The Wicked Muse:
Partnering Creative Practice, Local Communities and Sustainability

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Abstract: The plight of imagining and subsequently creating sustainable urban futures is often considered a 'wicked problem' needing complex solutions. Through this paper I propose that the 'Muse' is an important part of this 'wicked' conversation and can infuse the process with culturally rich meaning that enables communities to construct more sustainable cultures of living.

Creative practices – from art, design, craft, writing, music and other forms of cultural production – can play an important role in enabling communities to develop cultural perspectives on the complex issues they face. Not just as art for art sake, but actively engaging creative process in sustainability projects as dynamic, experimental and cutting edge projects that pull together the artist, academic, industry and community. Not just the cult of artistic genius, but building creative communities that can keep engaging in this wicked conversation with all the messiness and complexity of the many interconnected facets that make up sustainability.

There are emerging examples of creative industries forging new ground in engaging with issues of sustainability and wellbeing in local communities. The not for profit organisation Groundswell is using the arts to promote resilience and well-being through all phases of life and BighART partners with artists and communities to run projects that empower communities to change through the arts.

This paper looks at the value of developing co-creation and co-design projects that form partnerships between creative practice and local community, organisations, and industry to tackle 'wicked problems' and find creative, dynamic and empowering outcomes.

Introduction

Environmental and sustainability issues require collective engagement from across society; about, finding ways to live and act in the world 'not merely [to] survive but also express and expand [our] cultural and spiritual possibilities' (Manzini,1992, p.6). Although currently this involvement has focused predominantly on the sciences and social sciences, by broadening the approach to include creative practice provides people with a cultural orientation and enables an open conversation that engages with messy and uncertain issues.

Without the engagement of creative practice, issues (whether environmental, sustainability, or any other kind) have limited cultural context that in turn deprives people of a way to find cultural orientation for issues and thus a way of formulating an understanding, opinion and action within the context of everyday life. In the absence of a diversity of creative and cultural engagements people find a cultural orientation in what is left – news, media, internet discussions, public commentator 'shock jocks' and maybe scientific papers and magazines. The role of creative practice, as Zuidervaart (2011, p.84) outlines, lies 'in the articulation of issues and interests' that enable 'access to public issues and interests in ways that open rather than close conversation and debate'. The creative practices articulation of issues and interests applies equally to understanding the now – abstract notions of perception, connection, and awareness – as well as imagining futures. In particular, I propose, the creative practices form an important part in collectively forging a way through the wicked problem of achieving a sustainability trajectory towards change for the better.

Sustainability is now largely accepted as a contested term with ambiguous meanings (Davison, 2008). Although sustainability has acquired a plethora of meanings to the point of obscurity, there is opportunity in this ambiguity, as defined in Rittel's (1972) wicked problems – every solution defines the problem – that is, every definition of sustainability makes assumptions about the nature of the problem and thus is in danger of over simplifying the issue. Instead maintaining the ambiguity of sustainability provides opportunities to imagine possible futures and to engage with the complex network of everyday urban life and the wide range of social, cultural and environmental issues that encompasses – from health,

violence, isolation, disempowerment, intergenerational inequity, to waste, pollution, environmental degradation and climate change – in an attempt to imagine change for the better.

Thus, I have focused on sustainability and all the subsequent ambiguity that imbibes the term to engage with the notion of the 'wicked problem' as defined by Rittel in his 1972 paper *On the Planning Crisis: Systems Analysis of the 'First and Second Generations'*. In this context, the issue of sustainability becomes 'the Wicked'. In addition, I have used the term 'creative practice' rather than the arts or design to be more overtly inclusive to all creative practices and cultural production. The creative practice – from art, craft, design, music, dance, theatre, creative writing and so on – embodies 'the Muse'. Through this paper, I explain co-creation and co-design from the creative discipline perspective, report on a range of contemporary projects and critically reflect on the strengths and limitations; in order to, consider why creative practice has a vital role to play in finding more sustainable futures and how this role can be developed.

