

# artwork

2011



arts,  
culture  
and

# resilience



In November and December 2009, stencil artist, Joshua Smith, conducted a short series of workshops at the Westcare Karpandi Arts Centre as part of a larger Arts SA funded Community Arts Development project called 'The Juicer'. Workshop participants created a stencil from an image of their own face and then used that stencil to decorate their own calico carry bag.

The images throughout this edition are from this project.

Participants: Jenny, Olivia, Atticus, Sunshine, Jayne, Mark, Zoella, Nigel, Joshua Smith, Daisy, Celso, Nathan, Jordy, Joao, Shane and Chris

See Joshua Smith's work on his website: [www.iknowjoshuasmith.com.au](http://www.iknowjoshuasmith.com.au)

'The Juicer' project targeted people accessing welfare and other services at Baptist Care (SA) – Westcare.



# community arts network sa



This Artwork is dedicated to the memory of Deidre Williams 1947-2010

Deidre was the Director of CAN SA from 1988 to 1996 and an true inspiration to us all.

# artwork

Editorial	2	Lisa Philip-Harbutt
Adaptive resilience: change, not just persistence	4	Mark Robinson
Resilience: or the capacity to adapt/survive in a potentially hostile world	7	Jo Caust
Response to ACE paper <i>Making adaptive resilience real</i> Mark Robinson	11	Gareth Wreford
Art and resilience – beyond the 'pantyhose effect'	19	Christine Putland
Certainty, uncertainty and the new: How (community) arts participation builds resilience in children and young people	23	Sally Chance
Alternative Response to Mark Robinson's <i>Making adaptive resilience real</i>	28	Ianto Ware
Resilience and Restless Dance A Case Study	32	Nick Hughes
The Young and the Resilient – It's Only A Journey	37	Jane Gronow
The Art In Resilience – A Search In 9 Moments Of Change.	43	Steve Mayhew
Resilience	48	Helen Bock
Truisms	52	Finegan Kruckemeyer

contents

# artwork

## Editorial

**lisa philip-harbutt**



2010 marked Community Arts Network SA's 30th year of Incorporated Association status, and we decided to celebrate.

A number of linked events occurred, kicked off by our joining the community parade on the opening night of the Adelaide Fringe festival. Members and friends of CAN SA attended workshops where they made large speech bubbles with comments on what CAN SA has meant to them and printed T-shirt's celebrating the moment.

In June we had the big Birthday Party – a fun night of reminiscing speeches from all eras of CAN SA workers, live music from members and a fabulous birthday cake! During the South Australian Living Artists (SALA) Festival we had a members' exhibition.

But the final event for our birthday year proved to be a hard one to pin down. The Board of Management was leading the discussion around this last event and they felt they couldn't really top the party that had occurred earlier in the year so they were looking for another way of marking the moment.

I was headed for the USA after speaking at a conference in Milan and having

some meetings around Disability Arts in London, when ideas started flowing and as soon as I arrived I logged on and wrote to CAN SA's Board:

*Dear Board members,  
Greetings from Arlington, Virginia.*

*The conference in Milan and the meetings in London went well. I will catch you up on all that on my return. I have been having a think and thought I should share as you may like to discuss at the upcoming board meeting.*

*I have been thinking about Artwork and how much the sector and academia both miss the important role it played in documenting the practice and making sure that there was some ongoing debates and discussions.*

*So I have been wondering about CAN SA publishing an 'Occasional' Artwork. When we get our new website we are going to need new content on a regular basis. So I was thinking if we found a cheapish way of in-house printing (or limited run with a printer) but focussed on an online publishing outcome- that we could easily place it on a DVD or point funding committees to it.*

*I also wondered if a 2010 Occasional Artwork could have a dedication to Deidre. It could also, if the board was interested, be the board's final contribution to our birthday celebrations- in lieu of an end of birthday year function.*

*In terms of topics I have had a number of thoughts but one that may be relevant is getting a number of responses to the Arts Council England paper on Adaptive Resilience of Arts organisations that I have previously distributed. Similar to the format we did in the Artwork that was based around Australian responses to John Holden's paper. Resilience is big in the UK and Europe and in a day or two I will be able to tell you if it is also big in USA. It also seems a bit fitting for CAN SA, for to make it to 30 you have to be adaptive and resilient. So it could be good to celebrate 30 years of CAN SA in this way.*

*Have a chat and I will catch up as soon as I am home,*

*Cheers  
Lisa*

The response from the Board was immediate and very positive. I am very lucky to have a fabulous Board of Management.

And that thought on a flight – yes flying is great thinking time – has led to this edition of *Artwork*. Our first 'Occasional Artwork' and we hope not our last. Those of you who are new to *Artwork*, CAN SA published it from 1988 to 2007. During the last years we did this in partnership with an editorial team from other members of the then National Network. Keep an eye out for our new website which will be launched later in the year as we will have an archive of pdf copies of the earlier *Artwork* issues.

So now to this edition ...

The spark that started this conversation was from English researcher and writer **Mark Robinson**. In July 2010 Mark Robinson wrote for the Arts Council England (ACE) *Making adaptive resilience real* which at the time of publishing is downloadable on [www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication\\_archive/making-adaptive-resilience-real](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/publication_archive/making-adaptive-resilience-real). In this *Artwork* we have a shorter version from Mark Robinson called ***Adaptive resilience: change, not just persistence***. This was adapted after the changes that occurred to ACE after the last election.

In response to Mark Robinson's work we have an academic paper from **Jo Caust** called ***Resilience: or the capacity to adapt/survive in a potentially hostile world***. Jo is currently a consultant and writer but over the years she has been an arts practitioner, manager, bureaucrat and academic. Jo Caust gives Mark Robinson's ideas a good shake as she contextualises them in an Australian perspective.

**Gareth Wreford** draws on his experience to ponder on what has occurred in the arts and cultural sectors in Australia in the last few years and he explores how this has in turn affected the ability of our organisations to remain resilient. His article is simply called ***Response to ACE paper Making adaptive resilience real*** **Mark Robinson**.

In her role as an evaluator on many community arts and cultural development projects, **Christine Putland** see firsthand people's attempt to make sense of the change that is occurring around them. In her article ***Art and resilience – beyond the 'pantyhose effect'*** Putland remembers the Kasyer pantyhose advertisement and reflects on how people can and do 'bounce back' into shape after upheaval. She gives four short stories from recent projects to illustrate a range of approaches.

***Certainty, uncertainty and the new: How (community) arts participation builds resilience in children and young people*** has been written by **Sally Chance**. Sally has 25 years of working in community cultural development, mainly in dance and mainly with young people and children. She draws on all this experience in her response to the topic.

**Ianto Ware** is the project manager of Renew Adelaide and the co-founder and former director of Format. As a young researcher and writer from a Cultural Studies background he offers an ***Alternative Response to Mark Robinson's Making adaptive resilience real***.

In his role of Company Manager as Restless Dance Theatre, **Nick Hughes** is well placed to tell the story of resilience from within a South Australian performing arts company. His article is titled ***Resilience and Restless Dance: A Case Study*** and in it he tests the usefulness of Mark Robinson's paper *Making adaptive resilience real* to the everyday experience of being responsible for the ongoing sustainability of an arts company.

**Jane Gronow** has interviewed three of the recent recipients of the JUMP program. This is a national mentoring program for artists who are in the first five years of their professional practice. Her and their ideas about resilience can be explored in her article ***The Young and the Resilient – It's Only A Journey***

**Steve Mayhew** is the Artistic Director of the 2012 National Regional Arts Conference and Festival. His article ***The art in resilience – a search in 9 moments of change*** documents his exploration of the theme for this upcoming conference. Regional Arts Australia's eighth national regional arts conference will be held in Goolwa, South Australia in October 2012 and will be hosted by Country Arts SA.

**Helen Bock** works at CAN SA as our PlaceMaking Project Officer. PlaceMaking currently concentrates on working with people with experience of homelessness. Helen's article ***re•sil•ience*** starts and finishes with words from the well-known story *The Little Engine That Could*. In between, we gain insight to the PlaceMaking Program and the resilient participants who bring expertise in the place called Adelaide to the projects that occur.

And as a last word we have the poem ***Truisms*** by **Finegan Kruckemeyer**.

# Adaptive resilience: change, not just persistence

## mark robinson

*Mark Robinson is the founder and Director of Thinking Practice, a consultancy dedicated to increasing the impact and resilience of the arts and cultural sector through the creative use of analysis, planning, facilitation and coaching. He was previously Executive Director of Arts Council England, North East, where he worked for ten years. Prior to that he had various roles in arts development and education in Tees Valley and the North East.*

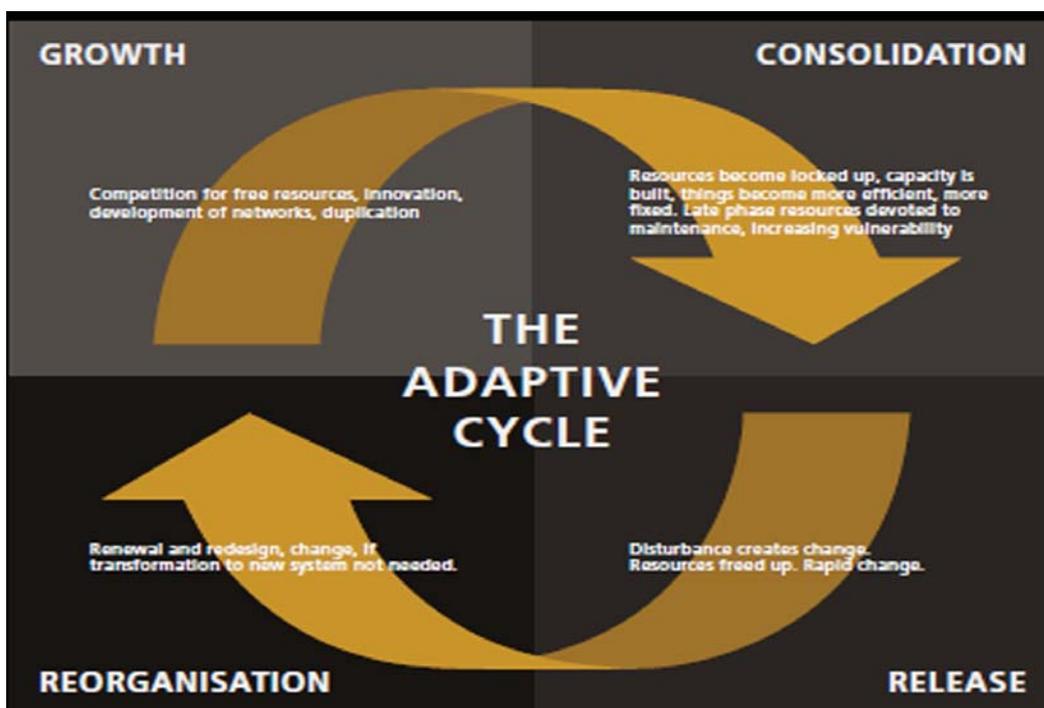
Darwin said that it is not the strongest species that survive, nor the most intelligent, but the most responsive to change. The arts sector certainly looks like it's going to have plenty of opportunity to test this theory as the public sector shrinks, the digital realm matures and mutates, markets shift, new spaces and uses for the arts open up, and people look to us for, well, some things we know well and some we can only imagine right now.

That's why Arts Council England (ACE) has just published my paper 'Making adaptive resilience real', researched and written during my last weeks at ACE – then given a small post-election polish. Resilience can be defined as the ability to cope with what the world throws at you, but it has to be more if it's to be a truly positive thing, for organisations as for individuals. Combining insights from psychology, organisational thinking, disaster planning and social-ecological thinking, I reach my own definition for the cultural sector: 'adaptive resilience is the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in changing circumstances'.

The paper explores theories drawn from ecological thinking. If the arts sector moves through an adaptive cycle like other ecologies, from the excitement of the Growth phase into Consolidation as things become more stable but also more

fixed and therefore vulnerable, into the disturbing Release phase (sometimes known as 'creative destruction') where things simply have to change, how do we best design the 'Reorganisation' phase? What do we need to keep, what do we let go – and most importantly what do we need to invent?

These are important considerations for ACE especially in reacting to the recent and future cuts, but also for the whole sector to debate.



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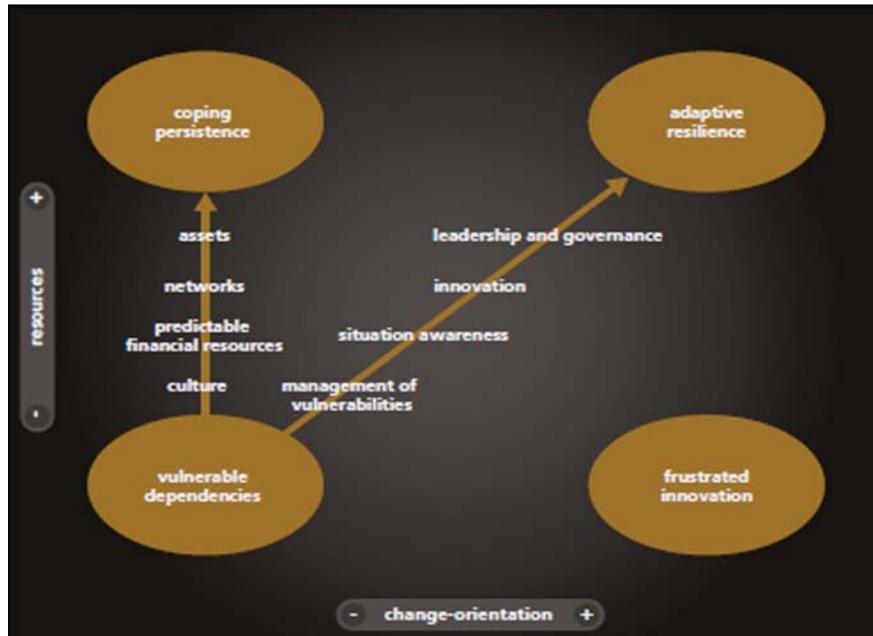


There is a need to develop a better picture of the arts ecology – something I make a stab at, highlighting the centrality of the artist, and the importance of how an arts organisation positions itself in its locality and 'how the place works'. There are, of course, other things affecting the whole ecology – economic and social cycles and the development of artforms or creativity more broadly. This needs more research and more brains applied to it to improve my sketch.

Although I personally feel there are few things as practical as a good theory, I know there are some who like things presented in a more obviously practical way. During my research, which including interviews with some fantastic organisations, I developed a list of eight characteristics of resilient arts organisations:

## Resources

- A culture of shared purpose and values rooted in a strong organisational memory, avoiding mission-drift but consciously evolving
- Predictable financial resources derived from a robust business model and a range of activities and 'customers', retaining some financial flexibility
- Strong networks (internal/external), with an absence of 'silos', and collaboration at all levels making the organisation vital and connected
- Intellectual, human and physical assets, used to maximise impact in pursuit of core purpose, with appropriate investment in the creation and exploitation of new assets



## Adaptive Skills

- Adaptive capacity: innovation and experimentation are embedded in reflective practice, with change seen as natural and actively prepared for
- Leadership, management and governance provide clarity internally and externally, with clear roles and responsibilities and strong improvement focus
- Situation awareness of environment and performance, with good gathering, sharing and consideration of intelligence and information to inform decisions
- Management of key vulnerabilities is regular and integrated into planning and preparation for disruption.

Organisations that consistently display these characteristics will tend to prove more resilient, be more productive and have more impact. Therefore, support should be focused not simply on subsidising excellent activity or quality experiences, but on enabling organisations to become sustainable and

resilient. This means being clearer about when money is an investment used to build a sustainable business, or revenue given to buy (or part-buy) products or services (such as plays or exhibitions).

This greater clarity about 'building' or 'buying' is much needed on all sides of the 'funding' equation if we are to use available money well. Does your organisation actively use its assets to create new revenue to create fresh assets, for instance – or do you do whatever activity funding enables? (All talk of alternative business models seems to boil down to this binary – the rest is technical info and risk assessment.)

My recommendations focus on developing understanding and debate about adaptive resilience, and increasing sectoral understanding of its importance through experimentation and sharing of best practice. I also recommend that funding programmes are shaped to consciously develop adaptive resilience, recognising the distinction between building organisations through investment and buying activity through revenue support for programmes of work.

Mark Robinson full article ***Making adaptive resilience real*** can be downloaded from [www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/making\\_adaptive\\_resilience\\_real.pdf](http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/media/uploads/making_adaptive_resilience_real.pdf)

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It is the first ACE publication with such a license.

# Resilience: or the capacity to adapt/survive in a potentially hostile world

**jo caust**

*Dr Jo Caust is the author of many articles, book chapters, research reports and conference papers and has worked in the arts sector as an arts practitioner, manager, bureaucrat and consultant. She has also been Associate Professor in Arts and Cultural Management at the University of South Australia and Managing Editor of the Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management. She is now directing her own arts consultancy company, JoCaustArts at [jocaustarts.com](http://jocaustarts.com)*

...I think to survive and thrive as an artist... requires a mixture of chutzpah, cunning, humour, ego, and no doubt, 'resilience'.

