



Arts and
Humanities
Research Council

**CLORE
LEADERSHIP**

Clore Leadership-AHRC Online Research Library Paper

Where currents meet...Leading collaboration: an exploration of methods for bringing people together from the arts and other disciplines to achieve shared goals

Author: Becky Swain

Supervisor/s: Cameron Cartiere,

Department of Media and Cultural Studies, Birkbeck College,

Year paper completed: 2009

Leadership Content Theme/s: Qualities of Leadership, Inclusive Leadership Practice, Sector Insights

AHRC Subject Area/s: Policy Arts Management and Creative Industries, Cultural Geography, Community Art (including Art and Health)

A note on contents:

Since 2005 Clore Leadership and AHRC have partnered to offer a diverse range of cultural leaders the opportunity to produce a piece of extended research relating to leadership and to their specific cultural discipline. These papers, published from 2023 onward on the Clore Leadership-AHRC online research library, reflect an important contribution to the field and we are extremely pleased to make them available to practitioners, scholars, and other interested parties. We recognise that this research library contains a range of terminologies and outlooks: these are reflective of the significant and ongoing changes within the cultural sector over the past 20 years. As such we urge readers to recognise that the authors' thinking and language may have shifted since completion of these papers, or may be in the process of shifting as consequence of their enquiries.

Unless otherwise stated, research papers included in the Clore Leadership-AHRC Online Research Library have not been formally peer reviewed or published in an academic journal.



This work is licensed under a [Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 2.0 UK: England & Wales License](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/2.0/uk/).

Where currents meet...

**Leading collaboration: an exploration of methods
for bringing people together from the arts and
other disciplines to achieve shared goals**

**Clare Leadership Programme Research Report
Becky Swain
Clare Learning Fellow 2008-9**

**Academic Supervisor: Dr Cameron Cartiere, Lecturer in Arts Policy and
Management, Department of Media and Cultural Studies, Birkbeck College,
London**

**Contact:
Becky Swain
T: +44 7966204717
E: Beckyswain2000@yahoo.co.uk**

Contents

1. Introduction: a bridge into research	4
2. Research: Leading Collaboration	7
3. Conversation as method	8
4. Conversations: four case studies	9
4.1 Manifesto of Possibilities	9
4.2 Roots and Wings	14
4.3 C Words	20
4.4 Artist as Leader Lab	26
5. Key themes	30
6. Conclusion	33
7. Bibliography	36
8. Acknowledgments	36

'Where currents meet there is fog, but often the best fishing'
Guy Claxton, Creative Partnerships conference, Bristol, February 2009.

1. Introduction

In the next few pages I want to reflect on the reasons why I am attracted to this subject and to create a bridge within this introduction between my past and current professional practice and the specific research focus I want to explore.

As a naturally curious individual, hearing about other people's passions and what gives them the drive to be who they are has always excited me. Since I can remember I have wanted to understand difference. I suspect this urge is led by a wonder and curiosity about the new and unknown. Also, coming from a family with strong socialist values and being part of the peace movement, The Woodcraft Folk, from the age of six, I developed a healthy social conscience and desire to find ways to work together against injustice and to achieve positive change where it is needed. What follows for me is often a strong feeling that in collaboration, we can understand, see and do more together.

During my degree course at Bretton Hall College in the 1980's I was able to explore this fascination with finding meeting points with those who have other specialist skills and knowledge within other arts disciplines and consider what we could achieve together. There was immediately a strong sense for me at that time that creativity comes from combining different ways of seeing things.

My degree course was an interdisciplinary arts course where students from different disciplines, including English, dance, music, ceramics, fine art and social studies would learn and meet together for at least one full day a week across three years to mix things up, learn from each other and work together in cross-disciplinary teams. The Inter-arts department was an antidote to what seemed like an ivory tower drama department within the college that was brilliant as its job of developing actors and focused in a way that I expect they thought they needed to be. However, I was more interested in the interdisciplinary nature of the Inter-arts course and the expectation of theatre making across art forms and a community project linking arts, education and community, pooling our expertise to achieve something unique. During that year I completed a community project with Sheffield Steiner School and was introduced to a holistic approach to education that valued the arts and science as integral to learning.