The Wicked Muse Context

We cannot dismiss the importance of developing cultural perspectives on complex sustainability issues, the value of imagining and of creative skills in developing resilient communities. It could be said that the notion of the 'wicked muse', as a creative approach that engages with complexity, fits into Rittel's (1972) proposal to address 'wicked problems'. Rittel is a design theorist (or at least a theorist claimed by the design discipline) and through his 1972 paper sets out to argue against the move (as was promoted through the 'design methods movement' of the 60's) for design to become more scientific (Buchanan 1992; Cross 2001). Instead Rittel argues for a more endemic approach – that is, a design approach based in design, the creative practice tradition rather than a more scientific approach. When teaming up with Webber in 1973 the 'wicked problem' took on cross disciplinary appeal and has largely lost its connection with the design discipline and its historical context.

Although the word sustainability as we know it today[1] comes into common usage a decade after Rittel's paper, sustainability can be described as a 'wicked problem' in the same manner Rittel defines. Firstly, for example, the contested and ambiguous nature of sustainability (as discussed above) lies within Rittel's explanation of wicked problems evading a clear formulation. Secondly, Not knowing what ends and grappling with what sustainability is trying to achieve describes the property that 'every formulation of the wicked problem corresponds to a statement of the solution and vice versa' (Rittel, 1972, p.392). Thirdly, there is also 'no stopping rule' (Rittel, 1972, p.392) for sustainability, it is an issue that by its character needs continuous engagement and re-engagement. Following Rittel's description, there are complex networks of explanations for what causes the problems of the socio-environmental 'crisis' that sustainability seeks to address and how we choose to define the problem defines the direction of the outcome. Finally, Rittel (1972, p.392) explains that 'every wicked problem is essentially unique', this is why '*sustainable futures'* is plural, each situation requiring a new, fresh engagement with the issue of sustainability that delivers a plethora of possible futures and a diversity of treatments. The term sustainability suggests a complex response, a direction towards something that we do not yet know but which should be better, 'a kind of change for the better' (Hocking, 2010, p.244).

Consider, if we take the idea of the problem out of the wicked then consequently this removes the idea of a solution. So what if we stopped assuming there is a need for a solution, instead there are complex issues that need to be engaged with and that require cultural perspectives to enable community engagement. In projects and partnerships like GroundSwell and BighART, creative practices are enabling communities to engage with complex issues. The GroundSwell Project (see http://thegroundswellproject.com/) is an Australian not-for-profit organisation 'focusing on using the arts for the promotion of resilience and well-being through different phases of life, as well as on increasing community participation in end of life issues' (Tsiris et al., p.116). Founded in 2010, GroundSwell has developed a number of projects including 'Busting Cancer' a workshop that engaged women in telling

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[1] Commonly seen as initiating from the Brundtland Commission report (1987, p.43) 'sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs',

their stories through creating a body cast sculpture that represents their experience of cancer and exhibited to raise awareness in the community, 'Festival of Remembrance' a community arts event and ceremony where participants create memory pieces to remember loved ones who have died, and the 'Penrith Schools Drama Project' started in 2010 connecting drama students with the stories of people living with Motor Neurone Disease partnering 'two organisations: The Motor Neurone Disease Association of NSW and Penrith High School in Sydney' (Tsiris et al., p.116) and won a National Award for excellence in Arts and Health in Palliative Care in 2011. The GroundSwell Project has grown out of international initiatives like the St Christopher's Schools Project in London, a community arts programme consisting of 'short-term collaborative arts projects between terminally ill patients and students from primary and secondary schools, as well as colleges within the hospice's catchment area' (Tsiris et al., p.95). BighART (see http://bighart.org/) describe themselves as 'Australia's leading arts and social change company'. Founded in 1992, they have been involved in projects such as 'The Northcott Narratives Project' at the Northcott Estate in Surry Hills, Sydney, during 2002 to 2007 that 'help "empower" and assist tenants of Northcott to tell their stories, help build people's sense of community, and encourage conditions that decrease violence and isolation' that engaged participants in story telling through a variety of creative practices 'photographic portrait work, music, geo-spatial maps, performance theatre, filmmaking, narrative and writing pieces, and a series of other performance and arts-based activities' (Wright & Palmer, 2007, p.6). These creative practitioners are infusing the wicked with the muse.