Every five years or so we see the appearance of a new term to describe the world we live in or a new approach to describe how we should respond to that world. In many cases this development is a reaction to a difficult environment where different values have emerged than those that we believe are important. This need to adapt is not necessarily a bad thing. We all need to change and develop constantly to survive and thrive. Sometimes though I think it might be easier instead to just go for the gun!

As a 'baby boomer' I have lived through several incantations of language and policy in the Australian arts world. There has been the arts as an amateur activity, the direct censorship by government of arts activity (the Commonwealth Literary fund), the involvement of government through arts subsidy, the acknowledgement of an arts sector, the anointment of the chosen ones given large and regular government funding, debates about whether some art activity is more deserving than others, a hierarchy of artforms and activities within artforms, 'excellence' versus 'access', the place (or not) of community arts versus the high arts, 'museum' art versus 'contemporary' art, the industry approach, the supremacy of marketing, the creative industry model, the business model, the triple bottom line (or the quadruple), the arts ecology or system, an understanding of 'value', the search for artistic 'vibrancy', sustainability and now the adaptive cycle or resilience approach.

Many of these approaches have occurred because of a change in government and then a change in government priorities vis á vis the arts. Having worked as a practitioner, a bureaucrat and an administrator, I think to survive and thrive as an artist (and/or as an arts organisation), requires a mixture of chutzpah, cunning, humour, ego, and no doubt, 'resilience'. To keep getting any money from the government of the day (given changes in government) requires either friends in high places or a capacity to survive and re-invent whatever the environmental context (with the exception of the state-sanctioned arts organisations such as the opera company, the orchestras, the state theatre companies and the ballet company, who more or less keep on going on).

This brings the conversation to the present where in the United Kingdom over the past year, major funding cuts are happening in the arts sector in response to both a change in government and a restricted economic climate. In an environment of restriction and constriction the conversation is by necessity about ways to survive. Hence Mark Robinson's *Making adaptive resilience real* (2010). The central tenet of his discourse is that if you adapt to your environment you are more likely to survive than if you don't. This is encapsulated in his definition of what he means:

Adaptive resilience is the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances. (Robinson 2010:14)

So 'adaptive resilience' is framed by Robinson as a higher capacity to remain true to your cause while absorbing and integrating different external forces. In the UK case this may mean a major cut in your government funding or receiving none at all. This then begs the question of how you keep doing your 'good' work without that backstop. In Robinson's case he argues that in fact this may be a healthy time because those that lose their funding in the new environment may deserve to; that the system has been propping them up far beyond their 'use by' date.

He notes:

Healthy ecologies are very dynamic—and in order for the arts sector to be healthy over a long period, funding cannot be locked up in one group of organisations ... we are also seemingly unable to walk away from those we know in our guts and our analysis are neither vital nor productive enough. (Robinson 2010: 1-2)

If a major funding cut is framed as part of healthy ecology then the process of shedding organisations is a healthy response and also to be applauded. It gives an excuse to let go of companies that are 'unproductive and lacking artistic vibrancy'. The difficulty here though is who decides and how are they measured? Is the rationale for rejection based on objective criteria or does it reflect a change in philosophical norms or a different political environment? In addition what may be brilliant to me may be boring to you and vice versa. Given the subjective nature of art appreciation, there is also the question of political preferences. There is therefore a fundamental flaw in Robinson's argument given that he does not mention any issues related to either education or class. Bourdieu (1993) raised two decades ago (and Williams (1989) and Berger (1972) before him) that a response to art-making lies in both the education and class of the viewer; as well as that of the presenter. To argue that funding cuts provide an opportunity to get rid of some of the 'dross' is ingenuous because those that get defunded are usually those that are less able to make a fuss politically.

In the end it is the government that determines the arts funding priorities, whether it is an arm's length model or not.

It is unlikely for instance, that an organisation in a Tory member's electorate, that he or she is fond of, will be defunded in this climate. It is likely though that groups doing community arts in a northern working class labour strong-hold, may get the 'chop'. Arts funding is not a level playing field. It has never been and it will never be. Arts peers on funding committees may do their best to protect what they believe to be the best arts organisations from going under but they can only work on the periphery of the equation. In fact the government of the day selects the people it appoints to funding committees to ensure its views are reflected in decision making. In the end it is the government that determines the arts funding priorities, whether it is an arm's length model or not.

Another challenging aspect of Robinson's argument is the implicit assumption that if you want to survive, it is a waste of time to complain about a change in the status quo. Instead by necessity you absorb and integrate the new paradigm and just get on with it. This assumes that complaining or protesting about change only makes you the victim. This in itself could be seen as a disempowering position because it does not allow for the possibility that by protesting you may actually prevent a change, which is not in the best interests of the art sector. If enough voices are raised in protest about a policy change, then it is usual in a democracy that some attention is paid to this by those in power.

Robinson does note though there is a danger inherent in such a funding climate. He says:

Change can be more reactive than innovation ... it is important that policies to increase organisational resilience do not marginalise the creativity at the heart of the arts ecology. (Robinson 2010: 1, 25)

# If arts practice is only the domain of those who can afford to pay for it, then it narrows its audiences dramatically and this thereby influences its content and form.

While this statement could be seen to be 'coded' to describe how to increase resilience, the central tenet is that by reducing the dependency on government funding (if 'resilience' equates to losing your funding and surviving nevertheless), an organisation may be forced to adopt strategies that are directed to being more 'commercial' and less 'risk taking' in their work. A major reason for the introduction of government support for the arts was the recognition that unless there is that support, the market place rules (Williams 1989).

This means that only art that can sell will be produced. Yet it is often art that does not sell or win an immediate audience, which demonstrates greater cultural significance in the longer term. Another belief embedded in the Keynesian model of arms length funding (which influenced the establishment of the Arts Council of Great Britain, the Canada Council and the Australia Council models), was that not all communities can afford to pay for art. Government support was seen as a way therefore of providing broader access to activity that was deemed important to everyone's lives. If arts practice is only the domain of those who can afford to pay for it, then it narrows its audiences dramatically and this thereby influences its content and form.

Leadbetter notes in his report to the Arts Council of Great Britain in 2005 about the challenges facing arts organisations into the 21st century:

The lesson from other sectors, both public and private, is that organisations that are complacent, inward looking and slow to adapt will find the environment increasingly unforgiving. (Leadbetter 2005: 4)

So he is also arguing that arts organisations need to adapt and change to survive into the 21st century. A perceived culture of 'entitlement' may be another aspect of this argument. Arts organisations (and artists) that have received generous government support over many years may believe that this is a 'given' and that they are recipients of government largesse by 'right'. This mindset may produce laziness, complacency and arrogance which can be hard to defend politically. It can also mean the organisation is out of touch both with its environment and its constituency. Leadbetter argues also that the importance to the community of 'making art' needs to be re-presented and re-argued so that there continues to be a broad acceptance of the necessity of art in all our lives (2005: 4 - 13). He says that, 'Getting art to where people are is a vital part of that' (2005: 12).

Robinson acknowledges though the importance of the 'systems' concept and the 'interdependence' of all players within that model. In fact he recognises that much thinking about the concept of 'resilience' comes from work in the discipline of biology. He notes, referencing Holling (2000), that 'the seeming paradox of change and stability inherent in evolving systems is the essence of sustainable futures' (Robinson 2010: 5).

If change is a 'given', the capacity to survive that change and thrive, is at the core of resilience theory. He also notes that 'central to an understanding of resilience in a systems sense is the adaptive cycle' (Robinson 2010: 18). This may be the most important aspect of Robinson's contribution.

His emphasis on understanding the system that the artist operates in, and how the artist or arts organisation needs 'to picture and manage the various systems impacting upon them, thereby increasing their resilience' (Robinson 2010: 26), is critical for survival in the arts. The maxim of 'knowledge is power' is never truer than in a context where you are on the cutting edge of economic survival.

For instance arts training institutions are finally recognising that artists do need more than their raw talent to make a living in this, most demanding of fields. Artists cannot afford to be 'removed' from understanding the world in which they operate. The more skills and knowledge that artists possess in their capacity to make a living from their work, the more likelihood that they may be able to earn a reasonable income from their work. Work about the incomes of artists in Australia over four decades, continues to emphasise that artists still occupy the lowest rung in terms of income (Throsby & Mills 1989; Throsby & Thompson 1994; Throsby & Hollister 2003; Throsby & Zednik 2010). The most recent of these surveys undertaken by David Throsby and his team at Macquarie University notes:

The most important factors holding back their professional development nominated by the great majority of artists are a lack of time to do creative work due to other responsibilities, lack of work opportunities and lack of financial return from creative practice. These are the same obstacles to career development as have been found in all previous surveys. (Throsby & Zednik 2010: 8)



So everything changes and everything remains the same. Conflating the presence of government funding with better incomes for artists does not correlate. It would seem that developing skills that allow the artist to be more economically self-sufficient is critical in the longer term. Robinson suggests in relation to arts organisations that:

[D]iversity of income streams, ingenuity, resourcefulness and re-use of materials...The central idea is twofold: looking at what the organisation does in a different way and using the income generated to invest in further work that creates new assets. (Robinson 2010: 37)

Choosing the appropriate response to dealing with change is always going to be the most important decision.

In other words, in Robinson's view, creating more economic independence gives freedom and the capacity to take risks. So there is a conundrum here which is at the root of the argument; the more dependent you are on government sources, the more vulnerable you are, if it reduces or disappears. Developing the means to survive independently, if this resource disappears, is then a pragmatic and sensible response. Robinson describes this as 'adaptive resilience versus vulnerable dependence' (2010: 38).

In this case then artists and arts organisations do need to be 'savvy' to withstand the change but there are dangers in accepting the inevitability of this situation long term, because of a political and philosophical position. On the other hand meekly accepting funding changes may be a way of disappearing and disempowering yourself in the political arena. This also challenges the rationale for government support of the arts in the first place as noted by Williams earlier (1989). Finding a pathway then between 'resilience', 'acceptance' and maintaining the 'rage' is critical for the future of the engaged and active artist or arts organisation. As Fabricius et al note:

Assessing whether a local response is appropriate for the external threat or environmental change in question is considered one of the major difficulties in research dealing with coping and adaptive strategies. (2007: 29)

Choosing the appropriate response to dealing with change is always going to be the most important decision.

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# Response to ACE paper 'Making adaptive resilience real' Mark Robinson

**gareth wreford**

Considering resilience for the national Community Cultural Development (CCD) sector is timely as in August 2010 the Australia Council's Community Partnerships released a sector plan for 2010-2012 ahead of a review of its programs in 2011 with changes to be implemented in 2012. Resilience and the notion of an arts ecology do feature as terms in the sector plan, as they have in some other Australian discussion papers and commentaries, though they are not considered or explored to the extent Mark Robinson does in his July 2010 article on 'adaptive resilience' for the Arts Council of England (ACE). Robinson defines adaptive resilience as:

... the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances (2010: 14).

The elements of Robinson's definition – core purpose, identify, absorbing disturbance and adapting to change – provide a framework through which to view the current health of the Australian CCD sector which is still dealing with the fallout of the Australia Council's 2004 'arts catalyst' restructure that dissolved the Community Cultural Development Board to form a new Community Partnerships section. It's a framework that may also resonate in Australia as deliberations about the shape of our new national cultural policy progress. In addition, reading Robinson provided some useful analysis of the work of the ACE in supporting producing organisations and in particular what Robinson sees, borrowing from US non-profit sector research, as the two main roles of an arts council: 'building organisations through investment and buying activity through revenue support for programs of work' (2010: 8). Robinson's analysis is driven by a desire to illustrate and diagnose rather than prescribe and by systems thinking which acknowledges that fixing one discrete problem can have unintended consequences elsewhere so there is a need to consider the health of the whole ecology of the arts. Finally Robinson, quoting directly from a 2005 ACE study by Charlie Leadbetter, notes that there are issues that only the Arts Council as the national body for the arts can address and argues for the Arts Council to:

... play a more strategic, imaginative and entrepreneurial role in shaping the environment the arts operates in. That means more than securing and administering adequate public funding for the arts. (2010: 39)

*Gareth Wreford was Executive Director of Arts Access Australia from 2003 to 2010 leading advocacy that resulted in the Cultural Ministers Council National Arts and Disability Strategy. In 2010 Gareth also published the first national overview of Australian community arts and mental health in Arts & Health: The International Journal of Research, Policy and Practice. Prior to 2003 he worked for the Australia Council in Community Cultural Development and Audience and Market Development.*



Resilience could start to look like the latest in a long line of buzzwords to migrate into arts discourse.

an ecosystem with organisations at different points in a cycle of renewal at any given point (2010: 13-14). Arguing for the distinct role of a national body for the arts, like the ACE, is complicated in Australia by the fragmentation of federal arts funding between Prime Minister and Cabinet (what was the Department of Environment Water Heritage and the Arts or DEWHA), the Australia Council and Regional Arts Australia. 2010 and 2011 also saw some questioning of the role of the Australia Council (Westbury 2010) and new research indicating that direct funding for individual artists has fallen by a third since the mid 1990s (Arts QLD) indicating that there are broader issues about arts funding that provide context for a specific discussion about CCD. Reviewing the discussion papers and debate with a CCD perspective, there are two main areas that I feel are not well articulated. One is clarity about the role of government in funding and supporting the arts. The second is who gets to create art when the debate is more about what type of art [form] is created, though these points are related.

As David Throsby puts it, 'Even the driest economist will concede that when markets fail, as they do in their failure to provide the public-good benefits of the arts, a presumptive case exists for collective action to remedy the problem, in this case most immediately via government subsidy' (2006: 35). This approach applied to CCD provides a corrective to the economic rationalist approach which sees low incomes for artists more as a failure of the art they produce and a result of an over supply of people with the vocational drive to create, driving down prices for their work. For the CCD sector with its social justice focus, the public good, or instrumental benefit, can be argued though as academic Jennifer Craik notes 'one of the ironies of the instrumentalist approach to cultural policy is that it simultaneously ghettoises elite culture and alienates potential new audiences' (2007: 53). The instrumental approach also misses the transformative possibilities of CCD practice to change the very way policy is developed and citizens and government relate to each other. No matter how well argued, the potential for transformative relationships is consistently missed by the Australia Council (Mills & Brown 2004; Mills 2008). It may be that the very nature of government will lead to instrumental approaches and, to be mercenary, if this is effective in leading to more support for CCD work then it's a risk I'd take in the knowledge that artists will find ways to do something a little more interesting.

As for the specific notion of resilience itself – I found it a bit uncomfortable knowing that the Global Financial Crisis has had a severe impact in the UK which, combined with spending for the London 2012 Olympics, has radically altered their arts funding landscape. Resilience could start to look like the latest in a long line of buzzwords to migrate into arts discourse ('innovation', 'sustainability', 'industry' and so on) and smack of being asked to do more for less and being grateful for it: stiff upper lip and all that. To be fair Robinson is well aware of the buzz word effect, stating that the last thing he wants to see is organisations generating 'resilience plans' and his paper is genuinely motivated by a desire to renew and strengthen the arts sector or 'ecology'.

The sobering thought is that there may be some degree of necessity in promoting resilience in the UK. Resilience may also be useful to the Australian CCD sector though overall I'm more optimistic about the future with new and significant players and opportunities emerging. This optimism is despite there being some issues or 'disturbances' to address, like support for the careers of freelance CCD arts workers, and changes occurring including the recent collapse of Community Cultural Development New South Wales (CCDNSW) and the Queensland Community Arts Network (QCAN) along with the uncertain future of the National Arts and Culture Alliance (NACA). As Robinson suggests when defining resilience, change is constant and there is no optimal or static state for

Arguing for government subsidy can also present a challenge for the CCD sector as there is some evidence to suggest we are asking the highly educated portion of the general public to support work they are unlikely to value and even less likely to see. Citing various research studies, Deborah Mills (2008) demonstrates the links between educational attainment and both participation in and support for the subsidised arts sector. The association with educational attainment is worth noting as it is here that funding body promotion of excellence can become a proxy for class. Talking about class seems terribly old fashioned in an era of rising affluence and low unemployment yet at some point the CCD sector may need to be clear about articulating its constituency and identifying priority areas. Add to this mix the changing nature of arts practice that brings new ways of realising the social justice intent of CCD work and you have a challenge to both traditional 'art that has been created as part of a community group together with a professional artist' (Australia Council 2010a: 2) and some new social inclusion thinking about work that wears the 'community' mantle.

The democratisation of the means of cultural production in areas like new media, and the resulting general increase in participation as creators of art, has led to the emergence of new artforms and 'voices' typified by an organisation like Western Sydney's Information and Cultural Exchange (ICE). As their website says, ICE is known for its success with newly arrived migrant and refugee communities working at the intersection of arts, community and technology through digital stories, film, urban music and any other medium with a pulse or a pixel. Describing these hybrid organisations and artforms Craik states '[t]hey tend to be cost-effective, sustainable and even profitable as well as merging (or making irrelevant) the distinction between creator, audience and consumer' (2007: 55). From here the future of CCD becomes less about policing prescriptive doctrinal boundaries, particularly around the collaborative creative 'process' used within its diverse artforms, and more about recognising the porous nature of both arts practice and the multiple pathways to achieving a social justice outcome.