So, my fascination was fueled as a student by an interest in what makes for genuine, strong collaboration and how interdisciplinary practice stretches and challenges all those involved.

Throughout my time as a secondary teacher of English and drama I leaned towards the need for collaboration and conversation across departments rather than developing subject knowledge and teaching and learning practice in isolation without considering their relationship to other disciplines. Much of my time as a teacher centred on encouraging others to consider the importance of arts and creativity across all curriculum subject to enhance teaching and learning for young people.

Having explored theatre making with young people as a Theatre Education Officer, and worked as a freelancer bringing scientists and drama teachers together for projects. I then joined the national office team of Creative Partnerships (CP) in 2002, the governments flagship creative learning programme for schools across England. The work I led at CP involved the development of training and continuing professional development models that effectively brought people together from different disciplines

across arts and education, specifically teachers and artists, working with them to prepare them to work together in partnership to lead creative learning projects in schools. The real challenge at the centre of this work was often how to form a strong, equal starting point between two or more in partnership, enabling a strong foundation for them to work towards a common aim or purpose working with young people as equal partners. Often creating shared experiences and removing individuals' labels as 'teacher' and 'artist' was a key starting point.

Apart from supporting professional learning and knowledge sharing across the national Creative Partnerships programme, I learnt a lot from two particular projects that we funded; the Teacher Artist Partnership Programme (TAPP), a professional development programme for artists and teachers; and Creative Science Teaching Labs with Performing Arts Lab (PAL) creating interdisciplinary labs of learning, supporting shared professional development, experimentation and play for artists, scientists and science teachers.

During my time at CP I also initiated REFLECT in 2008, a national cross sector co-mentoring programme pairing professionals from cultural sector with educationalists and school staff for a collaborative learning opportunity enabling them to have the time and space to share, to reflect and to focus on a self-directed task or enquiry.

Following those programmes I have been considering many examples of good practice in socially engaged work such as the work of Mark Storor and Anna Ledgard linking arts, education and health in projects like 'For the Best'. I have become more interested in reflective practice, partnership working, shared professional learning and knowledge sharing across sectors to support those involved in socially engaged practice. Under our former Labour government there was a renewed emphasis from central government on integrated and multi-agency approaches to meeting the needs of communities, particularly with children and young people and meeting Every Child Matters outcomes. Even without this continued emphasis our current government and their aspiration for 'The Big Society' will rely on people working together to meet the communities needs if it is to succeed.

Integrated working has always involved linking services across areas such as education, social care, health, arts and youth justice within a locality. For this to be effective it will rely on all those around the table understanding each other's work and unique perspectives. I suspect some of the examples I will look at as part of this research will help draw out key elements for effective collaboration.

When I applied for Clore in March 2008 I applied for the Learning Fellowship. This Fellowship is open to individuals working in education in cultural organisations or at a senior level within formal education, effectively linking learning and culture. One of my aims for applying to the Fellowship was to work towards developing synergy and cross-sector collaboration between the education and cultural sector to influence practice and policy. Having worked for six years as part of a national programme, I want to consider how best to facilitate high quality culture and learning experiences for children and young people and particularly how to support a skilled, confident, diverse workforce involved in socially engaged practice.

I have reflected on my core values in work and life and a strong connecting thread is trust, creativity and kindness, particularly ensuring everyone's voice is heard in any context in which I work, ensuring social change through purposeful collaboration. I enjoy working with others, connecting people and supporting others to imagine and see possibilities for positive change. I think there is a need to create a 'holding space' in the work that I do, nurturing and valuing a space where people from different art forms,

sectors and professional hierarchies can express themselves on an equal basis and work together effectively in partnership to meet joint aims. I have kept a quotation close to my office desk all year that seems to have renewed significance, 'Growth comes through analogy, through seeing how things connect rather than only seeing how they might be different'¹

I have also been part of the Common Purpose Meridian programme this year, bringing senior professionals together from sectors as diverse as law, finance, education, health, police, business and social charities to gather a picture about the true and real impacts of good practice in each others work. The programme has actively encouraged us all to lead beyond authority in a civic space working together towards common goals.