Muse as Wayfinder

How we move towards a more sustainable future is about constructing knowledge for change. Creative practice, as 'the Muse', has a part to play in finding our way, as collectively forging 'the Wayfinder', through 'the Wicked' problem of sustainability towards something better. Within discussions about sustainability, the idea of 'better' has been described as a balance or harmony, as responsibility or wellbeing. However, the question arises, who chooses what is better and should this just be left up to the 'experts'? This brings us back to Rittel's wicked problems. Rittel (1972) argues that wicked problems require an approach that facilitates a process as 'midwife' rather than 'expert'. Rittel appoints to the role of expert all those people affected by the problem. The role of facilitator aims: to maximise involvement, make sure the process is self critical and possible, follow a process of finding what ought-to-be, making these assumptions transparent, and finally encouraging an equitable dialogue on participants' judgment of the outcome. Rittel (1972, p.394) argues that the process is 'too risky' for one person, it requires 'accomplices' to 'share the risk' and be courageous enough to 'live with the uncertainty'. Rittel (1972, p. 394) recommends a dialogue process, where there is a continuous cycle of questions and issues leading to a diverse array of positions, which are critiqued and discussed up to the point that a decision is made to proceed and until another question arises. The complexity of sustainability requires processes which can engage with uncertainty and ambiguity in a dynamic way that can support social behavioural change.

However, the importance of including creative practice in environmental and sustainability issues is often lost in a wider research context dominated by the sciences and social sciences. Like Snow (1964) argued in his Rede Lecture 'Two Cultures and the Scientific Revolution', there now exists a 'cultural divide' between creative disciplines and more 'traditional' disciplines of research. Creative approaches are often dismissed as not following theory or method in a form recognisable by more traditional research disciplines and the part they play in knowledge construction is largely overlooked. This often acts to exclude the creative practices from a wider engagement and notions such as 'art for art sake' and 'the cult of artistic genius' acts to further isolate the creative practices from more integrated programs and partnerships. There are inroads emerging that are starting to bridge the gap and foster new connections between creative practice and other disciplines. In addition to GroundSwell and BighART partnerships engaging with wellbeing, as described above, 'climate change' is another example of an issue that creative practices are engaging through what Sullivan (2010, p.xxii) highlights as 'the development of new programs, partnerships, and projects that make use of the unique capacity of artists to create and critique phenomena in profound ways'. The Cape Farewell project (see http://www.capefarewell.com), foundered by artist David Buckland, is an international not-for-profit program formed in partnership with scientific and cultural institutions that aims to 'instigate a cultural response to climate change'. This program is based on the notion that the issue of climate change derives from the 'way we choose to live in our urban environment' from which they believe 'a cultural shift of values could stabilise what is potentially a

dangerous situation' and thus from this standpoint the organisation pledges to be 'committed to the notion that artists can engage the public in this issue, through creative insight and vision' (see http://www.capefarewell.com/about.html). Similarly, 'Climarte' is an Australian not-for-profit organisation that develops arts events, forums and alliances to 'inform, engage and inspire action on climate change' with a conviction that 'the arts can be a catalyst for change' (see http://climarte.org). In addition, public craft projects like 'Crochet Coral Reef' by the Institute For Figuring (see http://crochetcoralreef.org/) bring a tacit sensibility to the climate change debate, giving people a tactile sense of the complex geometry of coral and the magnitude of what is at stake. This project also brings together public action, a 'female handicraft' and science in an unlikely juxtaposition that has become a worldwide endeavour that is discussed as far as from Phillip Adams on Radio National's 'Late Night Live' to 'Stitch and Bitch' groups in rural towns. However, there is still work to be done to overcome the divide both in language and approach. This gap does not just exist between academic disciplines but also within community settings and if we are to collaborate to 'find our way' then there is a need to address these misconceptions and disconnections.