A recognition of broader changes in creative practice and questions about how best to respond are also described in a startling new report from the Australia Council. Council's 2011 *Art and Creative Industries* report challenges public funding

of the arts by arguing there is a collapse in the distinctions between funded or aesthetic arts, popular and commercial culture. While I'm not sure that CCD practice will necessarily benefit from this collapse, as art with a social justice bent can find itself centred outside of these categories, Council's research does contain some heartening words about the radical political intent evident in reclaiming the history of CCD and sounds some caution about how this intent can be blunted though a blithe alignment with current policy interest in social inclusion. Speaking of the history of CCD as influenced by the emergence of cultural studies in the late 1950s the report notes that:

... its main impact has been to radically question the grounds on which judgements of artistic value have been made, and indeed implicate such judgements in the ongoing reproduction of social inequality and oppression. Who has authority to judge; who is allowed 'voice'. (Australia Council 2011: 57)

Then, referring to the implications of Milton Keynes thinking that opening up art-making to more people necessarily implies changes to the arts themselves, the report links this to the origins of the 'community arts movement as it developed from the 1960s which was a much more ambitious movement than the "social inclusion" after-thoughts which characterise much of what we know as "community arts" today' (2011: 63).

Certainly social inclusion thinking applied to the arts could be a conservative project that sees the Australia Council's ambitious Cultural Engagement Framework reduced, at worst, to a set of audience demographic targets; though I did wonder whether the authors had picked up a copy of a recent Community Partnerships assessment meeting report or looked at projects funded under the Community Creative Partnerships Initiative (CCPI) to see what was being supported there. Yes the language of social inclusion is used, given its currency in government policy, while the work itself, like that of Information and Cultural Exchange, is commonly described as hybrid i.e. new forms not meeting historical definitions while being firmly grounded in concerns about 'voice' and who can create. For some communities and the individuals within them, the very act of citizenship involved in the right to create and tell their story, is political activism.

Talking about class seems terribly old fashioned in an era of rising affluence and low unemployment yet at some point the CCD sector may need to be clear about articulating its constituency and identifying priority areas.

Information and Cultural Exchange is one of eleven Key Producer organisations with a six year Community Partnerships funding agreement negotiated in the years following the 2004 Australia Council 'arts catalyst' restructure. Step forward to 2011 and the Key Producers are just over half way through their six year funding agreements while some of the advocacy and network organisations have lost funding or feel their role and status has been reduced through categorisation as 'service' organisations. While individual organisations may be doing well, the changes in the sector since 2004 have opened up a gap around national leadership or the 'core purpose and identity' aspect of adaptive resilience from within the CCD sector. The July 2010 Community Partnerships assessment meeting report identifies the need for sector leadership stating that:

The Committee will provide detailed feedback to each of the Key Producer companies with the aim of ensuring the next three years are marked by continuing improvement for the individual companies and *benefits to the sector as a whole* (Australia Council 2010b) [my emphasis].

The 'benefits to the sector as a whole' objective is arguably the major challenge for the Key Producers. There is a fundamental tension, or even conflict of interest, in asking organisations and employees primarily driven and funded to produce their own work to also provide benefits and leadership for the 'sector'. There are some Key Producers that combine producing work with a defined advocacy role though their focus is understandably on specific topics or issues of immediate interest to the communities they work with rather than sharing their skills and learning to build resilience in the CCD 'sector' as a whole.

The question for me is how these ad hoc and diverse issues connect, which in turn highlights the failure of the National Arts and Culture Alliance (NACA). Formed in response to the Australia Council's 2004 'arts catalyst' restructure NACA failed to convert an outpouring of grass roots activism into a longer term agenda for the CCD sector. While the amount of funding initially received from the Australia Council was modest it was initially auspiced by CCDNSW providing an administrative base, and Council might reasonably have expected the many people and organisations in the CCD sector to actively support NACA which on the whole they didn't. The NACA Board decision to then leave the auspices of CCDNSW and go it alone in Victoria with no other source of support was at best curious. Despite some talented staff the organisation subsequently delivered little and represented a miniscule number of CCD arts workers.

For all the internally focused intrigue many of NACA's ideas were good. Considerable energy was spent developing a national advocacy and lobbying agenda and there were plans for a series of sector (indigenous, local government) discussion papers highlighting opportunities for the CCD sector. My critique comes from a place of frustration – if not NACA then who at the national level will do the asking, the advocacy, imagining the future and the collective work to get there? Thinking about my own experience through Arts Access Australia: the National Arts and Disability Strategy didn't just happen – we asked for it. It's also fascinating to observe the parallel discussion in the small to medium theatre sector at the moment where the Australia Council is committed to funding a national theatre advocacy network building on the success of the Theatre Network Victoria (TNV). Add Council's recent funding of Writing Australia as the peak body for that sector to the well established organisations like The National Association for the Visual



Arts (NAVA) and The Australian Dance Council (Ausdance) and the value of effective peak bodies to Council and their respective sectors is apparent. I may not be the only one then who still sees a clear role for a leading national CCD advocacy organisation to exist outside of the Australia Council. Some drier policy and advocacy work is necessary to join the dots and provide a longer sense of continuity and collaboration between the shorter term ad hoc issues that capture the imagination. For example the Australia Council Community Partnerships Sector Plan for 2010-2012 (2010a) could use both a 'sector' response in addition to the Cultural Ministers Council Vital Signs discussion paper, and the recent Throsby employment research, not to mention the national cultural policy.

Perhaps there is still a view in some parts of the sector that the Australia Council will do all the national leadership work for CCD. Despite its own lack of staff resources and difficult position as a Commonwealth Authority, outside the Departmental structures and direct relationships within Government, Community Partnerships do have a significant leadership role to play in identifying sector priority areas and promoting achievements. Reading the Community Partnerships 2010-2012 sector plan, advocacy and promotional campaigns to other government departments are mentioned at several points, and it may be that Community Partnerships is also seeing a gap in the sector that they are filling. Though for Community Partnerships to be taking up an advocacy role for a sector that is often critical of government policy sits uncomfortably within the Australia Council. Reading the detail of the sector plan Community Partnerships looks to recognise the constraints on them and are doing their best to do what they can.

The Community Partnerships Sector Plan references a growing body of knowledge about the CCD sector, including a 24% participation figure in community arts activities from the Council's *More than Burns on Seats* research (2010c). As a broad indicator the 24% figure is interesting though to be truly useful, and picking up on Deborah Mills points about support and participation in subsidised arts, I'd love to see it cross referenced with levels of educational attainment as, for example, the majority of people with disability do not complete high school. Additional research cited in the Sector Plan also describes the current state of the CCD sector, like the latest of the Throsby series of arts employment reports. Reading Throsby I had the uncomfortable thought that perhaps things have never been better and those in the CCD sector lack the perspective to know when they are well off. Looking at the sector, Throsby's 2010 report found that CCD workers:

- have the second highest incomes of all arts workers which is attributed to high levels of local government employment
- are less likely to be young which is defined as under 34
- are the most successful of all artsworkers in securing funding
- are above average in applying their artistic skills outside of the arts and earning income from this work
- are the most successful of any arts workers at applying their skills in the charity, community, non-profit, health and welfare sectors
- are the most optimistic of all arts workers about the creative possibilities of new technologies though the least likely to expect new technologies to produce income
- are the most positive of all arts workers about the positive effect of living outside a capital city on their creative practice.





There are several observations to make about the Throsby findings that throw new light on the dot-point list of 'good news' to highlight gaps and opportunities for further consideration. Most notable is the comparatively high income of CCD arts workers confirming a long-term trend since the research series began in the late 1980s, though a stark reversal from the 2003 research which found CCD arts workers had the lowest incomes of all artists. (Throsby 2010: 51). The findings are now seen as reflecting a 'time of transition for the community arts movement' (Throsby 2010: 51). The time of transition argument seems unsatisfactory and left me wondering if the 2003 survey had, by missing the full time local government and not-for-profit CCD arts workers, revealed something more concerning about the plight of freelance CCD arts workers. It will be interesting to see if the upcoming Community Partnerships review picks up on this point and has anything more to say about the incomes and careers of individuals. As the Community Partnerships Sector Plan puts it 'practitioners demonstrate resilience in pursuing their practice and projects however there are issues of longer term career sustainability' (Australia Council 2010).

It may be that the sustainability or resilience of the CCD sector is now over-reliant on the vocational drive of artists and their willingness to continue working for low wages. Anecdotally a career in CCD as a freelance arts worker usually means you have some inherited wealth, a partner with a 'proper' i.e. well paid job or you are young enough not to care so much about income. CCD may have much in common with the theatre sector where the Australia Council Theatre Board 2008 review *Love Your Work* found 'Experienced directors and designers leave the theatre sector at around the age of 35-45, at the time when one interviewee noted that "mortgages and families" begin to take precedence'. A major reason for departure is wage and career structure (2008: 14). A reality check in this discussion is that the high comparative average wage for CCD arts workers is still significantly lower than the average Australian wage. It makes sense then that full-time CCD work in local government is highly prized and the positions tightly held.

The importance of local government takes a central place in almost all pieces of CCD related research. The question for the Australia Council is whether to form a strategic relationship

with local government (Dunn 2006: 17) or concentrate on funding significant projects like the Seeding Creativity project run by the Community Arts Network of WA which is designed to be a model for adoption elsewhere. Based on past performance, Council's partnership with the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) did not achieve the desired impact, though by the time this had stalled the Victorian based Cultural Development Network (CDN) moved to fill the gap in a strategic and practical way. The CDN has an enviable and internationally recognised track record of balancing its advocacy work with networking, publications, conferences and demonstration projects. Taking an ecology perspective the CDN and Community Arts Networks may be in a position to claim some credit for sustaining the levels of CCD employment in local government.

The high rates of success with grant applications identified by Throsby indicate that CCD arts workers are adept at finding arts support (though I wondered if this success rate varied for individuals). In addition the relatively recent role of Arts Support Australia, an initiative of the Australia Council to grow philanthropic income for the cultural sector, has been especially successful in CCD. As CCD arts workers are also skilled in applying their talents in other social service areas their endeavours may be assisted by a money map naming some of the non-arts streams that others have been successful in targeting. Through Arts Access Australia, and citing examples from Queensland and South Australia from the early 2000s, I suggested to then Arts Minister Peter Garrett that the federal government identify and report on non-arts support for creative activity. It may be an idea worth raising again with the current Minister as part of the national cultural policy discussion.

The positive association of CCD with regional Australia identified in the Throsby research also highlights importance of Regional Arts Australia (RAA) in the sector. Projects funded through the Regional Arts Fund and recent publications like *Seeded: great arts and health stories grown in regional Australia* demonstrate the extent to which they operate in CCD. The strong presence of RAA in CCD also makes the biannual Regional Arts conference the closest thing to a national CCD gathering.



From the Throsby research and my own recent experiences through Arts Access Australia, what I think is occurring in the CCD sector is a process of change illustrated by the rise of new organisations, arts practices and funding body roles with a resulting gap in a common national perspective, connections and identifiable sense of a sector. The very growth of strong regional, health, disability and local government focused networks has also resulted in a perception of fragmentation.

This sense of fragmentation is highlighted for me by the proliferation of websites (Arts Access Australia, Disseminate, Arts and Health Foundation, Regional Arts Australia, Arts on the Map, Pollinate) reflecting different national agendas in a way that still leaves gaps following the Australia Council decision not to continue funding the national CCD sector website [ccd.net](http://ccd.net) in 2006. Council has subsequently invested time and resources in the development of bespoke Placestories software and the associated Pollinate site (<http://ps3beta.com/community/pollinate>) to connect CCD arts workers. It's a personal view though I'm at a loss as to why I'd use Placestories/Pollinate when Facebook can offer more functionality and information about my colleagues' work. Most of the other sites are interesting and there will always be some degree of commonality in content and intent though if you were a CCD artsworker in Brisbane or Sydney where would you look for an introduction to CCD and career support? You would probably end up on the Community Development Network or Community Arts Network of South Australia site.

A related national gap is how virtual communities are supported by or lead to flesh and blood connections between CCD arts workers, especially isolated individuals who do not have the resources to get to conferences. It is these connections between individuals as colleagues, mentors and friends that so often provide a sense of common purpose and bolster the ability to adapt to change that are the hallmarks of resilience. As an example of a national body building connections and hence resilience, the Young People and the Arts Australia (YPAA) 'blueprint groups' had some success in pulling together communities of practice in specific areas by email and teleconference with the discussion recorded and subsequently made available online. While an e-list and group teleconference may sound a little 'year 2000' it works and skype

is too clumsy to use for group conversations. The important point is that in YPAA there is an organisational platform to facilitate and organise these sector connections.

For the CCD sector to be resilient, remain productive and adapt 'with integrity in response to changing circumstances' (Robinson 2010) some sort of enabling national agency, peak or advocacy body, is needed that supports the careers of individual artists and organisations, provides advice on funding, philanthropy and sponsorship, provides professional development and short course industry focused training, provides and examines case studies of best practice, brokers opportunities in new sectors, creates networks of arts mentors and peers, provides mediation and trouble shooting advice, influences and develops policy and guidelines which all sounds by any other name suspiciously like a Community Arts Network.

If there is some sense of the need for a national network or peak body from CCD artsworkers then the changing role and recent experiences of the Australia Council may mean they are receptive to the idea. Robinson suggests that the most effective role for a national arts funding body is to move away from directly purchasing activity and instead build organisations through strategic investment. There is an open question whether this is a decision forced by static government funding and needs to be an either/or choice though the trend towards building organisations and individual arts workers is evident in Community Partnerships' approach to its Key Producers and

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a renewed focus on individual professional development along with broader Council initiatives like Artstart, JUMP, Company Development Funds and Arts Support Australia.

Given the collapse of QCAN and CCDNSW, the Australia Council has an awareness of the problems that can come with tripartite funding agreements when state partners pull out. Looking forward I think Community Partnerships is unlikely to go it alone in supporting state networks and may be more likely to focus on national priorities. Despite a sense in the CCD sector that Community Partnerships may not value organisations that aren't driven by 'producing' work this concern is not evident in the recent support for the Arts and Health Foundation and the trend across Council to support national networks and peak organisations. There still appears to be a role for organisations that build a sector including the individuals and organisations that Council can't reach through direct funding, i.e. purchasing activity, and the Community Partnerships sector plan retains a commitment to the role of service organisations to assist communities and practitioners in developing capacity and project ideas. The CCD sector could do worse than look at the emergence of new national organisations in the literature and theatre sectors in addition to the structure, profile and success of organisations like Ausdance and NAVA to see what may be possible for CCD in the future.

So overall while noting concern about the careers of freelance CCD arts workers there is some cause for optimism. Within the CCD sector old causes, the 'core purpose', remain relevant and new opportunities abound while funding bodies continue to struggle with how best to use their limited resources to support a diverse and growing sector. The very diversity of the sector and the emergence of separate health, regional, disability, local government advocacy and peak bodies all playing a strong role in CCD is more a strength than a weakness. The challenge for the future of the sector is to develop a common agenda, with historical roots, that places arts workers at its centre while also strengthening emerging areas of work.

In each of the artform areas it funds, and in some identified cross-council policy areas like regional arts, youth and disability, there is clear recognition from the Australia Council of the need for effective national networks and peak bodies as part of the arts ecology. Following the upheaval caused by the 'arts catalyst' restructure of 2004 the CCD sector is admittedly taking its time though with Community Partnerships undergoing a review and the decision not to fund NACA in 2011 there is a clean slate on which to write a resilient future over the coming three to five years.

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# Art and resilience - beyond the 'pantyhose effect'

## christine putland

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The idea that there are certain qualities and capacities which improve the chances of individuals, communities and organisations 'bouncing back' after major upheaval is undeniably compelling. With the recent summer of flood, fire and tempest fresh in our minds it is not surprising that Australians are focusing harder than ever on understanding what enables people to withstand the life-changing impact of such events. Resilience, the term used to encapsulate this ability to retain or regain competence and sense of purpose, threatens to rival terms like 'social capital' and 'sustainability' in its currency. Faced with turbulent local and global economies and uncertain public policies, attention in the arts has turned towards the notion of resilience and the question of what makes some fields and organisations survive and even thrive, while others founder (Robinson 2010).

What can I contribute to this discussion of resilience and the arts? In my evaluation practice much time is spent analysing the effects of community-based arts initiatives designed to improve the wellbeing of individuals, groups and communities. Despite not generally involving large scale or dramatic global events, the concept of resilience arises frequently as shorthand for certain kinds of positive behaviours. At first glance its meaning appears straightforward, borrowing from physics the elastic ability to rebound after a shock or impact. Taken up by economists, environmentalists, psychologists, social scientists, systems theorists (and pantyhose advertisers – remember 'Resilience' by Kayser?) alike, it is variously applied to individuals, organisations, communities, and whole societies. While it may be relatively simple to demonstrate resilience in physics, like social capital it is hard to pin down when applied to human behaviour. In short, resilience in human beings is a dynamic, complex, contextual and conditional concept usually accompanied by a cautionary message.