I have had the pleasure of working with Siobhan Davies as a mentor over the past year with much of our conversation focused on respect for other disciplines and how they interrelate, seeing collaboration as an active tool and exploration of the interaction between art forms. One thing that strikes me about her artistic process is about how important it is for her to be in conversation with artists from other disciplines within the arts and beyond to science and architecture. She continues to develop a number of public 'conversations' with artists and others from different disciplines within and beyond the arts seeing the dialogues as, 'an invitation to extend analysis in unexpected and stimulating directions'.

So, I am interested in locality, socially engaged practice and how professionals and non-professionals can work together from different disciplines for shared goals. I started this research with some great questions such as:

- What might work best in terms of collaborative or integrated working?
- Why collaborate? Why work with other disciplines? What's the benefit? What's the aim and why might it be stronger to work together?
- How can you ensure meaningful dialogue about common goals? and Is there a need for shared experiences?

I am fascinated within this research period to find out how others have found effective ways to work together. My research focus will consider an exploration of effective methodologies for bringing people together from the arts and other disciplines. Reading about the Manifesto of Possibilities, one of my chosen case studies in this research paper, I really did enthuse me in terms of its potential to create a frame from which all can contribute their understanding for mutual benefit.

Whilst I don't know the outcome of the research, I want to learn from different methodologies to inform interdisciplinary approaches to affecting positive change for young people and communities in future. There will likely be lessons for professional development for those that work across sectors in a locality to apply to future work in terms of interdisciplinary projects or collaboration across disciplines and the design and development of CPD for collaborative partnerships working. It will also be important to look at the next layer in terms of interrogating the thinking behind how the methodologies were developed.

¹ Ken Robinson, The Element – How finding your passion changes everything, page 50

'When we collaborate with others, when we put our heads together to figure something out, we're engaged in a kind of a performance of understanding. We are playing out our puzzles, our experience, our individual contributions, trying to meld them together and to compose something that makes sense, that solves a problem, that delivers a service that fits a need.'

David Perkins

2. Research

In asking myself, what makes collaboration work, both within and beyond the arts? I want to explore the key qualities of effective leadership of collaborative projects across disciplines for shared goals.

The research question that has emerged through exploring the theme through a number of case studies of collaboration is:

How do we achieve shared goals through leading interdisciplinary collaboration?

This research will focus on exploring four case studies that offer up methodologies for bringing people together from the arts and other disciplines. These methodologies will be explored through conversations with some of the leaders, facilitators and producers of those projects alongside some additional reading and research around the subject of collaboration.

Over the spring and early summer of 2010, I had conversations with four individuals who have led interdisciplinary collaborations about a recent project they had led. I then transcribed each conversation verbatim. Having listened to and then read each of the conversations, I started to analyse what had been said, to link threads and draw out emerging themes about collaboration within each case study in terms of key methods or processes.

The methodology of engaging conversation as method in this research is key to the way in which I set about exploring how others have achieved shared goals through collaboration with a range of professionals across disciplines. I have trusted the process of conversation in developing my understanding of each case study, analysing themes and offering sub headings to clarify what I see as the threads that were instrumental in ensuring effective interdisciplinary collaboration within each case study project.

Having mulled over and talked with others about the subject of my research for some months, a number of case studies were suggested to me, either by my tutor Cameron Cartiere, through conversations with colleagues or through my own research.

I was sure that I wanted to explore collaborations that were out of my immediate areas of knowledge such as drama and theatre, or arts education that was primarily focused on schools or children and young people's learning. Also, having contributed to the development of Creative Partnerships in terms of artists and schools working with young people to lead projects, I wanted to widen my knowledge of collaborations across a range of disciplines beyond the arts. Evidently, one case study focused on a school community was so compelling that I couldn't resist including it.