Co-Creation & Co-Design

The arts, creative practices and cultural production can be seen as a vehicle for maintaining cohesive and integrated communities that can actively explore and construct common visions to enable sustainable change. In addition, a key role for creative practice as 'wayfinder' is in imagining possible futures and building creative capacity in communities to develop ideas for change. Co-creation and co-design projects are engaging participants in imagining and constructing change.

Co-creation is a term referring to the engagement of participants in a creation process and similar terms include co-design and open-source. Creative practices have been picking up on trends like Wikipedia 'one of the extraordinary stories of the Internet age' (Giles, 2005, p.900) where groups of people create an artifact (eg. an encyclopaedia that is dynamically updated by a community of online users). The idea that a community of online users can produce a more reliable encyclopedia than the traditional hardcopy versions[2] has generated enthusiasm for the power of the collective spirit. The key characteristic of the online culture of open-source, like the Wikipedia example, is that a community of coders continually tinkers away on a particular project that is in use. Similarly, in Wikipedia people are using the site to find out 'who is that actress?' and the community is continually adding, correcting and expanding the information on the site. However, within the creative practices, co-creation and co-design tends to occur within the more traditional process of first the development happens and then it is presented for use and participation tends to stop at the outcome when the participant then becomes the user. This follows the fundamentally dipolar dimensions, of a defined beginning and end, within creative disciplines like design; when, at the point of production the creator surrenders the outcome to the user or audience.

Within the arts, participation in creating fits into a tradition of community arts. Madyaningrum and Sonn (2011, p.358) describe community arts in Australia as 'a form of cultural practice in which art is produced and used by local people within their communities as an instrument for social change'. GroundSwell, BighART and the St Christopher's Schools Project, described above, fit into this community arts tradition. Often, the value of community arts projects focuses on the process rather than the outcome, as Madyaningrum and Sonn's (2011, p.367) research highlights 'our analysis for interview data with people who participated in a community arts project suggests that people emphasized the value of participating together with others more than the actual story told through the play'. However this is not always the case and the move towards co-creation places more importance on collective authorship of valuable outcomes.

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[2] The old bound encyclopaedias suffered from the lag time of production concluding in out of date information. The speed at which Wikipedia updates information, as Giles (2005) suggests, far exceeds the abilities of a hardcopy version but also rivals the current online versions of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. Although discussions on Wikipedia's reliability are sometimes considered controversial, through a study for Nature, Giles (2005) found that the reliability of Wikipedia is very close to that of the online version of the Encyclopaedia Britannica. So close as to challenge Encyclopaedia Britannica to write a lengthy complaint to Nature (see http://www.nature.com/nature/journal/v438/n7070/full/438900a.html)

Timm-Bottos' (2011) Canadian initiative 'The Kitchen Table Arts Project', is an example of community art that not only focuses on the values the process can make to the community members who engage but also in terms of making creative outcomes of value and the role of making as activism. The local 'thrift-store' came to Timm-Bottos with concerns about the amount of cloths they had to send to land fill. In response, Timm-Bottos (2011, p.58) set up 'a small studio space in the corner of the Nelson thrift store for incubating ideas, increasing awareness, generating conversation, and, most importantly, for taking action'. Timm-Bottos called participants in this community studio 'self-described artists' and tapped into the Do-It-Yourself culture and local crafters to generate not only a fulfilling experience but also significant creative outcomes. For example, a volunteer 'Grace worked closely with a group of local nursing students heading to Guatemala to develop a reusable menstrual pad especially suitable for the particular conditions that the women faced there' (Timm-Bottos, 2011, p.60), which used the large amounts of flannel and towelling material available. Young local 'refashion designers' created the 'Children of the Seams' art collective culminating in an *Up-Cycled Fashion* show which 'raised almost $800' (Timm-Bottos, 2011, p.62). This project addressed not only local environmental issue of waste but also highlighted a larger 'complex global social justice issue' and through cooperative creative action participants 'redressing, reclaiming, remaking, and creatively restoring' (Timm-Bottos, 2011, p.63) became action against 'social, environmental, and political impact of fabric waste' (Timm-Bottos, 2011, p.58).