Whether the focus is on individuals or collectives, resilience is not a static trait but a *dynamic* process, the result of people interacting with each other and with their environment. The term describes a *complex* interplay of factors such as personal and social skills, organisational and societal structures and systems, historical and cultural backgrounds. Analysis of resilience in a given context relies on *value* – and culturally-based judgements about both the significance of the impact or adverse event that poses a threat and the response to the threat or 'positive adaptation' (Masten 1994). The factors that lead to resilience in one context may have different effects in another while responses to apparently similar situations will vary (McAslan 2010). Sometimes resilience in one respect – for instance, in terms of educational or economic outcomes – involves sacrifice and cost in another

respect – for example, in terms of mental health and wellbeing (Gordon Rouse et al 1999). Furthermore, analysis at different levels risks falling prey to a kind of ‘ecological fallacy’: aggregate signs of resilience at the group or community level do not necessarily translate to resilience for specific individuals within the group, and vice versa. For example, a high level of shared values and social cohesion measured across a community does not mean that each individual within that community will display these characteristics. (Indeed, for some individuals, dissent from the shared norms may be considered a more adaptive response to circumstances.) In other words, the clearest thing that can be said about a concept like resilience is: it all depends!

Leaving aside the long list of reasons to be cautious about using the term, I return to the question of my contribution to this discussion. While categorising and measuring human behaviour is convenient in evaluation, much human behaviour is not amenable to linear, measurable, categorical and repeatable testing. My analysis of arts and cultural initiatives is therefore based largely on what I observe and what I am told about the experience by the people involved – including participants, artists, staff in sponsoring organisations and the wider community. I collect stories about people’s encounters with art and artists. Some of these stories provide insights into the ways in which the experiences may help build qualities and capacities associated with resilience in other aspects of their lives. I would argue that insights about the relationship between resilience and art-making at this level are informative even if we are ultimately interested in arts organisations or the arts sector as a whole. After all, how artists relate and organise themselves and their work, the structures and processes they develop, are presumably grounded in the practices and qualities of art and art-making.

My approach here is to share some of the stories I have collected about the experience of art and art-making from a range of different perspectives. These are small, fine grain stories about ordinary

lives, yet for the people involved, the threat, event or impact was significant and warranted considerable adjustment and adaptation.

## Story One – Change and acceptance

- I met Elsie towards the end of her life, soon after the death of her husband, when a friend had introduced her to a support group for similarly bereaved partners. She went along thinking that it would be good for her to get out of the house, but before long she realised that it had become much more than a way to fill the hours.
- Around the time she arrived the group had begun working with a community artist, designing and crafting mosaics as part of a larger public art initiative. Having never before seen herself as particularly creative, Elsie described how surprisingly good it felt to work alongside others, sharing ideas for designs, the more experienced artists helping out the ‘new’ ones. Sometimes over lunch they would talk about personal issues, but mostly they were too focused on the art work.
- Part way through our conversation Elsie explained that she was suffering from a terminal illness which sapped her energy and caused her a great deal of pain. Some days it was hard just getting out of bed, but someone would always call by to pick her up and make sure she was able to get to the group. Elsie had found that the intense concentration involved in the work – selecting just the right colour shade, cutting just the right shape without breaking the tile – actually relaxed her body, made her feel less stressed. The work had become all-absorbing: ‘You get so involved that the time goes quickly and before you know it the day is gone and you feel a lot better’. She mentioned it ‘kept her going’ and that without this group her life would be ‘miserable’.
- Elsie told me that making something beautiful and lasting was the most important thing for her at this time. Putting energy into imagining and creating a gift to future generations gave meaning to the short time she had left. It was the knowledge that although she wouldn’t be around for long, her contribution would endure, and then people who came upon it might pause and wonder about the person who made it. She laughed: ‘It gives you some incentive to go on ... I can’t die yet as I’ve got to finish my part in the mosaic!’

## Story Two – Unspeakable Truths

Jackie was a mother whose daughter had developed a chronic illness. She told me that she had always assumed she understood everything about her daughter, from birth onwards – her likes and dislikes in food, toys, clothes and more recently about the physical and psychological symptoms as her chronic condition took hold. Jackie had always felt in control as a parent. But as her daughter grew increasingly angry and frustrated, she admitted to feeling hurt and confused, not knowing how to respond. Then her daughter was offered the chance to join a song writing project, and she began to compose lyrics and music about her life. Through the songs Jackie came to learn about her daughter’s hopes and fears, the things she had not been able to say out loud. Jackie realised she had been so focused on the illness, its symptoms and treatment, she had lost sight of her daughter ‘the person’. It was as though a veil between them had been lifted. And watching her perform her song, she noticed a small smile escape her daughter’s lips, sensing she had discovered a way to tell ‘unspeakable truths’.

## Story Three –The Sound of Clapping

A group of parents who care for young adults with disabilities explained to me why they placed such emphasis on public performances and exhibitions. They described it as ‘the ego factor’. At school the focus of attention, either explicitly or implicitly, had been on limitations - what these young people were unable to achieve, the skills like reading and writing it was assumed they would never manage to acquire. In social situations their behaviours often attracted negative attention and caused discomfort in others. But being involved in music and visual art programs had turned that around. The key, they said, was twofold. Initially, the programs started from where the young people were at, focusing on what they were able to do, not what they could not do. The skilled community artists tapped into their creative streaks, bringing out ideas and abilities, and supporting them to take risks creatively. And the results showed as their emerging artistic ‘ego’ drove them to succeed: ‘Imagine their delight when people start clapping in appreciation for them – it becomes addictive!’ Meanwhile, the parents observed that the group process encouraged them to be cooperative and patient, to consider the needs of others, and a growing maturity was evident in their music and art works. Audiences responded in genuine awe to the sense of group commitment as well as the strength of the art.

*‘For a lot of our people, it’s the first time in their lives that they have been told what you’re doing is really great! rather than it’s good for someone with a disability.’*

The value of stories is in the access they give to firsthand accounts of people’s experiences, evoking ideas, thoughts, and possibilities in others. In a way these four are also episodes in a story of my own – about learning to listen through the laughter and the tears to what is important to people. I have learnt a lot about this from the artists I talk with, one of whom told me of the time she was working in a hospital painting a mural. People would stop to chat and make suggestions about what she should include in the picture, bringing up things that they liked or remembered: ‘So we would just have these conversations about nothing and everything, and laugh a lot.’ She called these the ‘quiet outcomes’. Although we may look for different indicators of resilience in the grander context of global disasters or organisational threats, at their heart still lies the human factor.

## Story Four – A place where ‘good stuff happens’

Susie lived in a neighbourhood undergoing vast urban renewal. Previously an area of low income housing and concentrated social disadvantage, it was being transformed by the construction of new dwellings, and an influx of new residents. As sole parent of a young toddler, she had been feeling unsafe and desperately isolated, unable to get out and meet people. One day she saw a notice at the local shops inviting people to come along and join a project aimed at creating art work for the front of the new community centre. They offered a crèche for her child, so she bravely went along.

Susie quickly met others like her who had found it hard to adjust to the rapid changes in the area, including people from very different backgrounds. In her words: ‘It’s really brought people together that I normally wouldn’t have associated with. Like we’ve had the Vietnamese Women’s Group join us for some projects and even though there were some language and cultural differences, we found that the art work sort of bridged that. Normally we wouldn’t associate or talk because those boundaries would get in the way, whereas art work sort of goes across those cultural and language barriers and it really gives people a focus to come together’.

I asked her if she could tell me what it was about making art in particular:

‘It helps you to understand other people, learn from each other. You are not so worried about differences, they are just like you when it’s about art and you don’t see them as any particular race or anything else, you just all contribute’. Susie stressed that the art programs had a huge impact on community morale: ‘I think it really brings people together and creates a healthy, happy community. Especially in areas like this that are really in upheaval mode and everyone’s a little bit on edge. It just gives people a way to come together in a non-threatening sort of way’. She thought it had changed public perceptions about the area: ‘Before I came here people told me that it was a place with problems, where people fight and don’t get on. Maybe so once, but now I have seen for myself that it is a place where good stuff can happen too’.

These stories are in no way intended to be conclusive about the nature of resilience and its relevance to the arts, and I invite readers to take their own meaning from them, but I will offer some initial thoughts. They suggest just some of the many ways in which experiences in the arts can be linked to resilience at the individual and community level. For example, improving self-confidence and positive self-image through opportunities for creative expression and problem-solving within a supportive social environment; developing communication skills, relationships and social networks; learning to manage strong feelings and impulses; these are all associated with developing resilience in vulnerable groups (APA 2010; Robinson 2010). They are also highlighted in social inclusion strategies for people who are marginalised, in which the arts play a major role.



Similarly, the stories resonate with the literature about developing stronger communities, citing community participation, developing shared goals, helping others and linking with people from different backgrounds as resources for resilience (APA 2010; McAslan 2010). Once again, the same features are given as reasons why community arts initiatives are regarded as effective vehicles for the practical application of social capital theory (Putland et al, 2009). The strong connection between these three frameworks (social inclusion/social capital/resilience) in practice is obvious here. It raises the question of the extent to which resilience represents a new way of thinking about the instrumental benefits of the arts or whether it is a re-naming, indicative of the continuing struggle to find a path to more solid public policy ground.

In terms of understanding how resilience might be strengthened, for me the most interesting insights are in the stories' detail – how people describe art-

making itself: the focused, concentrated labour that is oddly relaxing; the sensation of mastery that comes from seeing or hearing work take shape; a transformative sense of competence and productivity; being a part of a project larger than oneself; finding a kind of sanctuary in tactile and personal contact; voicing hitherto unspoken thoughts; being challenged to take risks leading to new and surprising abilities; and, not least, the intense pleasure they derive. These are stories of people's attempts to create meaning in the context of change. And perhaps in the end this is what resilience is also about: being supported to make sense and meaning from situations that arise. If so, then community art may be an ideal vessel for riding the waves of change, a little leaky at times, but ultimately unsinkable.

### Acknowledgement

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# Certainty, uncertainty and the new:

How (community) arts participation builds resilience in children and young people

## sally chance

*Sally Chance trained as a community dance practitioner at the Laban Centre for Movement and Dance, London, working for UK dance company Ludus. She travelled with the company to South Australia as guest artist of Come Out '89. Sally was the Artistic Director of Come Out 2003, 2005 and 2007. Sally focused for many years on disability cultural activity and she was the founding Artistic Director of Adelaide-based Restless Dance Theatre, developing and leading the company's philosophy and practice for ten years. From 1999-2002 Sally was a member then the Chair of the Australia Council's Dance Board. Sally's dance practice now focuses on very early childhood. In 2007 she began a two-year Dance Board fellowship program of dance workshops, research and observation, exploring the cultural lives of babies and young children. Recently she presented This [Baby] Life, a new performance work for audiences aged 4-18 months at the 2011 Come Out Festival in Adelaide.*

'... to be with children is to work with one third certainty and two-thirds uncertainty and the new.' Loris Malaguzzi

Collecting my thoughts, I turned to my trusty Concise Oxford dictionary and found the following fantastic image defining the word 'resile': (of elastic bodies) recoil, rebound, resume shape and size after stretching or compression; have or show buoyancy or recuperative power.

I enjoyed this highly kinetic set of definitions and couldn't help thinking of the many hours in my career spent inviting various groups to make use of a large circle of elastic as inspiration for movement and a symbol of belonging to a group.

Next year will be my twenty-fifth year in community cultural development, with most of my time having been spent working in dance, mainly with and for children and young people.

I've experienced heydays and down times, successes and heroic failures; I've seen dramatic funding swings and interesting policy initiatives and witnessed the rise and fall of organisations and companies. I've worked as both employee and freelancer, as a maker, project leader and curator. I guess that makes me quite resilient; certainly a number of the organisations I've worked for have demonstrated their resilience over this time, although I can remember feeling nervous in the early years of Restless Dance Theatre when a parent mentioned that the company was the most consistent thing in the life of their family member. For me, the company's activities felt pretty random at the time, depending on successive small project grants and the generosity of partners with premises and other things to lend. To be honest, the sheer maintenance of the company's existence took everyone's best efforts, perhaps at the expense of any kind of systematic approach to the dancers' well being. It's interesting to look back and wonder whether a tiny organisation trying to be resilient in the face of profound uncertainty of resources and people can possibly be in a position to build the resilience of the individuals taking part. So it occurs to me that a pre-requisite for building resilience in children and young people through community-based arts participation is a resilient organisation capable of supporting the building.

I guess that  
makes me  
quite  
resilient...



How does the concept differ when applied to an individual or to an organisation?

In an individual, is it the same as an absence of depression or mental illness?

Or does resilience have a more dynamic set of characteristics rather than being something it's not. Is it like happiness or creativity? ...Desirable though ultimately elusive qualities?

Or is it a concrete skill set that can be learned and fine-tuned over a lifetime of experiences and self-reflection?

When applied to an organisation is it the same as sustainability?

Resilience is a characteristic that perhaps we all share in the arts, despite – or probably because of – the perennial competition for resources and recognition; despite – and certainly because of – the uncertainties we need to navigate as we devise, resource and deliver our projects.

However, I don't think contemporary ideas about resilience are as glib as 'whatever doesn't kill you makes you stronger,' much as 'faking it until you

make it' is unlikely to explore the layers of experience behind depression and mental illness. As Gina Stepp says in her 2008 paper, *Building resilience in a turbulent world*: 'One doesn't become the type of person who can weather adversity simply by adopting a fiercely independent resolve to single-handedly pull oneself up by a pair of bootstraps.'

As Mark Robinson describes in the paper *Making adaptive resilience real*, (which also features in this Occasional Artwork); 'A growing body of work has looked at the characteristics within complex systems, drawing out the interdependencies in a way which moves thinking on from what might be seen as simple self-reliance in the face of difficulty' (2010: 13).

With this in mind, I'm curious about the layered ways in which ideas about resilience can inform how we make the arts available to children and young people. At risk of sounding like the house that Jack built, if the organisations working with children and young people are to continue to support the development of resilience in their participants, then the organisations

themselves need to have done some thinking about their own organisational resilience and capacity to continue to do what they do. In turn, these organisations occupy a place within a sector, which has a holding function too.

This seems to me to link conceptually with my current work in infant mental health with a number of mother-infant groups. The work draws on the notion of the group providing a psychological holding place, which supports the mothers to be better equipped to provide an emotional holding place for their babies. Not long ago, there was a broad view that babies and children were so resilient that the quality of their earliest experiences was unimportant. Theatre colleague, Suzanne Osten, delivering her Babydrama lecture at the 2008 ASSITEJ Congress in Adelaide, referred to the shocking fact that until the 1960s, babies were operated on without an anaesthetic, such was the low status of babies and society's general lack of awareness of their agency and abilities. The psychologically critical need for babies to know that their carers acknowledge and respond to their agency is a relatively recent

...a pre-requisite for building resilience in children and young people through community-based arts participation is a resilient organisation capable of supporting the building.

# One characteristic of resilience is the capacity of the individual or organisation to navigate uncertainty and change.

understanding, as is the idea of the lifelong impact of the prevailing 'feeling tone' (as psychologist Daniel N. Stern would put it) in the very early years, even before a child's explicit memory kicks in.

It may be a truism to say that it takes a village to raise a baby but I find it helpful to consider that community cultural development is a kind of contemporary necessity, which deliberately constructs the readily available community of the village of old.

Much of my current work does exactly this, using dance and movement to encourage mothers to 'rehearse' their responses to the non-verbal offers of their babies in a safe environment, a holding place, which supports the development of the resilience of both mother and baby.

On this, Gina Stepp quotes neurologist Louis Cozolino:

For most of the past, people lived in groups of 50 to 70 and there were multiple generations and multiple people we were interconnected with ... but in societies like our own, the emphasis is on individualism. I suspect that the increase of mental illness that we're seeing is related to that factor. It's hard to prove it because we can't go back in time, and we can only guess that there really is more depression today than there used to be. But we can make a compelling case for it. (2008)

One characteristic of resilience is the capacity of the individual or organisation to navigate uncertainty and change. Mark Robinson says that: 'a blend of change and continuity is essential for resilience' (2010: 27).

Some time last year I was invited to run a tutor training afternoon at Urban Myth Theatre of Youth in Adelaide. I invited each artist to nominate an aspect of their work in the arts with young people that they most loved. I was struck by one response which referred to the sheer thrilling terror of not being quite sure from one week to the next how each workshop would go, despite being as planned as possible. This capacity not only to rise above uncertainty and respond to the inevitability of change, but to relish the possibilities this brings in the course of one short exchange with young people or over the life of a project or even as part of the trajectory of a company, seems to me to be the essence of resilience. We engage in 'planning and preparation for disruption' as Mark Robinson puts it (2010: 18-20).

I enjoyed Mark's paper and was inspired by the systems thinking it describes, which promotes the idea of an arts ecology – the mutual importance and interdependence of every layer of arts activity. Not that the notion of an arts ecology is anything new, having been in currency in Australia for many years. However, I particularly like the way in which this thinking links the individual, whether artist or participant, with the organisational, since it is within community that we function.

As Stepp says, 'Building resilience is nearly impossible outside of the protective influence of positive interpersonal relationships' (2008).

As a youth theatre participant recently put to me very memorably: *Theatre makes you close very quickly, you're like soldiers, it's the same thing in theatre only less people are dying ...*



So how does resilience work and how can we transpose this into a reclaiming of the necessity for creativity in the lives of our participants?

The Headroom project within The Centre for Health Promotion of Children, at the Adelaide-based Children, Youth and Women's Health Service (CYWHS) describes resilience as being about 'the ability to deal with and succeed in difficult situations and events' and 'a mix of key skills and characteristics of a person and the social supports and environment in which they live' ([www.headroom.net.au](http://www.headroom.net.au), accessed 11 July 2011).