As I considered which projects to explore in more depth it became clear that each was led by an individual who identified either as an artist or who whose practice bridges arts

and social education, arts and social activism or arts and cultural policy. Each of the lead collaborators I chose to meet exuded an incurable curiosity and openness to working with those beyond their own specialism.

It was also important to me that I chose four interdisciplinary projects that have contributed to significant change or positive outcomes where those involved worked together for shared goals; whether for the development of public art practice and policy; transforming the emotional resilience of a community; provoking thinking and action on environment; or grappling with how artists might take a lead in shaping cultural policy.

My aim is to consider each of these collaborations and their underlying methodologies. I want simply to build on and apply learning from both my own experience and those of the chosen case studies below in order to inform my own practice for future collaborations and interdisciplinary ways of working.

I also suspect that through drawing together themes that emerge across the four case studies and attempting to answer my research question, it may raise further questions about the art of collaboration as well as some of the potential barriers to effective collaboration and how we overcome them.

3. Conversation as method

'The quality of an organisation can be measured in the quality of its conversations'
David Perkins

I invited four individuals who had led separate interdisciplinary projects working with artists and others beyond arts disciplines to enter into a conversation with me about their projects.

I began conversations with individuals with an invitation to them to;
'Describe the journey of the project from the first seed of an idea....'

Each individual was then able to describe their project in detail without interruption. Later, as a dialogue opened up between the interviewees and myself, we were able to explore aspects that were of particular interest to me. Where interviewees had not already touched on specific areas, I was able to ask open questions such as:

How far did you achieve what you set out to do?

Could you say more about the outcomes of the project, those that were expected and those that were surprising or unexpected?

What were the challenges and how did you overcome them?

What might you change or do differently next time?

To what extent was the project outcome a beginning?

Tell me more about the thinking behind the methodology?

Is there anything else you would have liked me ask?

To a large extent I have trusted the process of conversation as method. With each case study conversation I needed to remain open and fluid rather than draw judgements. I have aimed to let themes and recommendations begin to reveal themselves in relation to my exploration of interdisciplinary collaboration.

4. Conversations: Four case studies

'There can be no satisfactory conversation without mutual respect. Respect discovers the equal dignity of others.'

Theodore Zeldin

4.1 Manifesto of Possibilities: Commissioning Public Art in the Urban Environment

'This was a critical moment. I need to do something, radical problems need radical solutions and the boldness and ambition of a manifesto seemed to suit'.

Cameron Cartiere

The Manifesto of Possibilities is described as 'a discussion document for commissioning public art in the urban environment'. Designed as a poster, the manifesto highlights areas of consideration including the commission, the artist, the curator, evaluation, community engagement, and the art itself.

The Manifesto of Possibilities www.manifestoofpossibilities.co.uk/ is a well-documented project with the manifesto described as offering the 'chance for anyone involved in the public art process to address the uncertainties of commissioning art in areas of urban change, discuss crucial concerns, and devise tangible solutions.'

When you visit the project web pages you are able to view the document and download a free poster version, join the online discussion about the manifesto and explore a whole range of resource links. There is also a student page for posting projects and using the manifesto as a teaching tool, although this aspect of the project is still in development.

Dr Cameron Cartiere and Sophie Hope (as part of her PHD studies) initiated conversations that became the Manifesto of Possibilities, through a collaborative process involving a diverse range of people with shared goals within public art. In order to understand this collaborative process and get a sense of the project from the first seed of the idea to fruition and future life of a project I interviewed Dr Cameron Cartiere.

Possibility and Positivity

With the potential of LCACE funding back in 2006 to run an evening event around leadership and arts management, Dr Cartiere responded that she was much more interested in having 'a rolling conversation'. Tired of one off events where people would get together, make unrealistic promises and often nothing productive would happen, and with expertise in public art and social engagement, Dr Cartiere was interested in 'grappling with the issues that are really facing us here in London, such as urban regeneration, activism and community engagement.'

A supportive link in Marjorie Hoek at LCACE was key to open up possibilities at the earliest stage:

CC: 'We're just painfully optimistic, and I think that's a crucial element in all of this... You have to have people for whom their first response is not 'no', or all the reasons why it won't work. Their first response has to be 'Wow, that's really interesting, so what can we do with that'. The fear factor has to be pretty low.'

