.

- **Information Sessions/Town Hall Meetings:** At these meetings the project team makes an informative presentation, with an opportunity to answer questions from the audience. As with all community consultations, those who come to meetings are usually the people who are most interested and impacted. If a project is controversial or contentious, this format can provide an opportunity for opponents to dominate the discussion.

- **Information Open Houses:** These sessions are typically held over the course of an afternoon and evening, and are a drop-in format, with information boards and staff on hand to answer questions. This format can be useful in diffusing anger, mistrust or opposition, by providing a very tangible way for people with concerns to be heard, and to have a true one-on-one conversation about the project. It is important for all staff to be well-versed and consistent in the messages provided to the community, so that there is no inconsistency or confusion created. It is also recommended to provide opportunities for feedback, so that people can think about what they learned and provide considered comments by email, mail, etc.

- **E-Bulletins/Social Media Updates:** These depend on gathering a list of email addresses and subscribers, and is a good way to provide ongoing information to those who have already attended consultation sessions.

- **Hoarding and Signage:** Once your project is under construction, it will require some kind of protective hoarding, which provides an opportunity to include images, information, website addresses, etc. Hoarding at ground level can become an opportunity for art by local artists or neighbourhood kids, which can tie into your community event program.

- **Community Events:** Consider participating in already-organized community events such as sidewalk sales and festivals. Have an information table and perhaps some project-related activities for young people in the community. Flyers, postcards, info sheets, renderings, etc., are good props to have on hand for neighbourhood events. You can also create your own community event, perhaps an open house and tour of your project site pre-renovation.

3   Gathering Input and Understanding Local Needs and Issues

Gathering local input may be useful to the project team to help understand community needs and issues, determine the best design and program of the building, or to get feedback on preliminary ideas. It is also a great way to test the market for a new business or operating model, or for new programming ideas. Some consultation methods to consider:

- **Interviews/Focus Groups/Roundtable Discussions**: These are face-to-face meetings, either one-on-one or in small groups (up to 12 people). They can focus on one main theme or question during the project planning, or they can be used early in a project to seek advice from community leaders and learn about any opportunities and threats to the project. It is often wise to mix people of different backgrounds and perspectives in these sessions, to enable different viewpoints to be heard. It also helps provide an appreciation among community stakeholders of the various trade-offs and balances that need to be taken into account when making project decisions.

- **Email/Web Surveys:** These can be accessed through your project website or sent to your mailing list. Surveys need to be carefully constructed so that you can easily compile and interpret the answers. Free online survey tools include Survey Monkey, Zoomerang and ESurveysPro.

- **Request for Expressions of Interest**: The Request for Expressions of Interest (REOI) is a briefing document that may be used as a tool to stimulate and assess interest in a project and to solicit useful information from interested parties.

3.1 Seeking Discussion and Direction from the Community

- You may wish to seek community direction on the vision for your project, specific design elements, programming goals, opportunities for public art or animation of public spaces, or other forms of participation.
- You may want to discuss with the community the use and time allocation of a community-accessible space.
- If you've chosen your tenants or building users, you may want to seek their advice and direction with respect to design and program requirements, which will ensure that they will be able to make best use of the space provided to them.
- Methods include:

  - **"Visioning" Charrette:** A visioning charrette is a technique for consulting with some of the most interested community stakeholders early in a project. It typically involves full-day, intensive meetings, whereby municipal officials, developers, organizational leaders, community members and potential tenants are invited to gather and discuss issues, challenges and desires related to the project. A successful vision charrette achieves a shared vision and helps to defuse potential confrontational attitudes between different community stakeholders by providing a common understanding of issues, opportunities and challenges. This process is also extremely useful for identifying potential threats that could arise later in the project. A charrette can also help the project team understand the steps required to arrive at the shared vision.

  - **"Design" Charrette:** Similar to the visioning charrette described above, a design charrette is used to solve a complex design problem, often at the neighbourhood scale with a focus on how the physical parameters of your project intersects with the rest of the local community. It requires thorough preparation of drawings and design limitations by the project team, and can last a full day, or even two days, depending on the level of complexity and detail you are seeking from the group.