...resilience

thinking skills

can be taught.

## Time and a safe space to explore these possibilities is the critical resource that community-based arts participation can offer.

The critical idea is that resilience thinking skills can be taught and supported, the development of these skills depending essentially on our closest family and community-based relationships. Stepp says that 'researchers now know that new experiences and supportive relationships can literally change brain structure. This has led psychologists to understand that optimism and resilience can be built, and that adults as well as children can, in effect, be inoculated against depression – at least to some extent' (2008).

This notion of an early intervention, which somehow protects children and young people against the effects of not developing resilience skills, is echoed in some of Edward de Bono's concepts, available at his web site ([www.edwdebono.com](http://www.edwdebono.com)).

PK Scott, contributing to this site, writes: [A] teacher facing a class of 30 children cannot know which of his pupils may go on to face an emotional upheaval ...

but on the evidence of statistics ... he (sic) is entitled to assume that they are all potentially at risk. Unlike doctors, however, teachers cannot administer an "educational vaccine" to protect children from the threat of contracting "suicide." (Accessed 2010)

Or can they?

In Worcestershire the Education Authority has taken a positive lead in introducing the teaching of CoRT Thinking Skills (a thinking system using the Six Thinking Hats and a suite of attitudes to thinking, including creativity or lateral thinking) to children in schools. Through these lessons children quickly develop self-esteem and discover that through thinking they can change their own perceptions and therefore exercise control over their emotions ... Apparently the suicide rate among young people in Worcestershire is significantly lower than elsewhere in the UK. A coincidence? There is a mounting body of evidence (that has been growing for over 30 years) that it is not.

While it is not the role of youth arts organisations to teach such thinking systems specifically in their work with children and young people, it's interesting to consider how participation in the arts has the same effect.

Headroom defines some of the characteristics of resilient children and young people as follows:

- Being socially competent: this means being flexible, caring and being able to communicate well
- Having effective problem solving skills: this means being able to work out what the problem is, think of different ways to solve the problem and being able to plan ahead
- Being autonomous: this means having high self esteem, being self disciplined and independent
- Having a sense of purpose and future: this means having goals in life, being motivated, wanting to be educated, being persistent and hopeful. ([www.headroom.net.au](http://www.headroom.net.au), accessed 11 July 2011)





I believe that exactly the same can be said of children and young people who take part in community-based arts activities.

I would also suggest a further two critical factors:

- Youth arts activity allows children and young people to try out a number of ways of being in the world, to put on and take off a range of hats as it were, to pretend and to be free
- Community-based participation in the arts is a kind of protracted rite of passage. Young people taking part in Restless Dance talked about entering the company at a certain life stage and in a certain frame of mind and then emerging again some time, maybe years, later with expanded perspectives and an increased sense of self.

Time and a safe space to explore these possibilities is the critical resource that community-based arts participation can offer.

Coming full circle, I feel that several of the characteristics Mark Robinson identifies as contributing to organisational adaptive resilience are relevant to the frameworks of participatory youth arts activity with and for children and young people with which we're familiar. In other words, community-based organisations providing arts activities for children and young people need to model those very creative approaches which remain open to possibility.

As Mark puts it, 'innovation and experimentation [are] embedded in reflective practice' (2010: 27).

This latter practice is absolutely critical in the realms not of probability and certainty, but of possibility and potential.

Early childhood specialists whose concern is to create secure attachment relationships with children draw on the concept of State of Mind, as defined by Hoffman (2010) in his work on early childhood attachment, alongside colleagues Cooper, Powell and Marvin. For Hoffman, State of Mind is 'the conscious and unconscious beliefs, attitudes and values regarding past and current attachment experiences.' (www.circleofsecurity.org 2010). I think that a useful reflective process for people working in the arts with and for children would be to develop a personal awareness of these deep attitudes, how we have each arrived at our own belief systems about children and young people – their behaviour; their social status, the myths surrounding childhood – and how this affects how we respond to them.

Perhaps this is the sort of territory that Loris Malaguzzi, the visionary behind the Reggio Emilia pre-school education system, was exploring with his ideas about certainty, uncertainty and the new within collaborations between adults and children. He says:

The one third that is certain makes us understand and try to understand ... We can be sure that the children

are ready to help us. They can help by offering us ideas, suggestions, problems, questions, clues, and paths to follow; and the more they trust us and see us as a resource, the more they give us help. All these offerings, merged with what we ourselves bring to the situation, make a handsome capital of resources. (1997: 89)

I like the idea that this 'handsome capital of resources' is a resilient one, because it is replete not with probability but with possibility and then with what could be possible, as opposed to what is possible.

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# Alternative Response to Mark Robinson's making adaptive

## ianto ware

*Dr Ianto Ware is the project manager of Renew Adelaide and the co-founder and former director of Format. He completed a PhD in Cultural Studies in 2007 and has worked in research related to social innovation, social inclusion, media and urban studies.*

The medium age of those involved in running Format is in the mid-twenties. The medium age of those using is slightly lower.

Over the last couple of years I've found myself inexplicably drawn into a number of conversations about Arts organisations, funding structures, programming and management. It's been a very interesting process, but somewhat ironic given I've never technically run an Arts organisation, I've never received an Arts grant for anything more than small projects, I'm not an Artist, and the programming and management of the organisations I've run only partially relate to the kind of Arts you spell with a capital 'A'.

The reason I get drawn into those conversations is because, from 2008 to 2011, I was involved in co-founding and running an unfunded, non-profit organisation called Format. That organisation operated on a non-profit basis intersecting arts, design, media, social innovation and the knowledge industries, with a particular focus on emerging practitioners working between those fields. To that end, Format hosts an ongoing hub space, a start-up theatre company, a small online publisher, the local chapter of Hackerspace, a fringe to the Adelaide Festival of Ideas, annual festivals and a steady stream of pilot projects by nineteen year olds with harebrained ideas. As of 2011, Format continues to grow under the directorship of Stan Mahoney with a fairly stable advisory committee identifying projects to support, artists to work with and further activities to pursue. The medium age of those involved in running Format is in the mid-twenties. The medium age of those using is slightly lower.

Whilst we've routinely been successful for smaller project grants and we're frequently called upon for advice on strategies related to youth by Arts organisations and local councils, our cross disciplinary nature and focus on emerging practitioners tends to place us just outside the parameters of Capital A Arts infrastructure and funding. We're not particularly unique in this respect. The last few years have seen the rise of a number of similar ventures operating as micro production houses, simultaneously curating, running events, housing projects and working with those involved in the Arts, media, design, knowledge and cultural industries. In Adelaide at least, the bulk of those ventures are run by younger people and geared heavily towards younger audiences and practitioners. Like most of those micros, Format deals with Capital A Arts some of the time, but some of the time what we deal with is distinctly not Capital A Arts. Nearly all of the time, however, the divide isn't clear.

When we began, our goal wasn't, and still isn't, inherently about longevity.

Initially, we were simply interested in the notion of 'participatory culture' and the infrastructure required to support it. Notably, we didn't see that as mutually exclusive of gatekeeper systems or funded Capital A Arts institutions; it was simply a different, albeit frequently interwoven, space. We also felt that many of the things previously provided by the university system and a more liberal era of Arts funding had disappeared; affordable rehearsal, studio and gallery space and environments in which to network with younger, emerging and cross disciplinary 'creatives' had more or less collapsed or downscaled substantially during the early 2000s. The loss of those environments meant the link between 'early career' or 'emerging' practitioners and established Cultural and Arts institutions was substantially fractured. There was, effectively, no clear career path or cultural link between our ex-

perience of cultural activity and major, funded flagship organisations, other than our occasional presence in their audience – and that presence has grown increasingly occasional.

Secondly, we believed the world had changed in the face of an information revolution, globalisation and the impact of neo-liberal governments. For us to simultaneously engage in a dialogue about where 'Culture' was going, and develop the professional skills to work in that sector, we needed new pathways. Many of those pathways were not coming from major Arts funding bodies, major institutions, universities or publicly funded organisations in the way they once had.

Overall, the principle aim in starting Format was to produce a space of cultural experimentation; not just in terms of the art we hosted, but in terms of organisational practice, audience development, support for creative practitioners, professional development and the active interchange between different disciplines and practices. The entire organisation is essentially an experiment.

Hence, when I was kindly asked to write this article and introduced to Mark Robinson's *Making adaptive resilience real*, my immediate reaction was to compare his work back to the experience of setting up an organisation that seems to consistently fall outside the criteria of Arts organisations as he defines them. Oddly, what I found was a great many points of commonality. At its heart, his work is interested in the very experiment Format has tried to run; how to develop and maintain cultural infrastructure in an age of decreased



public funding, shifting audiences and changing creative practice.

To that end, the first point that strikes me in Robinson's planning for organisational resilience is the recognition that the culture we live in has changed, and changed faster than Capital A Arts infrastructure has been able to adapt. As Robinson points out, innovation is a consistent characteristic of resilient organisations. To remain resilient I would, therefore, argue that there needs to be a much wider acceptance that the world has changed and that the tools required to deal with Culture circa 2011 are different than Culture circa 1996 or 1978 or even 2001.

Further to that, I would argue that micro organisations like Format are potentially a key source in building those tools. Audience development, the hunt for new work and new ideas, new funding streams, and simply running the organisation itself makes Format an exercise in R & D. The lack of funding is almost a blessing. It allows us to work on the borders of multiple creative ecologies, connecting new practice and new audiences and experimenting at those intersections. To find out what works, we tend to do a lot of small, low cost things; small exhibits, sub-leases to creative groups, workshops,

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performances and so on. In classic innovator style, we try to fail small and often, and in doing so identify what works and where to invest for the best returns in the future. We can do this precisely because we have low cost infrastructure, low outgoings and we avoid the pressure associated with large, public funding.

By contrast, when I encounter the Capital A Arts I frequently find myself looking at what is essentially a top down, gatekeeper focused infrastructure, both within the governments that define where Arts dollars go, and within Arts organisations themselves. Their modus operandi seems based around a subjective notion of 'quality' and the logic that if you produce a few quality exhibits a year, you'll attract both an audience and further funding. That logic always



seems back to front. Running a micro organisation, it's our audience that defines the definition of quality and their willingness to donate and support us comes after the work has been presented. With no funding buffer, we have to adapt our sense of 'quality' to the audience, not the funding board.

When I say that, I don't intend it as attack on funded and flagship Arts organisations, nor as an implication that they're obsolete and outmoded. Public funding for major flagships aims to protect them from the need to appeal to a mass audience, thereby freeing them to present work that leads and pioneers culture, not simply appeals to mass audiences. If appealing to a mass audience produced quality work, television would be a totally different medium. What I'm suggesting is the micro sector is where innovation, audience development and creative experimentation takes place. It might not be quality – experimentation generally means a willingness to fail – but it's the environment where things can fail, try again and figure out what works. When something proves it works, there should be a path to take it into funded and flagship organisations, whether it's new work, audience development strategies or techniques of management.

At the moment those pathways are few and far between. It's not that funded and flagship organisations are in contest against unfunded micros. It's that there's barely any relationship at all. This isn't exactly rocket science. Creativity and innovation have a habit of operating at the borders of conventional practice. That position makes it hard to connect them to more established institutions. Yet, if you exclude that innovative activity by defining it as 'design' or 'craft' or 'new media' or 'youth' rather than incorporating it into Capital A Arts, you miss the potential to keep the Arts at the very front of culture.

Robinson raises the same point when he notes the extent to which an 'arts ecology' needs to be re-conceived as a 'cultural ecology' and a 'creative ecology' (2010: 26). The ecology metaphor works well. From the experience of the micros, working with Capital A Arts organisations regularly feels like watching a polar bear that's wandered into a desert. Whatever its merits as an animal, whatever its unique evolutionary traits, it has found itself in an ecological environment it is not really designed for. Some Arts organisations are working hard and setting the tone for further evolution. Places like the Australian Network for Arts and Technology, the Australian Experimental Arts Foundation and, indeed, Australia Council's Interarts Board are looking at pathways to connect innovation back to Capital A Arts. To do that, they're talking to and working with parts of their ecology that are distinctly unlike polar bears.

It's in unpacking this need to connect cultural innovation to Capital A Arts that Robinson's adaptive resilience framework comes to the fore. He notes that a resilient organisation will incorporate 'collaboration with others in its locality (perhaps also regionally,

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nationally and internationally) and artform, and [are] part of wide information networks' (2010: 29). That, he argues, makes the organisation 'vital to other systems – e.g; local arts/ political/social networks' (2010: 29). Second to that, he defines a resilient organisation by its capacity to be 'constantly seeking to innovate and experiment, with a clear focus on building on or integrating successful innovations into business' (2010: 30).

These are themes I fundamentally agree with. It's not just that I think they're fundamental to resilient organisations. I think they're a fundamental part of the Arts. We don't publicly fund major Arts flagships to present the same content to the same audiences. We fund them because we expect they'll positively shape the culture we live in. This sounds like a fairly banal truism but it reinforces the need to see Capital A Arts within a much wider cultural ecology. As Robinson points out, the networks of that ecology are diverse and, by their very nature, extend outside the networks of any single field. In the past two decades, those wider cultural ecologies have fundamentally changed. The impact of economic rationalism, globalisation and the information revolution has altered the way people think about and engage with each other, and the platforms in which they do it.

The question is how we link across those ecologies. Robinson makes the wonderfully pragmatic point that 'innovation tends to move up the scales, but occurs at all scales, and needs to be integrated into consolidation and maintained during the back loop to form part of the next growth phase' (2010: 20). The unfunded micro sector is, I would argue, one of the key places where innovation is currently happening. When Robinson talks about the 'back loop to form part of the next growth phase' he's raising the issue of the capacity of Arts organisations to draw in the skills, ideas and creative practice from those on their borders. If we accept his belief that innovation is core to resilience, then strong relationships with micro, cross disciplinary and experimental organisations like Format might be an ideal part of that loop.

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The unfunded micro sector is, I would argue, one of the key places where innovation is currently happening.



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# Resilience and Restless Dance

## A Case Study

### nick hughes

*Nick Hughes is the Company Manager for Restless Dance Theatre. He has worked as an actor, director, writer, artistic director, dramaturg and manager, with a wide range of theatre companies. He has a BA (Dramal Sociology) from Birmingham University. Arriving in Australia from England in 1973, Nick has worked primarily in political and community based theatre. He has taught acting and directing, written 28 theatre scripts and written extensively on community based forms of arts practice.*

The staff constantly review operations to ensure that the internal networks remain strong.

This article examines the usefulness of the theory of Adaptive Resilience put forward by Mark Robinson in his paper: *Making adaptive resilience real*, by applying the concepts to a South Australian performing arts company: Restless Dance Theatre.

Restless was established 20 years ago by Sally Chance, the first Artistic Director, who had the dedication, perseverance and skill to establish the company during its first 10 years. I began my association with the company twelve years ago, just as it was beginning to consolidate some of its funding and achieving some permanence.

The concept of resilience comes from the field of ecology and it encourages you to take an organic, holistic view of organisations. This fresh, dynamic perspective is very useful when the details of the theory are used to analyse how healthy the operations of an organisation are.

Mark Robinson's paper outlines the four phases of adaptive resilience: Growth, Consolidation, Release and Reorganisation as a natural cycle of growth, decay and regrowth (2010). There are many points in the paper where he stresses that the four phases of the adaptive cycle apply not only to the overall development of an arts organisation but that different parts of the organisation may grow at different rates and will be at different points in the four phase cycle at any one time. This certainly strikes a chord when looking at the overall patterns of growth at Restless. The company has experienced slow, sometimes painfully slow, but continuous growth over the last 20 years. There have certainly been plateaus in the company's overall progress and an uneven development in different parts of its operations.

In order to analyse this in detail let us look at the list of eight 'resources and adaptive skills' that Robinson suggests combine to characterise adaptive resilience. These are:

#### Resources

- Culture of shared purpose and values rooted in organisational memory
- Predictable financial resources derived from a robust business model
- Strong networks (internal/external)
- Intellectual, human and physical assets

#### Adaptive skills

- Leadership, management and governance
- Adaptive capacity: innovation and experimentation embedded in reflective practice
- Situation awareness of environment and performance
- Management of key vulnerabilities: planning and preparation for disruption (2010)

So, taking these in order; how does Restless score in terms of these Resources? The first is: *Culture of shared purpose and values rooted in organisational memory*. Restless has exhibited a very strong culture of shared purpose. The Company was incorporated in 1996 and the first four Objects of the Association listed in its Constitution still describe the core of its raison d'être:

- (a) to create unique inspirational dance theatre
- (b) to provide challenging dance workshops which extend the skills of the dancers and participants
- (c) to build all aspects of the company's activities from the creative abilities of the participants with a disability
- (d) to ensure all those associated with the company, including company members without a disability, will respond to the views and styles of their peers with a disability.

These four Objects encapsulate the core of what the company is and why it exists. So, a big tick on the first Resource. The second is slightly more problematic: *Predictable financial resources derived from a robust business model*. While the financial resources have become more predictable with the achievement of triennial/Key Organisation status with the

Dance Board in 2006, Restless remains heavily dependant on government funding and most of that is either annual or project based. The company has recently established a third, professional arm to its operations, called the Touring Company, in order to have a viable product to sell and to achieve a more robust business model but it requires investment by its major funding partners to fully realise this. So, in terms of financial resources Restless could be more resilient.