Within my own creative discipline of design, co-creation and co-design are part of participatory design. Participation has always been, to some extent, part of the design process; that is, at least in practice the 'client' becomes a key participant in the process of design even if it is only, for example, in defining the brief and in choosing one of three design proposals. However, within the last few years there has been growing interest in engaging participants in the designing process and in constructing outcomes. The growing prominence of co-creation and co-design within the discipline of design is evident in the growing number of contributions to this area of research at major design research conferences. For example, the last European Academy of Design conference *Crafting the Future*, in April 2013, dedicated a theme to co-creation and co-design entitled 'Power to the People: Practices of Empowerment through Craft' (see http://www.craftingthefuture.se/). Within this theme papers described projects ranging from using co-design methods to engage youths from poverty situation in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil 'so they can become agents of change and replicators' (Tanaka, 2013, p.1) to projects exploring design activism through collaborative knitting in the form of a re-making activity to discuss 'what we perceive we can do to existing garments, whether we see them as "open" or "closed", and what factors affect those perceptions' (Twigger Holroyd, 2013, p.7). In a recent *Design Issues* paper, Steen (2013, p.27) argues for the inherent ethical quality of co-design as 'a process in which participants are able to express and share their experiences, to discuss and negotiate their roles and interests, and to jointly bring about positive change'. Furthermore, my own research work (Hocking, 2011) showed that the co-design process of design research can enable the participants not only to engage in the process of design but also mould the research process itself to construct knowledge for change.

Blue Sky to Nuts and Bolts

Despite the potential of co-creation and co-design, the looming question still remains, how do we get good ideas to go somewhere? A question that unites disciplines – how do we effectively work together to create change? It is one thing to develop creative methods that enables communities to collectively dream of sustainable futures – this is a vitally important step – but how does this translate into 'real world' changes that do not get whittled away to nothingness through the grind of the 'nuts and bolts', the realities of institutionalised limitations and regulations. It is tempting to stay in my research studio and just do my bit of the puzzle (ie. researching new design-led ways to build creative capacity for imaging the future) and that would be ok if it was a relay race (I could just hand on the baton for the next person/discipline to keep on running down the path) but, as yet, it's not. Consequently, we cannot neglect to engage in the practical notion of applying creative process to the 'nuts and bolts' of implementing change. So, how do good ideas go somewhere?

The Bronte Catchment Project (BCP) in Sydney (during 2000 to 2001) is an account of a project that successfully goes from a 'blue sky' process to the 'nuts and bolts' of implementing change. The project

engaged community participation through community development activities, citizen jury and a review of Council activities and processes with the aim to improve water quality at Bronte Beach resulting in 'the development of a new environmental management approach for Waverley Council' (Elton, Ryan & Rudland, 2002, p.2). According to Healy (2003, pp.101-106) BCP success went from how the project 'facilitated project learning and reflection with an increasing understanding of local conditions and issues feeding into the development of conceptual insights deployed during the project' that was able to create behavioral change 'where and how residents wash their cars and how the council mows grass verges, etc.—that determines improved stormwater outcomes'. More recently, Australian born Artist Natalie Jeremijenko is making it work in New York, with co-design projects like 'NoPark'. Part of the 'Environmental Health Clinic' at New York University, these projects are engaging participants called 'ImPatience' in turning sustainable design processes into 'real world' solutions (see http://www.environmentalhealthclinic.net/). The NoPark project 'uses a legal gap in traffic storage interfaces (i.e. no parking zones in front of hydrants) to install intricately designed gardens which absorb automobile related pollutants right where they are generated' (Bratton & Jeremijenko, 2008, p.10). These examples are successfully engaging participants in processes that generate good ideas that are implemented to effect change.