  - **Roundtable Discussions:** As noted above, these are ideal for groups of 12 or less, with a mix of perspectives and viewpoints. At this stage of consultation with the community, it is best to limit the topic to one main question or theme. Often you will want to invite those who have been most involved, as well as those who may have outstanding concerns on the particular topic you are seeking to address.

  - **Small Group Workshops:** These are ideal for groups of 20 to 30 people. Small workshops are similar to but less intensive than a charrette, and can be useful for larger groups or if there is more than one related topic to cover. It begins with a presentation and question/answer period, and the participants are then divided into smaller groups to discuss specific questions. The groups can all have the same question(s), or each group can be asked to discuss a different question. A facilitator for each group keeps the discussion moving and on track. Each group records their main points and then reports back to the larger group near the end of the session. The reports are typically recorded on a flip-chart and then distilled later by the project team. As above, your aim is to invite those with the most to contribute, and those with ongoing concerns. http://www.artscapediy.org/Creative-Placemaking-Toolbox/Who-Are-My-Stakeholders-and-How-Do-I-Engage-Them/A-Guide-to-Engaging-the-Community-in-Your-Project.aspx

4   Liverpool Capacity Building Programme

In January 2010, The Hamilton Project was commissioned by LARC Thrive to undertake a 12 month community capacity building programme (CBP) for community and arts organisations based in North Liverpool. The aim of the capacity building programme was to develop ways in which the organisations could provide arts and cultural projects in collaboration with each other and apply for funding to deliver the projects.

The objectives of the programme were to:
- Support community programme managers in developing viable project ideas for using culture to address regeneration objectives.
- Identify current levels of funding knowledge and activity in participating organisations.
- Develop understand of basic fundraising skills for project managers and long term volunteers.

- Identify funding sources relevant to cultural programming that the organisations are not accessing and provide practical support for community project managers and community organisation directors in applying for them http://www.larc.uk.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/10/LARC-Capacity-Building-Final-Report.pdf

5   Bristol Women's Voices

This year, Bristol Women's Voice researched and developed our biggest policy document to date, the Bristol Wo-Manifesto: Our Call for Parity, which is available to view on our website. Evidence tells us that women in general experience disadvantage, and that some women are more disadvantaged than others. Our wo-manifesto identifies six key priorities for change and makes a call to action for all who have a stake in the future of Bristol. The six key priorities identified in our Wo-manifesto are:

Power: to bring about change in public, private and political institutions in the city to ensure gender balanced leadership. To ensure that the city's key organisations hear, understand and respond to the needs of all women.

Health and Social Care: to improve the health and wellbeing of Bristolian women of all ages through action and influence underpinned by research. To raise the profile of women's health and the importance of taking a gendered approach in all aspects of health promotion and service planning and delivery, to secure equal opportunities for women to enjoy good health.

Safety: to make Bristol a city free from any form of gender-based violence by becoming a Zero Tolerance City with:
- A greater understanding of gender-based violence
- Enhanced specialised and appropriate support services that adequately meet the needs of all women
- High quality work on prevention, education and understanding of gender-based violence, gender
- stereotyping and discrimination.

Education: to ensure that education fully utilises the potential of girls and women, and that the education of all young people (girls and boys) builds values and behaviours that lead to a more equitable society.

Housing: to ensure that the needs of women in relation to housing are met, and in particular that the needs of women who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are understood and addressed. Bristol faces a housing crisis, which is having a particular impact on women and forcing them into homelessness. Rising rents, insecure tenancies and lack of affordable housing are forcing families to leave the area where they have childcare and family support networks. The housing needs of women fleeing domestic violence must be prioritised.

Economy: to enlist the skills, creativity and experience of women to deliver Bristol's potential to be a leading European city and to tackle the economic and social exclusion of women on low incomes in Bristol.
http://www.bristolwomensvoice.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/10/annual-report-2015-16-low-res.pdf

6   Soundart Radio – Web Reporting

We find out about the world through the media - how to define ourselves, who to trust, what to buy, how to vote, what to believe in. Media is a powerful force, and yet often funded by advertising. For advertisers, stereotypes are powerful and effective. We need corners of our culture to be kept free from commercial interests.