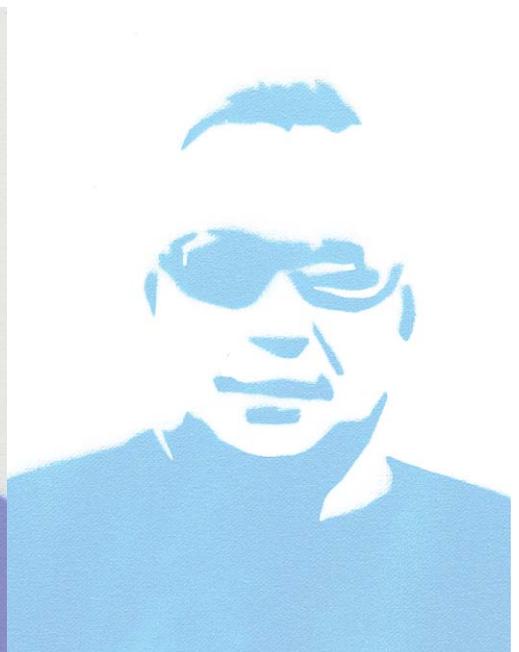
The company scores better on the third Resources point: *Strong networks (internal/external)*. For much of its existence the company has had a staff of two: Artistic Director and Company Manager, who have been compelled to work as an effective team for the company to function efficiently. As the company has grown these two positions have become full time and two more part time office staff have been added. The staff constantly review operations to ensure that the internal networks remain strong. The external networking is strong and developing; the company has good ongoing partnerships within the local disability sector and within the disability arts and dance sectors. The second goal of the company's Business Plan is: To be a centre of excellence for disability ethos

and practice. And Restless is certainly valued within the dance, the arts and the wider community as a leader in disability ethos and practice. This contributes to the resilience of the organisation.

The final Resource is: *Intellectual, human and physical assets*. My judgement here is that the resilience of these assets at Restless is mixed. There is a core intellectual asset that is very resilient and that is the processes and procedures for working with integrity with disabled people. While there is recognition for these intellectual assets within the disability sector and within some parts of the arts sector, the resilience of the company would be greatly enhanced by a wider recognition of these abilities; the company would become more valuable



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to more people if this were so. The staff at Restless take great care to nurture the human assets of the company: the staff, the dancers, the artists who work with the company, the tutors, the volunteers and the Board. It is this internal community that gives the company its coherence and lends it great flexibility and strength and resilience. However, the physical asset base is not resilient: the office space is very cramped and while there is an excellent studio next to the office, these assets are rented and could become unavailable.

Turning to Mark Robinson's list of Adaptive skills, the first is: *Leadership, management and governance*. Restless has shown considerable resilience in this area. By 2000 the company was operating from a clear and concise Strategic Plan (well ahead of most other dance companies in Australia) and has managed to keep its management and governance on an even keel despite having had five Artistic Directors in the subsequent decade. It is a measure of this organisational resilience that the turnover of Artistic Directors has not deflected the steady growth of

the company. There have also been five different Chairs in that time but the Board has remained consistently strong and supportive through all these changes. In the last two years Restless has achieved certificate level in the Service Excellence Framework which is a set of standards covering operational procedures in the following areas: planning, governance, financial and contract management, human resources, OHS&W, partnerships, communication, service outcomes and consumer outcomes. This has come about through Restless being a part of the disability sector. The Service Excellence Framework has instilled a greater level of resilience in these aspects of the company's operations.

The second in the list of Adaptive skills is: *Adaptive capacity: innovation and experimentation embedded in reflective practice*. This skill is all about constant innovation and experimentation and how well the lessons of that are adopted by the organisation and built on over time. It is one of the central skills necessary to build resilience. Restless has shown this capacity in several areas over different periods and I am going to examine in detail the history of the development of its education/workshop program to illustrate the presence of this skill. But first a few words about the structure of the company to put this discussion in context.

For most of its existence Restless has operated on a two part model. The first part is the Youth Ensemble, the core performance ensemble of the company that does at least one major production a year, sometimes two and often does a range of other projects. Membership of the Youth Ensemble is by invitation only and numbers range from a dozen to two dozen young people aged 15 to 26 with

the majority being disabled. It is a very stable group with many participants joining at 15 and staying until they turn 27. The second part of the company is the Education/Community Workshop Programs which Restless has struggled to present consistently until recent years.

By 1997 (and possibly earlier) Sally Chance had identified the need for Restless to run ongoing open access workshops that anyone with or without a disability could come to. She called this the Restless Central workshop program and she wanted it to be the major route into the Youth Ensemble for new people. These workshops were to be used by the company in lieu of auditions which are not usually appropriate for people with a learning disability. These workshops have become crucial for the healthy operation of the company for there is a two way exchange of people between the workshop programs and the Youth Ensemble: not only do new Youth Ensemble members come through the workshop program but tutors for the workshop programs are sourced from the more experienced members of the Youth Ensemble. If the company is to operate well it needs both of these parts to be running smoothly. For many years Restless has struggled to find regular funding for workshop programs. They remained intermittent at best and sometimes entirely missing. The list of funding bodies and philanthropic trusts who have supported Central type workshops over the years is impressively long and diverse. However, the list of bodies who have been approached and who have refused support is more than twice as long and is more diverse. It remains difficult to this day to find ongoing support for dance workshops for young people with and without a disability.

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# The company has been prepared to see change as part of what happens and to adopt different strategies to achieve its core goals.

Faced with this failure to find funding for a necessary, regular workshop program at Restless, the company has consistently demonstrated innovative and experimental alternative strategies in order to achieve its goals. The first of these strategies was to identify a range of communities and to take



the workshops to them. During the years 1997 to 2003 long form, themed workshops were developed around different communities and partnerships who were delighted to work with the company. These projects were also attractive to the Australia Council and other arts funding bodies and six major community workshop projects were run. By this means a constant stream of new participants was maintained.

Between 2003 and 2006 Restless added a second strategy of running a series of Restless Central workshops under once-off names: Swivel, Tilt, Swerve and Spring. Once-off workshop series were more attractive to a range of funding bodies. Since the formation of the Community Partnerships Section of the Australia Council the company has been successful in obtaining Annual Program grants which have at last allowed Central to be run for three out of four school terms in a year. However, this is still a year by year existence with no guarantees of permanence.

The history of the Restless community workshop programs clearly demonstrates the persistence, flexibility and adaptability necessary to build resilience over time. The company has been prepared to see change as part of what happens and to adopt different strategies to achieve its core goals.

This capacity also links to the third of Mark Robinson's Adaptive skills: *Situation awareness of environment and performance*. There are informal and formal aspects to this skill. The informal part is all about having your antennae out regarding developments in your field and keeping abreast of anything that might influence how you go about your practice. This has always been a challenge at Restless but a very stimulating one. The company has managed to stay aware of and connected to leading edge practice in youth arts, in dance and in disability and disability arts.

The formal part of Robinson's 'situation awareness of environment and performance' is about having ways of sharing that information within the organisation and incorporating it into decision making. This is a challenge for the company. There is a huge volume of information to be analysed and sifted every week. Staff are constantly making decisions about what is important enough to be communicated to others and to a certain extent those have to be personal decisions. This formal part is also about accurately measuring your performance. Restless has always evaluated projects thoroughly and is currently formalising and standardising its evaluation processes. As a Key Organisation of the Australia Council it has a Business Plan with KPI's that measure performance. These formal metrics are an essential part of knowing how the company is tracking in terms of its core purpose and goals.

The final Adaptive skill is: *Management of key vulnerabilities: planning and preparation for disruption*. Well, some vulnerabilities are easier to manage than others. Succession plans for instance can be made with a little forethought and need not take a lot of resources. A certain level of disruption is to be expected. As long as you can roll with the punch and still focus your energies on achieving your core goals then the disruption can be as healthy and regenerative as the Adaptive Resilience theory suggests. But there are other vulnerabilities that would



This formal part is also about accurately measuring your performance.



have devastating consequences for the company. If the company's application for Annual Program funding to Community Partnerships was unsuccessful the results would be dire: staff would probably have to return to part time employment and that could tip the organisation into terminal decline. It is hard to manage catastrophic risks other than by trying to avoid them. Extinction cannot be managed.

Restless, like a lot of other arts Companies I suspect, has always, of necessity, operated closer to the financial edge than the funding bodies would like to see. Not enough of a resilient buffer when it comes to managing key financial vulnerabilities. There is a paradox here. You need to generate enough activity

to have a viable annual program and the more activity you have, the more opportunities you can take advantage of to raise funds from a variety of sources. It is that very variety that increases the resilience of the company. But the more you stretch to achieve that level of activity the less resilient you are. It can be argued of course that the company needs to access a variety of funding sources without overstretching. But the reality is that funding dollars are scarce and becoming scarcer. There are not a lot of realistic options, especially for a smaller, niche company like Restless.

So the theory of Adaptive Resilience is a very useful tool in analysing the functioning of an organisation like Restless Dance. It provides insights

into the dynamics of the company's operations and it helps to identify where more can be done to improve its health and robustness. One of the best aspects of the theory is that it changes the language and the mindset used to examine a performing arts company. It encourages you to see it as a moving and interacting entity; as an organism rather than a plan or a picture. It stresses the importance of qualities like persistence, flexibility and adaptability. It promotes the value of being realistic, of being willing to see things as they are. It is a valuable resource.

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operated closer to the financial edge than the funding bodies would like to see.

# The Young and the Resilient: It's Only A Journey

**jane gronow**

*Jane Gronow is the Editor of Lowdown Magazine – the national magazine for youth performing arts in Australia, published by Carclew Youth Arts Inc since April 2007. Jane transitioned Lowdown Magazine from a print publication to digital delivery in 2010 and has been researching online community development and engagement with youth arts practitioners and arts educators across Australia. Prior to Lowdown Jane was the National Project Officer at CAN SA working on Artwork Journal and ccd.net the national community cultural development website. She thinks the colour of resilience is Australia Council RED!*

Adapt, change, and develop, are all words that come to mind when considering the term resilience and its meaning. In a social context resilience can also relate to the ability to deal with political uncertainty or even natural disasters in a sustainable way. For the arts sector, its artists and arts workers there is a similar scenario – political uncertainty, consideration of how we respond to environmental and social concerns, and dealing with ever changing social, political, cultural and environmental climates.

When considering the term resilience – my definition begins somewhere with being tough and determined and ends with being open, honest and malleable, so as to accept, adapt and move with the waves of change. Most of my creative work has been determined and shaped by what money is available and from whom I received the support. I can count on one hand the times that my own artistic practice came as top priority over what funding agencies determined a legitimate arts project that was successful in attaining funding.

What does the term resilience mean for young artists, the artists who are honing their artistic practice into a finely tuned, well oiled, resilient creative machine, who are beginning the journey to become the future leaders and who will ultimately inform the future of the arts sector/industry, artistic practice and arts policy? To explore this further I discussed the notion of resilience with three young artists who have all taken part in the national JUMP mentoring program.

The JUMP program, launched in February 2010, is a national mentoring program for artists who are in the first five years of their professional practice. Mentored artists receive funding of up to \$5,000 for a creative concept that is realised through a relationship with their chosen mentor. Over a ten month period, artists between the ages of 18 to 30 undertake a one-on-one mentorship with a leading professional of their choice. Artists focus on a creative project in art forms including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts, Community Arts, Dance, Hybrid/Interdisciplinary Arts, Literature, Music, Theatre, and Visual Arts. The JUMP program is 'serious about championing our nation's next generation of arts industry leaders, and ensuring that geography and cultural diversity are no barrier to identifying and promoting artistic excellence' ([www.jumpmentoring.com.au](http://www.jumpmentoring.com.au), accessed 11 July 2011).



Alysha Herrman, Emily Collett and Matt Cornell have shared with me their understanding of the term resilience in relation to their own arts practice; their dreams for the future; and identified resources that have assisted them, in a series of online discussions in February 2011.

## Resilience – what does it mean?

As an artist resilience seems to be about having the ability of transferring skills, adapting, morphing, transforming and moving with time, identifying a need and responding to that need in an ever changing climate. Could resilience be about looking for adaptability in all the right places, the justification of the existence of work, ideas, programs or projects? How do we learn? What are we being taught? How are we adapting to survive in the current climate? What does this mean for the future? How do we make change?

When discussing the notion of resilience with our three young artists I feel there is a connecting theme in the responses from Alysha, Emily and Matt. They share a similar understanding that not only contextualises resilience in terms of their individual practice but also brings motivation into the mix that drives them to continue to realise their creative and artistic visions. To learn, to change, it's quite inspiring.

First meet Alysha Herrmann, an emerging writer/director/performer who lives, works and plays in the Riverland region of South Australia. Alysha is passionately committed to social justice outcomes in everything she does and is actively involved in many levels of community building as a parent, employee, artist, volunteer and community member.

AH: *[The term] resilience to me means, having an awareness of the world around me and both accepting and embracing that the world is often confusing, painful and difficult but is deeply precious as much because of these things as it is despite them. Resilience is about understanding that life doesn't work out how we plan and the things that go wrong can teach us as much as the things that go to plan. We're beautiful because we're flawed – it's not easy and it's not comfortable but it's crucial to be flawed and to believe that we're worthy BECAUSE we're flawed. It's about living our lives in a way that means we face challenges and conflict with courage and compassion.*

In terms of Alysha's arts practice, resilience is about taking risks, being vulnerable and allowing experimentation, making mistakes and learning from them. It also means that she's willing to adapt and change without feeling there is an element of failure. She's honest to point out that it is not always achieved but finds it assists with motivation, and gives her a reason to continue. It's inspiring.

AH: *[Resilience] means allowing other people's views to inform my work rather than crush or control it. It means I keep going even when it's really hard, disheartening or disappointing – it means I keep believing in the vision I have, the reason I'm doing the work – when there are a million reasons I might stop believing, I keep believing.*

Next meet Emily Collett who graduated with a BA in Interior Design at RMIT in 2004 and attended The Victorian College

of the Arts studying a post graduate course in design (set and costume) in the School of Production in 2007. Since then she has felt right at home in Melbourne's theatre industry busy designing and costuming over 20 productions since graduating. Emily also believes that, the day she decides to rest and give herself a pat on the back for a job well done is the day her resilience will wane. She also adds, 'to be perfectly honest, sometimes I think 'resilience' just means getting out of bed every day.'

Emily's definition of resilience in relation to her arts practice sounds a little like a recipe mixed with a touch of philosophical wisdom that plants a small seed of hope in my artistic heart.

EC: *[Resilience is] a strong artistic centre, or core, around which everyday life fluctuates. It's easy as a young artist at the bottom of the pile to falter, or wander off track a little. As long as I continue to work on keeping my artistic core built up with relevant skills, contacts, links, inspiration and values, I can continue to evolve and grow within my industry. [There is] a delicate mix of staying current and keeping true to yourself. Staying current because the arts are an ever evolving, changing and growing world in which it could be easy to get left behind. Keeping true to yourself*





*because there's no point 'creating' if in an effort to keep up with the crowds you turn into one of them.*

And now to Matt Cornell who has had numerous engagements with Australian, European and South-East Asian industry professionals as a choreographer; dancer and/or digital composer; spanning live Contemporary Dance and theatre to gallery installations, film, rock concerts, video clips, and street/performance art. Matt believes that resilience is 'the balance between commitment towards a focused goal and adapting to the unanticipated along the journey.'

In relation to his arts practice Matt believes that resilience involves 'consistent training, even when the project at hand doesn't call for those specific skills; being deeply present in the moment for creativity and performance while aware of the future and the logistic preparations required to sustain momentum; avoiding the pitfalls of seeking external validation (particularly hard during times of unemployment).' Matt also believes in 'refusing to be a victim of the system'.

Support for young artists at present seems to be plentiful with funding programs provided federally by Australia Council for the Arts, state and territory agencies such as Carclew Youth Arts (SA) and Propelarts (WA), local

government agencies such as City of Melbourne (ArtPlay) and Brisbane City Council, as well as artist run initiatives such as Splendour In The Grass Splendid Arts Program and the John Butler's The Seed arts grant fund.

Matt, Alysha and Emily all identified the JUMP program as being a valuable and valid experience: the Australia Council Arts Start grant, which offers up \$10,000 to recent arts graduates to establish a career as a professional artist, was also mentioned. Peak organisations that support, advocate and provide professional development for young artists such as Youth Arts Queensland and Carclew Youth Arts were identified as invaluable, enhancing the networking and community experience that provided much-needed support.

*EC: Youth Arts Queensland, and the JUMP program, have been quite incredible. I have spent the length of my JUMP mentorship wishing time and time again I had someone like them looking after me here in Victoria. In so many ways – the support and encouragement from the team, who because of their placement within the industry always had suggestions or recommendations I would not have been aware of otherwise. Training, networking, personal and professional development – YAQ and JUMP have proven far more than helpful.*

Alysha also highly values the infrastructure and support of organisational networks.