And then there are recounts of many other stories of great processes and good ideas that go missing, getting flattened by the realities of local contexts. At a recent Society of Human Ecology conference I collaborated with a number of colleagues (Hocking, Eyles, & Cleverley, 2013) to pose this question (ie. how do we get good ideas to go somewhere?) in a workshop for a cross disciplinary range of participants. Two interesting ideas immerged from the workshop, one that there was no consensus on a clearly identifiable process that all participants could agree on and the other was that maybe something small equals success. Firstly, Cleverley recounted stories from her experiences at local council and frustrations of a great process and good ideas being shelved for a new and less inspiring plan. After which, the participants identified in Cleverley's story small projects that were inspired by the 'blue sky' process; like, a mothers group that was imagined through the process and implemented by the local mothers involved. Perhaps the fact that the local council shelved the good ideas did not mean 'fail' but that the process had inspired ideas to flourish in the community and the 'fittest' ones to generate outcomes might mean a resounding 'success'. Maybe it is our expectations within a wicked context that need to change. Conceivably this rather anecdotal evidence could lead us to explore the notion, supported by Rittel (1972) and Rittel and Webber (1973), that perhaps firstly the process will never be the same and therefore there will always be a need to find a path, however good we get at the process, there will never be one clearly agreed upon process to take within a wicked context and secondly that small is success. BighART promote their successes[3] but are also realistic about the nature of working with 'wicked problems' as highlighted on their website:

> Do projects work?... Not always! BighART projects are by necessity dealing with complex and emerging issues, requiring the development of new solutions. Our projects are always a learning experience, because we fully engage with participants to find the right way of working for each community. (see http://bighart.org/public/?p=84)

But what about the speed imperative in which we live, do we have the time for wayfinding with such small returns? Shouldn't we optimise the effectiveness?

If it were possible to 'optimise the effectiveness' then my response gets back to the cross-disciplinary, trans-disciplinary, interdisciplinary debate. A semantic one perhaps, about the extent of integration each term defines, but I'm not so concerned about definitions. It is the idea of relationships between the disciplines that interests me in the question of 'wayfinding' and this can happen between people within distinct disciplinary frameworks or within a person that mixes disciplinary perspectives or between a combination of the two. Then there is the idea of roles and this goes beyond the disciplines into what Bremner (2005) would call 'the real world' of professional and participatory roles within a community based process. The question is how does it all fit together? Although, theorists such as Val Brown (2008)

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[3] BighART's domestic violence prevention project on the North West Coast of Tasmania was used to 'help shape the Prime Minister's Partnerships Against Domestic Violence – Youth Strategy, for implementation nationally' and subsequently 'local domestic violence agency reported a 600% rise in the numbers of young people seeking help with local agencies' (see http://bighart.org/public/?p=84)

have provided guidance and theoretical frameworks, in practice this is something that we are still working out.

Designerly Musings

The insights I can offer, into how to go from 'blue sky' to 'nuts and bolts', is limited to contemplations from where my research has taken me so far. My work to date has been looking at how my own discipline of design fits within a wider research context; fundamentally about what role design can play and how it can engage with other disciplines. Making disciplines accessible and learning to engage with other disciplines and roles is part of working out how these relationships can generate new paths and 'optimise the effectiveness' of delivering outcomes for change. This, I suggest, is about developing a tacit knowledge of doing rather than mapping out the chaotic interplay of relationships that can race the 'baton' down a well defined path. As Glanville (2007) reminds us about complex contexts, we do not need to know how the internal mechanisms of a door-handle work to be able to open a door. It is about the conversation, the two-and-fro of engaging in a process and collectively finding a way to create and implement change. If this sounds rather 'utopian' that is because optimal effectiveness can only be an ideal that causes us to explore how a complex network of disciplines and practical roles can engage within an equally complex network of locations, situations and events that can forge new directions towards change. Then when we have implemented change it is not a case of being able to say 'ok we have found the answer to life the universe and everything, now everyone can go home', instead there needs to be a continual re-engagement. Rittel (1972, p.392) defined this as 'no stopping point' and that is because there are no problems or solutions in the wicked, no beginning or end just a continual creation and re-creation. Law's (2004) imperative is that it is going to be messy and it's going to stay messy and trying to clean it up is just going to create more mess. What Glanville is suggesting (with the door handle analogy) is that there is no need to clean it up.