Many of us don't fit in to the expectations we feel society has of us. We feel inadequate, pigeonholed, unacceptable. It's easy to say 'blame the media' but there is no such one thing as 'the media', just many individuals working in many organisations. Any of us can be 'the media' and step up to make sure our point of view is heard.

In the radio studio we are safe to express ourselves. The audience is invisible, and we do not feel their judgement. Yet we are performing, we are focused on our task, speaking and listening to the best of our abilities. Our radio persona can be just ourselves - but our best selves. The audience can walk away, tune out, if they wish, without that affecting our performance.

Some of the people who find Soundart Radio have not found another place where they are welcomed and accepted. As we grow in confidence as radio presenters, meet one another and collaborate, things change in our lives, and our expectations of what we can achieve is heightened.

Most of the radio we hear on BBC or commercial channels is extremely slick. Listeners hear a polished-up version of the world. We take to the airwaves nervous and confused at times, there are off mic moments, silences, muddles. To the listeners, we are broadcasting - "you are ok as you are."

It's nonsense to talk of 'hard to reach' people. People outside the mainstream are not hard to reach, they are just easy to reject. http://www.soundartradio.org.uk/community/

7   Making and Doing: Creativity and the Evaluation of Impact in Creative Community Projects
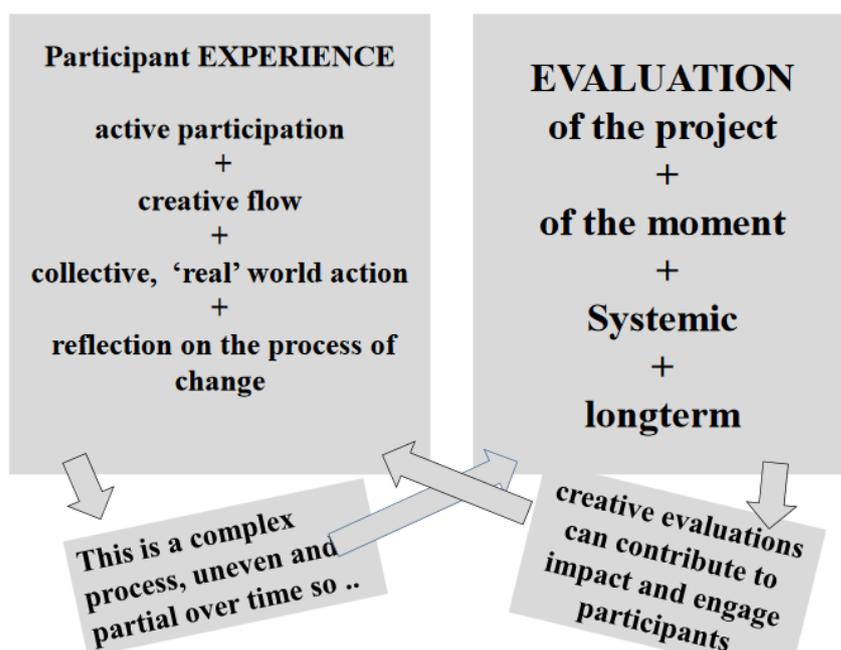
It is possible to link changes such as increased wellbeing and social cohesion to participation in creative projects in a number of ways (Helliwell, Putman, 2004). In our research, for example, participants in Imagineer Production's six-month carnival costume-making project made the link to their own feelings of increased self-confidence, to increased volunteering, to improved wellbeing. In a subsequent Focus Group, convened three months after the course, they gave examples such as "feeling strong enough" to challenge local teenage vandals on the estate. In this project, we used a wide range of visual and creative evaluation techniques, including visual journals. Techniques of reflection, individual and collective, were built into the course activities. http://iafor.org/archives/offprints/ecah2013-offprints/ECAH2013_0349.pdf

8   Activity Blogging
* Can you write any key points from this session into a blog?
* How will you use links and embedded media in your blog post to enhance the discussion and information that you present?
* Do you think you can write in a way that prompts other people to respond and engage with what you have written?
* To what extent does your blogging demonstrate any of the evaluative skills outlined above?

9   References