*AH: I've been lucky enough to have access to some amazing networks and their combined resources including tangible 'things' as well as advice and the sharing of anecdotal experiences, has helped me develop resilience in my arts practice.*

*[H]aving community partners who support my artistic practice by promoting my work or by providing in-kind support to my work is a real confidence booster to how I view my work as well as tangibly contributing to the success of my arts practice.*

What also appears highly valued is the nature of a community network: family, friends, and artistic peers. Matt believes that people are anyone's greatest resource. Engaging people and sharing value is the most useful practice in any grouping of society, he says.

Alysha, who works predominantly in a regional setting, strongly credits the support of her family in particular her parents as well as broader community:

*AH: Some of the most helpful things have been my relationships with individuals and community partners who support my work. In terms of individuals, by this I mean the people I love who love me and want to see me achieve my goals, they support me financially, emotionally, mentally and physically.*

When asked what was not helpful Matt responded: '[T]o financially start from scratch for every new project, with grant application writing etc wastes the time and limits the output of artists who have already proven their capabilities.'

## The future of the arts industry, what is it?

I was reading with interest recently Platform Paper No.26, *Not Just An Audience: Young People Transforming Our*





*Theatre*, by Lenine Bourke and Mary Anne Hunter (2011). The paper explores how young people are no longer prepared to be passive participants and want a voice in decision-making and how young people are vital to the health of theatre. The launch of the paper coincided with forums that were scheduled across Australia where young artists and theatre workers met to debate new generational perspectives with the co-authors of the provocative essay.

The *What If?* Debates posed the questions; What if the professional theatre community lets go of the outmoded idea that young people's work is only a stepping stone to the serious stuff of a national theatre industry? What if the theatre sector acknowledges the ways in which youth arts practitioners have already cultivated the networks and collaborations that it struggles to achieve? Emily, Matt and Alysha have differing perspectives about the future of the arts industry. All discussed organisational infrastructure but, interestingly, from different angles that challenged established cultural, social, environmental and economic frameworks.

MC: *Not so long ago, the idea of monetising one's art practice was not the foremost concern. However, with the fall in arts patrons practitioners have had to adopt a business model that undermines the more noble of humanities pursuits. While it's true that necessity is the mother*

*of innovation, the preoccupation required with trying to survive as an arts practitioner is a gross misspend of such highly trained intuition and greatly affects the quality of Australian art. The encouragement to invest and the embracing of not only failing, but failing spectacularly is at odds with the need to pay the bills.*

Matt continues: *The reason arts cannot be solely structured as a business pursuit is its dependence on failure to evolve. While established companies may be unsuccessful in engaging any significant number of Australians show after show, they invariably fail in the same, safe manner. I would like to see a shift in arts organisations salary structures. Currently in arts organisations, it is the desk jobs ... that have full financial security. If it is an organisation devoted to the arts, it serves no logic to have more administration than artists in the building - who are they administering? Arts is a service and most artists [want] nothing more than the opportunity to do their job with access to the bare minimum of required infrastructure to achieve it well.*

Alysha would like to see collaborative practice high on the list of our future arts agenda.

AH: *There's sometimes a shying away from openly sharing visions and ideas because someone might 'knock it' or dispute its validity and I think this is really stifling the arts industry. We need to be part of a community that supports and embraces diversity rather than a few*

*individuals trying to retain control over the purity of their ideas. Getting audiences to participate and see our work means they have to feel part of it - we need to make them co-collaborators.*

Emily too believes in collaborative practice but also would like to see the continuation of programs supporting and nurturing young artists such as JUMP and the like.

EC: *The band of designers I look up to as mentors and teachers all came from a time when leading theatre companies around Australia had spaces for assistant and apprentice type roles. None of this exists anymore. It would be so lovely to see more openings like the official mentorship I experienced in 2010 appearing, and even more spaces for the sharing of knowledge and skills amongst theatre companies worldwide. Imagine the theatre we could produce if larger companies around the world adopted a more collaborative environment between them or is that all getting a bit too close to a bid for artistic world domination?*

So what is the future for Alysha, Matt and Emily, what are their personal dreams and visions of the future and how do they see the arts and cultural landscape twenty years from now? Will their journey be about adapting and changing, responding with creativity and productivity - will they remain resilient? Alysha has a vision, and she asks us to imagine a four day arts festival in the South Australian Riverland. It's

highly collaborative and everyone in the community is embracing the music, performances, visual arts exhibits, writing, arts` and cultural workshops activities to such an extent that no-one can imagine life without a theatre or art gallery. It's a festival that has attracted locals and visitors alike. There is a huge respect in the community for arts and cultural activities. People are finding their creative expression, they have found the song they have inside them and are singing it.

When considering her personal journey as an artist, Alysha is also pragmatic and finds it difficult to see a vision of where she will be in twenty years.

AH: *My arts practice is intimately tied with my life as a parent and a community member – I can't and don't want to separate these roles... so much of where I'll be in 20 year's time is actually outside of my control (which I think whether we like to admit it or not is the case for most of us!). Ideally in 20 years time I'd like to have a body of work I'm proud of to look back on, I'd like to have some of my writing published in a hard copy format and I also hope that I continue to be involved in some capacity in creating performance work that empowers individuals and communities. I'd like to work across disciplines more and increase my multimedia skills and collaboration with health and justice sectors. My son will be 28 in 20 years time so perhaps I'll even be a Grandmother*

*and be creating work with my grown & grand children – that'd be pretty special!*

Matt on the other hand just wants to create.

MC: *So far I am enjoying the journey of creating and fulfilling need where I see it. I look forward to a future where I can enjoy investing most of my time into the creation instead of chasing the opportunities to do so.*

In relation to the art industry, Matt is quite clear that he would like to see some sustainability, support and valuing of artists, and offers a solution.

MC: *I would like the contract-based artisans of Australia designated the same industry understanding of some western European countries which cover living costs in known gaps of contract work. An unemployed artist should not have to go on the dole.*

In a similar vein Emily wants to create collaboratively and brilliantly and will feel accomplished if in twenty years time she is still doing this.

EC: *Quite simply, ... working creatively, still be working in the theatre as a designer I would like to see cross-cultural collaboration, in all arts, to be an established and easy practice. Through working with others we share of ourselves, and learn of them. Is this not the best*

*way to breed understanding and tolerance? And create brilliant art, of course.*

## The Colour of Resilience.

Change is inevitable – social, cultural, economical or environmental – and I think we're in for a bit of a turbulent journey on every level. When it comes to talking resilience, a realistic view is necessary and positive outlook is essential. I am inspired by all three artists and their notion of resilience and what it means for them. I am at the front of the queue to attend Alysha's festival and can't wait to see Matt's new work that he has created whilst being financially secure and creatively supported. I can't wait to one day write an article on Emily's collaborative process ... it will be a winner!

My final question to our young artists asked, 'If resilience was a colour what would it be?'

AH: *It'd have to be yellow – and I say that only because living in the Riverland with the years and years of drought and difficult economic times we've had, seeing the sunflowers that spread (and are often a nuisance and a pest) along the sides of roads still manages to bring me this little deep bubble of inner joy.*

EC: *The colour of a shadow. Always there, never in the way.*

MC: *It would be a chameleon type of blue. As resilience relies on adaptation. It is because of this that water is far stronger than rock.*

That's a nice way to end their beginning ... don't you think?

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## Thanks

Thanks to Alysha, Emily and Matt who responded to a series of questions and took part in the online discussion around the theme of resilience and their arts practice during February 2011.



## Meet the artists:

### Alysha Herman (SA)

- Alysha Herman is an emerging writer/director/performer from the Riverland region of South Australia.
- Alysha is actively involved in many levels of community building as a parent, employee, artist, volunteer and passionate community member.
- Alysha's artistic work in recent years includes curating and directing *160 characters* an experimental movement performance; inspiring and co-curating *LetterBanks* a mini documentary comparing experiences of young and old with Riverland Youth Theatre.
- Alysha's JUMP mentorship focused on building confidence, networks and artistic practice with mentor **Alison Howard**. Alison is an experienced director/dramaturg with a wealth of experience and knowledge working in regional communities and youth and community arts projects.

### Matt Cornell (NT)

Dance Interdisciplinary Artist Matt Cornell has had numerous engagements with Australian, European and South-East Asian industry professionals as a choreographer, dancer and digital composer spanning live Contemporary Dance and theatre through gallery installations, films, rock concerts, video clips, and street/performance art. Examples of these include Gavin Webber at DanceNorth, Davis Freeman, Shaun Parker and Company, Sara Black for Lucy Guerin Inc., Sarah-Jayne Howard for QUT, Buzz Dance Theatre, Lisa Wilson, Anton for WAAPA, Superstar Productions, Croc Fest., Resolution Design and Darwin Festival.

In 2010 Matt received the danceWEB scholarship. Matt is also in the process of constructing his debut solo album and undertook a NFSA residency in January of 2011.

Matt's JUMP mentor was **Antony Hamilton** a Victorian Dance and Interdisciplinary Arts practitioner, who has trained in dance in Sydney, Perth and New York. Since 1999 he has performed with the Australian Dance Theatre (Garry Stewart), Kage Physical Theatre (Kate Denborough), Chunky Move (Gideon Obarzanek) and Lucy Guerin inc. (Lucy Guerin) extensively throughout Australia and overseas.

### Emily Collett (VIC)

• Graduating with a BA in Interior Design at RMIT in 2004, Emily attended the Victorian College of the Arts and studied design (set and costume) in the School of Production as a postgraduate in 2007.

• She has experience designing and costuming over 20 productions since graduating from VCA, including various productions at Theatreworks, La Mama and The Dog Theatre; tours for Complete Works Theatre Company, Melbourne Opera, Short and Sweet (Shorter and Sweeter tour) and works as a founding committee member of the Kristian Fredrikson Scholarship for design in the performing arts.

• Emily's JUMP mentor in 2010 was Victorian dance and theatre artist

• **Hugh Colman**. Emily was also a recipient of a 2010 ArtStart grant offered through the Australia Council.

# The Art in Resilience: A Search in 9 Moments of Change

**steve mayhew**

*Steve Mayhew is currently the Artistic Director of the 2012 National Regional Arts Conference and the Creative Producer, for Local Stages at Country Arts SA where he develops contemporary professional performance in regional South Australia and commissions new works featuring regional artists for touring and festivals across the country.*

As the Artistic Director of the 2012 National Regional Arts Conference and Festival I have been searching for a theme, something to hang your forthcoming experience on, something that is relevant but also prismatic, and one that will lend itself to a rigorous discussion of the role that creativity and art has in our society and culture. These are a few notes from my search ...

## Moment 1 – April 2010

It was the bus driver's remark; 'It's something maybe you city folk don't know, but we people living in the country are a resilient lot' that annoyed me.

I was on a bus with 39 others partaking in the South Australian Governor's Leadership Foundation Course, on a regional excursion to South Australia's Riverland region to look at and discuss our State's insurmountable water issues. We were a captured audience for our bus driver's musings on the world that day, but it was THAT WORD, 'RESILIENT' and the way he said it, such pride, a badge of honour that was self decreed with a large amount of sympathy-seeking hardship and adversity thrown in for good measure that any city folk would dare not argue with him. It got my shackles up and wrinkled my ire. He didn't need to use the word with such pride and a twist of the victim. Why did he use it in such a way I felt almost un-Australian for not agreeing with him? The way he used the word didn't acknowledge the potential ingenuity of people and their capacity for leading change. Did he really know what resilient meant? Did I really know what resilient meant?

So that evening I looked it up..

Rèsi'lìjènt (-zi'lýe) a. recoiling, springing back; resuming original form after stretching, bending etc.; (of person) recovering readily from illness, depression, adversity, or the like; buoyant. (Oxford Australian Dictionary)

...and then I extrapolated the following..

If, after a major catastrophe or a natural event of the like, such as a drought, you showed resilience, surely you would want to change some elements of your situation as you recoiled, or sprung back? If you didn't, you would indeed return



## Where is THE ART IN RESILIENCE?

to the same shape or original form and be in exactly the same position to make the same mistakes again. Where is the change in all of this? Where is the learning? Where is the creative ability to solve problems that a human is so capable of? Where is THE ART IN RESILIENCE?

### Moment 2 – October 2010

I admit it; I don't like the word much, but I have become captivated by its increasing use as a policy buzzword. Intrigued as to how artists and communities could use the qualities of resilience in times that resilience is required in their practice and well being. So over a period of 12 months I will set off on a journey around the country to discover the multifaceted characteristics of this word. I want to understand its use as an adjective and a verb with a view to featuring the most interesting aspects and definitions of resilience through art from around the country in the Goolwa, South Australia, 2012 National Regional Arts Conference and Festival.

### Moment 3 – February 2011

In the wake of the GFC, recent natural disasters across the country, the continuing climate change debate and other social and infrastructural disturbances, 'bouncing back' for a regional community may actually seem quite comforting. However I believe that the idea of restoring any system to a past state of existence following a crisis or trauma could be misleading and instead lessons should be learnt along the way about change and survival. In these environments, we do not want or need static regional communities but innovative, forward thinking and ground breaking ones and ones that are equipped to be resilient.

In a recent journey to Queensland to discuss the Conference and Festival with regional arts colleagues I became enthralled with the idea of capturing the moment(s) in time when a community or person engages creatively with being resilient, the point where recognizing that change is required to move forward and the excitement of possibility that might bring. In only a month after the devastating January floods and Cyclone Yasi, when does the 'bouncing back' finish and 'creativity' begin? Do they happen at the same time? Queensland Arts Council is currently discussing with Regional Arts Victoria as to what strategies they used and approached regional arts projects after Black Saturday 2009. I look forward to seeing projects arise from some regional Queensland communities that may possibly approach this idea with learnings from Victoria.

Whilst in Brisbane I heard that within 24 hours of some train services stopping, carriages had to be housed on uncovered idle lines and therefore became stationary targets to some of the most intricate graffiti pieces Brisbane had ever seen. Is this a demonstration of some 'Art in Resilience'? I would like to think that it could be; it discusses notions of bouncing back with its immediacy and opportunistic nature whilst challenging our morals of how one should constructively spend the aftermath of a flood.

### Moment 4 – November 2010

Art and creativity, with change being their vital active ingredient, I believe can play an important part in the notions of resilience.

The arts, whether it is a personal arts practice or simply the viewing and the witnessing of art, can fundamentally

Art and creativity,  
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change the person or the community doing the practice or witnessing. No matter how small or nominal, the brain synapses are making new connections, sparking off new thoughts and new ideas or reliving old ones in new contexts. In a community context, social and human capital can be constructed. By the very act of making art, changes occur on a personal level. These 'arts people' in turn make up our communities and can in turn affect our communities with creativity and originality.

I was lucky enough to be invited to Denmark, Western Australia, to discuss my forming ideas around the word and the theme of the conference at Country Arts WA's 'Muster'. But before I had a chance to, Facilitator and improvisation artist Liz Jack beat me to it with a humorous performance of her - **Recipe for Resilience:**

## Ingredients

One core group of committed, passionate people  
1/2 pint of stock prepared from the good bones of the past  
4 cups of community response  
2 tablespoons of shared vision and aspirations  
Pint of courage  
Spoonful of gumption  
3 tablespoons of flexibility  
Twist of good luck  
Ten years of time sifted then allowed to rise  
Touch of magic synchronicity

## Method

Wildly mix the organic ingredients in a chaotic, colourful manner  
Add a dash of duty of care whilst preparing your organisational systems  
Dice your project commitments  
Allow to mature, mix together and present with a sprig of good humour to family and friends.

©Liz Jack, Denmark WA

It was a creative way to describe the many factors required to build a resilient arts community or organisation in a regional town. Denmark has a thriving artistic community blossoming since the 1970's hippie era and they celebrate their resilience whilst making a significant impact to the way the broader community embraces the arts.

## Moment 5 – December 2010

Through my experience working in regional areas and with regional artists I am intrigued by how often the artist is disregarded by whole sections of a community, councils, planning committees and think tanks when trying to answer their own questions of resilience. The artist is one of the few people who can ask the moral and ambiguous questions more effectively than a pamphlet, focus group or questionnaire. The artist can create social interaction with their work and leave the audience to discuss, digest and think about issues whilst at the same time creating pockets of cohesion within the community.

## Moment 6 – June 2010

Goolwa, with a town population of 3000, is situated at the mouth of the River Murray. A site where the management of one of Australia's major waterways across four states can be viewed, the definitions of resilience can be explored on its many physical and ephemeral levels.

Goolwa is Australia's first 'Cittaslow' town, where the founding principles of the global movement – to encourage diversity not standardization, support and encourage local culture and traditions, work for a more sustainable environment, support and encourage local produce and products, encourage healthy living especially through children and young people – are valued and supported by the local community and businesses.

It is also the land of the traditional custodians, the Ngarrindjeri Nation, whose vision is all people caring, sharing, knowing and respecting the lands, the water and all living things; all things being connected. Australia's Indigenous population and culture is often generally referred to as resilient. What do we really mean when we describe it in this manner? Has the culture survived forty thousand years due to the notion of connection, interconnection, common values and beliefs?