Ambition

Bold and ambitious thinking led the first planning to consider a rolling conversation that would be sited in appropriate venues: Public Art and Community Engagement at Tate Modern; Arts and Regeneration at the Greater London Authority (GLA) in the Town Hall; and Arts and Activism at the Whitechapel in May 2006.

The three events, 'Building Cultures' Seminar Series, Art and OUR City, in May 2006, provided the opportunity for artists, curators, educators, politicians, and other professionals involved in public art processes to engage in dialogue and raise the issues and concerns generated by their work in the public realm. Dr Cartiere spoke of these 'events' as the first part of a conversation where the airing of views and sharing of experiences would take place. Dinners followed for the panel for each conversation event in the series so that conversation could continue beyond the events.

Having made a substantially more complex proposal and got funding agreed by LCACE, it was decided to video each conversation and to publicize them as a series. Evidently, through the series interest grew and grew, with standing room only by the third conversation where, 'conversations evolved further than they had before'. People began to network across the series reaching about 300 people actively involved.

Making connections

Thinking and reflection time followed, watching videos of the event but more importantly getting distance from the conversations across the series. On a tour along the west coast of North America looking at public art through the lens of transportation, Dr Cartiere saw over a hundred public art works and met many public art officers:

CC: 'Several interesting things happened. One was that people knew about each other, but they were so busy, so overworked, so focused on their bit, that they had no idea that a person 100 miles away, or across the bay, was actually grappling with exactly the same issue.'

As the traveler of the piece, connecting all the dots, she started to become a conduit, linking people up, becoming a 'collector of this microcosm of people's experiences, positive and negative'. Hearing of individuals' frustrations in the public art commissioning process from different perspectives over and over again Dr Cartiere kept thinking, 'if I could get all of these people in a conversation at a table a lot of this would be resolved. It was a conversation over a coffee where I said, 'We need a manifesto!''

Mapping for radical solutions

CC: 'This was a critical moment. I need to do something, radical problems need radical solutions and the boldness and ambition of a manifesto seemed to suit'.

With Sophie Hope working on the project as a PHD case study a collaboration began and both Dr Cartiere and Sophie Hope started to brainstorm together, watching all of the videos of the conversation series, pulling out common themes and started doing a mind map.

With another call for seed funding the aim was to collaborate to 'develop a manifesto on how to commission public art works in the public environment. What we wanted to do was to help bring these people together at a table to work together'.

Leaps of faith and the language of consensus

The second part of the conversation in February 2007 took the form of 'Building Cultures 2: A Manifesto of Possibilities' action workshops to consider how issues could be addressed and to consider appropriate positive action. Seventy-five people were invited to come to an action workshop and it was made very clear that it was an 'action' workshop.

Sophie Hope launched the event proposing that the aim was to create a 'working document that we present to the Greater London Authority (GLA), Department for Culture Media and Sport (DCMS) and all the other agencies involved in regeneration and public art'.

Having presented issues from reviewing videos of the first set of conversations both Dr Cartiere and Sophie Hope facilitated clear boundaries with the group and an agreement not to get 'stuck in a loop', but to agree to disagree about some things and move on. It was clearly important to reassure the group that there was no hidden agenda and to pre-empt questions that could derail purposeful discussion and action.

CC: 'One of the issues raised was 'Who is this for?', and our position was 'It's for whoever needs it.'

Asked, 'What is Public Art?', both were clear that 'it wasn't a conversation that was right for now, 'It's everything'. Can we agree that there are probably lots of methods and ways we can approach doing this but as a group we are going to take a leap of faith and try things and see what happens. If you can't take that leap of faith we won't hold it against you, you just should probably leave now.' Evidently, nobody left.

The six areas, identified by Dr Cartiere and Sophie Hope were: The Changing Roles of Public Art, Public Art and Urban Renewal, Regeneration and Gentrification, The Public Art Profession, Evaluation and Public Art as a Negotiating Power. Facilitated break out sessions followed with groups having a chance to discuss and note issues and key problems, with time to report back to the rest of the group.