Designers, and creative practices in general, learn to work in and with the mess (a state sometimes reminiscent of Munch's *The Scream* 1895). By this I mean to suggest the rational approaches to knowledge construction, as Law (2004) suggests, have a tendency to try to 'clean up'; that is, understand before they know and then do. Whereas creative practices based on pre-rational forms of knowledge construction, let's call it un-rational (ie. other than rational), as Glanville suggests have developed approaches for working with the mess by keeping it messy. In other words this un-rational approach does not try to understand or know before they do rather they do to understand and know. Design research work like Manzini's, and others in Europe over the last decades, has been trying to pick up on the small successes and amplify them into major agents of change. Manzini's (2003) *Sustainable Everyday Scenarios of Urban Life* project could be described as an exhibition of ideas that 'went nowhere'; however, it was a very influential project. Small initiatives inspired by such 'blue sky' processes, such as car-share[4] and walking-bus[5], while initiated in Europe have incubated into global presences with car-share service Go Get (http://www.goget.com.au/) 'launched in Sydney as Newtown CarShare in 2003' (Ramirez & Nawangpalupi, 2006, p.205) and walking-bus becoming more common part of social practice. The point I want to stress is that just because the optimal efficiency may be missing, in big projects with small successes, this should not be the end. Not dismissing a need to follow through from idea to implementation but the success of 'blue sky' ideas can vary in size and extent; perhaps, with further research we might be able to show that small is in fact beautiful and that starting off small gives time and space for an idea to morph into a successful outcome. How does this work within the speed imperative? Do we have time? The realities of institutions and funding may make it difficult to take the time but I propose that the 'wicked muse' can help make it work.

Conclusion

How can the 'wicked muse' enable us to take the time to invest in big ideas that produce small outcomes? I propose the answer is by supporting cultural systems which maintain an active generation of collective

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[4] Car-share is a product-service-system initiative where members are encouraged to not own their own car by having easy access to a car borrowing system

[5] Walking-bus is where parents take it in turns to walk a large group of children to school. There is an adult at the front 'driver', and at the back 'conductor' like on a bus. (Kearns, Collins & Neuwelt, 2003)

thinking that can be 'taped into' to produce specific projects with outcomes that feed back into this social activity that is constantly in the process of designing and re-constructing our culture of living. It is about, firstly, acknowledging the role of creative practice and cultural production from 'high art' to 'popular culture' as playing a fundamental role in society that is constantly working within the public discourse, both constructing and disseminating knowledge. It is about supporting and valuing these cultural systems and is why Zuidervaart (2011) argues for the importance of funding the arts. Strengthening these cultural systems enables specific co-creation and co-design projects to become effective nodes that can 'tap into' this social activity to imagine, generate and implement change. Part of developing co-design and co-creation projects as effective nodes is, perhaps, about open projects that build creative capacity and facilitate ongoing engagement to produce dynamic and resilient outcomes with no clear end point. That is, like the open-source examples, outcomes are simultaneously used and continuously constructed. Secondly, it is about articulating the methods and theories of creative practice; about, further understanding and developing creative approaches and processes for imagining and generating change and how this fits into a wider context of knowledge construction, networks of disciplines and roles. Thirdly, it is about exploring how to coordinate this collaboration of approaches, between a variety of disciplines and roles to imagine, generate and effect change.

Creative practice can engage us in imagining sustainable futures, prompting public debate, promoting and disseminating information, presenting different perspectives, creative capacity building and visualising change. When issues have neither a clearly definable problem nor a concluding solution we all need to engage with their complexity through interconnected cybernetic loops of engagement, feedback, action, imagination, comprehension, creation and contemplation – with no summation. This means that we are not looking for a one off solution, a point where we can stop engaging. Instead, we need a continuing engagement that becomes part of our culture of living. The muse can infuse this wicked conversation with culturally rich meaning to help engage communities in constructing more sustainable cultures of living.

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