## Moment 7 – between February 2010 and March 2011 (ongoing)

'Cultural Leadership' requires 'Adaptive Resilience' and 'Adaptive Leadership'. 'A cultural leader is the driving force behind the creation and pursuit of a





set of artistic, organisational or sector goals. Developing cultural leadership skills is about building an individual or organisations' capacity to:

- Effectively lead colleagues and sector areas through extended periods of experimentation and growth
- To think and work strategically toward long-term goals
- To manage, motivate and inspire colleagues
- To develop fortitude and problem-solving skills in the face of adversity
- To be financially resourceful and responsible
- To understand, analyse and respond to the complexities of the Australian theatre scene and its relationship with broader communities.' (Australia Council 2011)

'Adaptive Resilience is the capacity to remain productive and true to core purpose and identity whilst absorbing disturbance and adapting with integrity in response to changing circumstances' (Robinson 2010: 14).

'Adaptive Leadership is specifically about change that enables the capacity to thrive. New environments and new dreams demand new strategies and abilities, as well as the leadership to mobilize them. As in evolution, these new combinations and variations help organisations thrive under challenging

circumstance rather than perish, regress, or contract. Leadership, then, must wrestle with normative questions of value, purpose and process.' (Heifetz et al 2009: 14)

In a microcosmic aspect Robinson's adaptive cycle of growth, consolidation, release and reorganisation could be seen as elements of the creative and artistic process. As a theatre director/performance maker in rehearsal or development one must allow the creative team to go through this cycle on numerous occasions to allow the work to be made, refined and shaped. In turn the practice of adaptive leadership can be that akin to a theatre director: One must lead and assist the creative team through periods of disturbance as they sift through what is essential and what is expendable, experimenting with solutions to the challenges of making the work at hand.

Australia's regional arts organisations are often dealing with smaller populations, and Robinson articulates the effects of locality i.e. what happens in a town or city – economics, population change, transport, etc. Through my work at Country Arts SA I have begun to understand that the more resilient regional arts programs and projects are where the isolated regionally based artist is placed at the centre and their understanding of 'how the place works' is made greater, often through mentoring or outside collaborations, in turn establishing conduits to wider national or international networks. Their capacity to be adaptive in their own

home town is increased as their place on the national playing field increases. There is nothing actually new in this as many artists choose to live regionally whilst operating on a global/international level. When discussing adaptive resilience in this context it's the ability of the artist to look inwards into their own practice, and then slightly more outside of that as to how their practice effects the social and cultural aspect of their locality along with their impact on a global scale that makes the adaptive cultural leader.

## Moment 8 – February 2011

Conversation at Department of Environment and Natural Resources information marquee at Goolwa's Wooden Boat Festival:

Me: *So what is your definition of resilience when you refer to the situation that is*

**Resilience in  
psychology is the  
positive capacity  
of people to cope  
with stress and  
adversity.**

occurring in the lower lakes and at the mouth of the River Murray?

DENR staff member Cassie: *Resilience in this instance means that we are able assist the system to return to a (natural) self-regulation between the saline and fresh water levels so that the water and bird life can continue to exist.*

## A FINAL Moment? – September 2010

Resilience in psychology is the positive capacity of people to cope with stress and adversity.

There is a work between two South Australian based regional companies that I hope to present at the conference/festival. It is about a young man whom you never get to meet face to face but you see, through his eyes, his town, social, family and sporting life. The real world of a country town is dubbed, daubed and overlaid with the symbols, images and memes that give us clues into this young man's life, associations and inner most thoughts with the use of installation and projections. You travel on a bus with 39 other people and visit the places where he lives and plays. He continually stays just out of reach and as you are immersed in the work you question his capacity to be resilient.

I am only beginning to scratch the surface of the word Resilience and the questions raised here and in the future may or may not be answered by the time the conference rolls around. As I travel across the country and as you travel towards Goolwa, (18-21 October 2012) you are invited to pick up the conversation, to comprehend your community's and your own personal resilience and how your creativity and artistic practice can play a role in these

notions. I'd be interested to hear your understandings.

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# Resilience

'... I-think-I-can! I-think-I-can! I-think-I-can! I-think-I-can! I-think-I-can! I-think-I-can! I think I can - I think I can - I think I can I think I can--'

And they did! Very soon they were over the hill and going down the other side. Now they were on the plain again; and the little steam engine could pull her train herself.

So she thanked the little engine who had come to help her, and said good-by.

And she went merrily on her way, singing:

'I-thought-I-could! I-thought-I-could! I-thought-I-could! I-thought-I-could! I thought I could - I thought I could I thought I could ...'

THE LITTLE ENGINE THAT COULD

(Watty Piper)

## helen bock

*Helen Bock is Project Officer with Community Arts Network SA managing the PlaceMaking Project. A Community Cultural Development worker committed to the empowerment and development of communities through good arts practice and collaboration she has worked across the SA Arts sector for over 30 years as a producer, programmer, promoter, performer and freelance arts worker. She also works with and for community to program and produce theatre, festivals, balls, music events, markets, Community Events and celebrations and is Market Coordinator for Semaphore Community Market.*

When one thinks of resilience and community the thoughts are endless. For centuries communities have been bouncing back from wars, political unrest, drought, floods, fire, famine, capitalism, communism, dictatorships, fascism, corrupt regimes, death, loss, poverty, racism, sexism, even hangovers, you name it we have survived it. The human drive to survive and be resilient at a personal, political and community level is amazing.

The strategies that communities and individuals use to survive the challenges of life are as diverse as the challenges themselves. Some of us do it with ease, some of us have to delve into our innermost strength and others of us need lots of encouragement and support to believe it is all worthwhile and that we can make a difference. For many of us it is the journey that we take in understanding we are not alone, and that there is this powerful thing called community we can belong to. 'The Arts' has long been a tool of resilience for communities. We at Community Arts Network SA believe that community arts activities, underpinned by the principles of social justice and inclusion, can change our lives and therefore our communities.

Since 2008 CAN SA PlaceMaking project has been contributing to the resilience of community in the city of Adelaide. Our action research project has been working with people who have experienced homelessness, arts workers, community organisations and government agencies to act creatively in the pursuit of making connections for low income and homeless people into their community.

PlaceMaking works with communities to explore the social, cultural, environmental, financial and economic dimensions of their lives. PlaceMaking projects work on the

PlaceMaking projects work on the belief that meaningful

interactions can turn spaces we find ourselves in, into

places we want to engage with.

belief that meaningful interactions can turn spaces we find ourselves in, into places we want to engage with.

PlaceMaking with 'marginalised groups' requires strong partnerships, commitment and sharing. Where do you start? How do you find them? Who are they? What will be different because? How fast will it happen? What expectations do we have?

Partners, collaborators and supporters of our project have been Common Ground Adelaide (CGA), Hutt Street Centre, Westcare Karpandi Arts Centre, Unity Housing, Streetlink Youth Health Service – Uniting Care Wesley, Higher Ground Inc, Offenders Aid and Rehabilitation Service (OARS) and Adelaide City Council.

As PlaceMaking project officer my philosophical approach to our project has been guided by the thought of 'from little things, big things grow' and I don't mean just the art. The inspiration rings through musically in my mind regularly as we begin any new activity. It is these little steps that we are offering for this community that is contributing to their resilience and to our own. As a community arts worker facilitating the project each day I get to celebrate and be amazed by people's resilience and to value the contribution we ('the arts') can make to people's lives, resilience and community.

So what did we do to PlaceMake with these communities? Supported by the skills of some fabulous community arts workers, groups and community workers, we were able to run a series of activities. These included:

### Garden Rangoli

BBQ and Organic Rangoli Making in the CGA Community Garden (Sandy Elverd - Community Artist, led the making of a Rangoli made from different coloured bark, shell, pebbles, sand and plants). We also shared information about other proposed arts projects for the year and gauged participation interest, needs & numbers.

### Gravel Area Arts Installation

Many of the CGA tenants had identified the area immediately outside their balconies as an area that they would like to utilise. Working with Sandy Elverd, tenants produced and designed an 'ephemeral' art work to be viewed from their balconies. The longevity or resilience of this activity is that we were able to move the art work from the Gravel area when needed to the Community Garden fencing where it still remains.

### Glass Workshops

Tenants of the CGA Franklin Street apartments worked with glass artist Jennifer Taylor to make individual glass pieces for their own apartments and a group piece to hang in the entrance foyer of the apartment building.



'The Arts' has long been a tool of resilience

for communities.



### Mural Project @ Higher Ground

This was a partnership with Higher Ground Art Cafe and PlaceMaking to produce an iconic piece of art within the West End of Adelaide about the West End. Artists Bob Daly and Kalyna Micenko led the community created mural which illustrated and communicated the history of the West End from its indigenous outset through its settlement days up to today. This 40m long by 10m high landmark is now on a billboard on the Morphett Street and Light Square corner.



### Westcare 'Karpandi' Arts Centre

Sandy Elverd and Stephen Noonan worked together with clients to transform the day centre courtyard. Clients were involved in making juggling balls, creating a juggling tree, juggling, wrapping trees and furniture in knitted items, chalk drawing, rangoli making, weaving vines into sculptures and lots more. It was fantastic.

### OARS digital story telling project

This was a story telling project about the positive journeys of women exiting prison. The project invited women to be involved, primarily to give hope and instil confidence in women who were recently released from prison and who were struggling to find their place on the outside. A five minute DVD about their experience and their engagement with life on the outside was produced. Morag Cook and Ashlee Page - community artists.



### Street Link Youth Health Services Project

This series of visual arts based workshops with clients of Streetlink Youth Health services focused on the new activities room and engaging young people in its aesthetic and use. Lucy Thurley - community artist.

OK so this is what we did – so where is the resilience story? It would be patronising for me to try and verbalise on behalf of the participants some of the daily challenges they faced and how they found the drive and interest to participate. Yep that's it ... in its most basic form we had participants ... regular and repeat attendances.

Lives changed. Some really woke up in the morning with a purpose for the day. Some people stepped out of their rooms for the first time. Some participants gained the confidence to enrol in art courses. New friendships were made. New skills discovered.



## And from some of our artists...

'A major outcome for myself was increased awareness of the faceless homeless men and women on Adelaide streets. I have worked on a broad cross section of arts projects and this one was a truly humbling and rewarding experience.'

'I work in the performing arts this was a great opportunity to work in the visual medium. I felt comfortable and confident in this new area ... I saw how I could transfer, modify and adapt the skills I have into the visual medium eg graffiti knitting, rangoli and vine weaving. I am an emerging visual artist ... hear me roar!!'

'I really enjoyed connecting with the residents and learning more about their lives and the challenges they face.'

'The real highlight was watching people's faces as they realised they could do things they thought they couldn't – they could cut glass and make designs and end up with artistically pleasing pieces they were very proud of.'

'I think the main achievements were for participants to gain confidence in doing something that they hadn't attempted before and to develop relationships with each other in the process.'

'There were generally good relations between participants, an atmosphere of cooperation and sharing (e.g. of tools and ideas) and lots of mutual encouragement and praise. The CGA workshops are the first I've done where I haven't had tools or materials go missing or get damaged.'

The resilience to survive and move forward when you have experienced homelessness in your life is one to be admired and applauded. To find the strength to do so is heroic. To have the arts there to be part of your journey is a celebration and a lifeline.

Our resilience as arts workers and in particular community arts workers is continually being challenged by funding cuts and changing bureaucracy priorities. Each day as I come to work and fuel resilience on my way home, I remember the looks on the faces, the joy, the pride in achievement, the laughter and the many, many thanks and I say to myself 'this is why I do it!'

'... I-think-I-can! I-think-I-can! I-think-I-can! ... I thought I could - I thought I could I thought I could ...'

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...'this is why I do it!'

# Truisms

**finegan kruckemeyer**

There is the 14-year-old boy who sailed around the world in a boat as big as a bathtub.

This is not a lie.

There is an insect that looks like a stick, another that looks like a leaf.

There is a flower that looks like the bee, which it wants to meet – it tempts the bee so its pollen will travel, so it will live on.

This is just a flower.

There is a gene, which has engineered the human form as the perfect vessel for its transportation – it forms the human so its self will travel, so it will live on in its carrier.

This carrier is you.

This is just a gene.

There is a man who can learn to speak a language in a week.

There is a woman who retains prime numbers like a game.

The type of mind they possess to perform these tasks, is called disabled.

That's funny.

Look, there is a man playing chess against a giant computer. Who will win? It doesn't matter – it is a man playing chess against a giant computer.

Look, here is an ecosystem perfectly formed to hold us. Look – this is chance.

There is a monkey at a typewriter. Naturally what he writes is a load of shit.

**But there is time...**

This man has cut his own arm off with a small knife because it was wedged under a boulder. Then he has walked for a few days.

This woman wrote a book that made me cry.

But she has never met me.

This woman refused to move from her seat on the bus. This couple lay in bed for a while. This man sat cross-legged on the ground.

They were all just being still. But it was called a movement. But nobody moved.

That's ironic.

This cockroach has no head, but all it will die from is hunger. If a nuclear bomb were to go off, it would die from that. If people tell you different, they are lying.

In 14th century Europe, there was an infant who could read and write. He wrote a history of his land and sent it to his king. The king ordered him to attend the court and become his personal historian. The child replied that he would, but his mother must come too, because she had to feed him and clean his bottom when he shat.

This child died at five, of old age.

Listen to that man play the trumpet in the chorus of 'Moonlight in Vermont'. Why does he make me feel different than when I hear another person play the same song, on another trumpet?

There is a person, who wrote an advert, that makes me want to go out and buy dark chocolate. That's clever – I don't like dark chocolate.

A certain English boy is working-class. He went into hospital to have fluid drained from his brain – that's sad. When he came out of the operation, doctors found his vowels had become longer. He'd started speaking posh.

**That's true**



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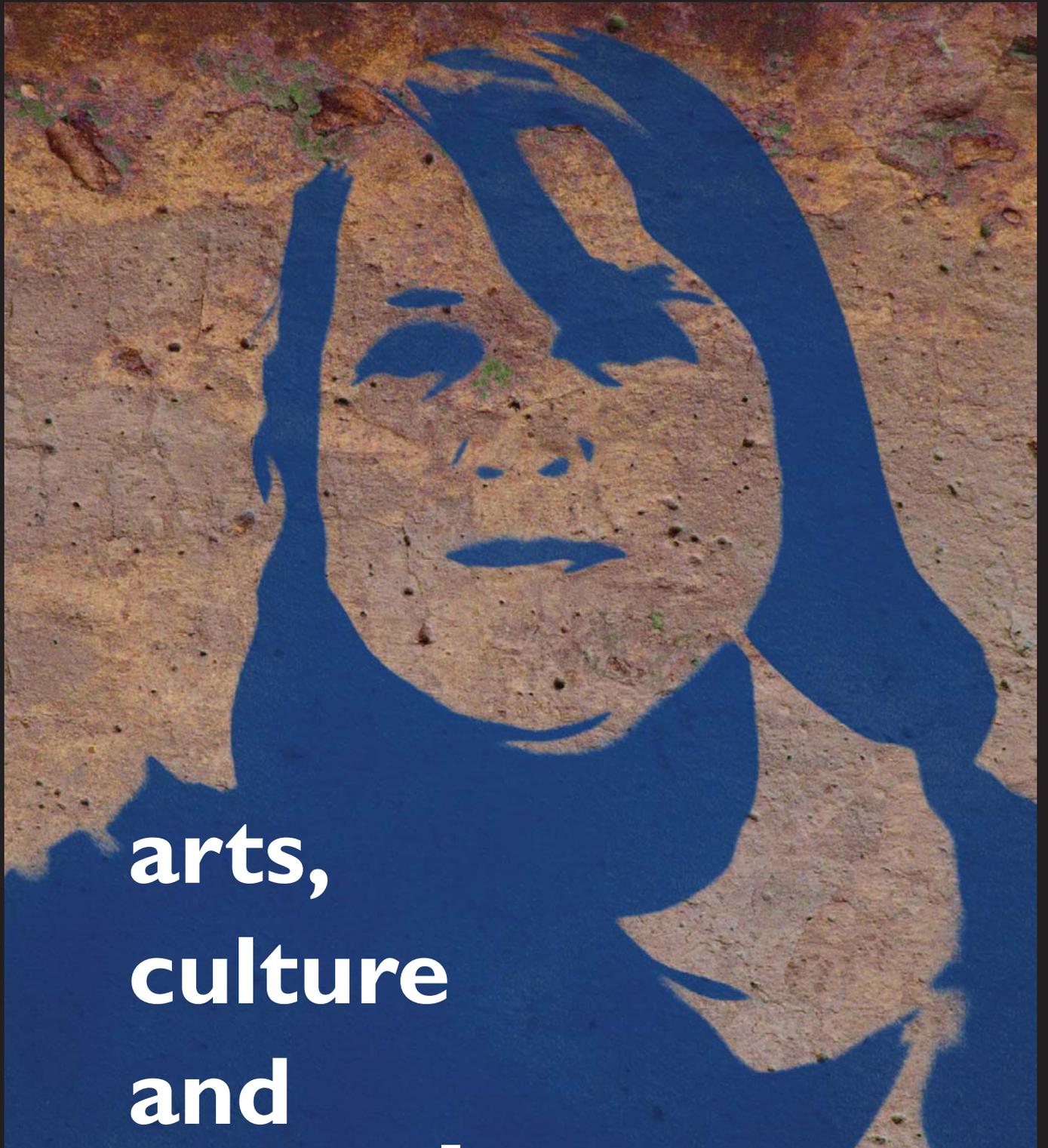
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arts,  
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and

resilience