Food

Earlier conversations held at the Tate Modern, GLA and the Whitechapel Gallery purposefully involved panelists and others in informal conversation and debate over dinner and these events involved a lunch, encouraging informal discussion to continue.

CC: 'This is always important in the methodology. Food, drink, hospitality, goodwill. These are all things that people don't consider as essential elements but they are crucial and we were also banking on these people to give us their time and their best thinking.'

Framing the task

Participants were asked to go back to their groups and discuss key themes and to; 'Come back with one, if not two or three concrete suggestions,' effectively asking those present 'what do you want? And what are you going to do about it?'

It was explained that participants were going to contribute to a draft document that would be created as a Wiki and that over the next two months participants and anyone else with an interest in the work could have a chance to feedback and comment on whether they felt anything had be misinterpreted, or missed out. The document was also sent to a broader field and other experts in different fields.

Rosemary Shirley, artist, writer and editor of Leisure Centre, Rosemary Shirley www.leisurecentre.org.uk states;

'Proposed action points included calls for: artists to be designated equity with other professionals involved in public art projects, the development of systems to allow knowledge sharing particularly in reference to models of evaluation and good practice and the recognition of the importance of risk in delivering successful public art projects.'

Dialogue at policy level

The sense of ambition and possibility continued as key drivers in the project and from the very start being in dialogue with people at policy level within DCMS was key to ensuring that it would find the most appropriate and influential form.

CC: 'We asked, if we were to do a document like this, what would make it helpful to you? How could it help you do your job?'

With hindsight it is possible to see what a radical position that is to take, but at the time it was a simple and crucial question that would help ensure the energy captured in layers of conversation could develop into something that was practically useful and would inform or encourage positive change in the way people developed public art.

'Organisers and the participants emphasised that the creation of such a document does not represent the end of the argument; instead it is intended to engage all those working in the public realm to join the debate.' (Rosemary Shirley 2006)

Cameron was clear that for policy makers they would get 'the best thinking of this community of interest,' and by bringing the collective knowledge of a group of professionals together you are getting 'a broader perspective and seeing how these things don't operate in isolation'.

Questioning existing paradigms

The Manifesto poster was also a response to what Cameron referred to as a movement that was happening where many evaluation toolkits were being used in public art, with 'the evaluation of an artists designed bench with the same criteria you'd use to evaluate a public performance or community project involving three schools and a homeless shelter.'

CC: 'This stance on evaluation was entirely floored as one has to ask, 'What are we asking public art to do in this situation? What is it you want it to do? Situation A is going to be different from situation B. You say firstly, 'What is it you want it to do? What it should be? Did it do what you wanted it to do?'

CC: 'It has been quite controversial in academic circles as an outcome of research...but we wanted to have something that could reach out to a lot of people'

Cameron and Sophie felt in many ways that a mind map poster would have a 'neutral position'.

Cameron referred to the manifesto poster as a 'knowledge transfer exchange document. It is the collective knowledge of the community, transferring it to people who actually need to use it'.

CC: 'It goes back to the question of 'Who is the manifesto for?' It is for whoever needs it. It is for the artist who has been asked to do a public art commission. It's for the arts administrator. It's for the developer who wants to get involved. It's for the community organiser who thinks that public art might be interesting or who is looking for a way to engage artists. Each one of these categories offers a way in, a way into the whole picture'

Distribution

The draft version of The Manifesto of Possibilities was launched as a Wiki on May Day (2007) and was open for comment and consideration for two months. This provided an additional opportunity for conversation with an even broader audience. The final version of the manifesto poster was launched officially at the National Public Art Conference in Nottingham on December 7, 2007. A pdf version of the poster was also available on the wiki site.

Several people took posters, with Lewis Biggs from Liverpool Biennale stating that he could use this every day, that every day he would get people calling him up asking how to start a public art commission, whether there were any guidelines and he could give them the Manifesto of Possibilities poster.

Over 15,000 poster leaflets have been distributed far and wide with requests coming in from Japan, Taiwan and Europe. Over 10,000 visitors have visited the wiki site where the poster can be downloaded. The poster has been used to help draft the National Public Art Policy in Taiwan and by a major public art organization in Japan to draft their proposals. It has also been used as part of a project to train public art curators in New Zealand.

'We wanted the poster to be up on the wall and so that the Public Art Officer who is trying to facilitate and negotiate could say 'We talked about this, but looking at the poster we haven't talked about...'

Effectively the poster becomes another voice in the planning process with recognised authority.

Letting go

Many comments about the Manifesto have been from people who have received the poster and testify that it is always up on the wall in their office. Whilst they have forgotten where they got it, they refer to it and use it regularly in their work. For Dr Cartiere and Sophie Hope there is a sense that the Manifesto has a life of its own.

CC: 'Once we let it go, we really did let it go'.

Rather than a launch event that would be 'just self-congratulatory' it was felt that so much more could be done with that money.

CC: 'How about we do a London launch but take it for a test drive. Let's invite people. We'll present it again and put them in break out groups. Let them bring a problem and try it and see if it works and let them get some support. It was about giving people a chance to test things out in a safe environment and to feel more confident to actually go out and use it and show other people how they might be able to use it.

'This is where, really truly, if you believe in collaboration, you test it...You could make a project your lifelong project mission but I think for me it's important to know that it has its own legs so that it's not always dependent on you'.

The collective nature of developing the manifesto and consensus seeking has meant that likely to have a real life of its own.

Navigating complexity

CC: 'People open the map and say, 'I had no idea it was so complicated?''

When you look at the Manifesto of Possibilities one page poster at a glance you can see that developing public art is not a simple process. However, in its simplicity it lays out the complexity of the collective journey towards really successful and meaningful public arts projects. It is an invitation to understand and be involved in a complex process, and as Cameron states, 'you know, not everybody should do public art. If you look at the map and it scares you, you should walk away, walk away now.'

4.2 Roots and Wings

'I wouldn't be anywhere else on a certain Tuesday in July.

These children are in the driving seat of cultural change. Where they lead, perhaps adults will have the sense to follow.'

From One Day In July, Mary Robson

'Roots and Wings,' is a multi-faceted, arts based, emotional literacy project based within Chickenley Community Primary School in West Yorkshire. The project received external funding from The Children's Fund in Kirklees for 5 years to employ artists to work with the children and staff of the school to promote health, wellbeing and personal development.

The project has been recognised nationally and used as a model of good practice for many other projects with NHS Kirklees committing additional funding in recognition of the benefits that the project brings to the school, its young people and the local community.

To understand the journey of the project and the significance of 'a certain Tuesday in July,' I interviewed the Roots and Wings Project Director, Mary Robson who told me the story of the project.

The journey to 'Roots and Wings' began when Chickenley School were in special measures and a new head teacher took over. She was struck by the very poor educational experience of the children and highly demoralised staff.

Building relationships

Having attended a conference the Chickenley head teacher met another school head in a similarly deprived primary school. They told of how they had found that one of their parents, who was an artist, had come in and started to work with them and they had developed a relationship with him. The head teacher of this school described in inspiring detail how 'together over time they had forged work that had made the children 'happy and more in a position to learn'.

The Chickenley head teacher came away wanting to find an artist of her own and with the help of the Chair of Governors they applied to The Children's Fund for three years funding. The school had some support from LOCA, the Kirklee's Council arts and regeneration agency, for some aspects of project management such as recruiting artists. The school then applied for 70 artists days a term over three years because they wanted there to be a real presence in school with artists building positive relationships with different adults and children over time.

Deep hanging around

Mary was asked by LOCA if she wanted to apply to work on the project at Chickenley. Based on the strength of the bid, Mary met the Head and Deputy Head:

M: 'It was like we were triplets. We just got on instantly....there was a wonderful blank canvas. I was introduced to everybody in school and did a lot of deep hanging around. Between us we thought that the kids who need the most help are the ones who are leaving. They were the children who had had 14 teachers and their behaviour was somewhat off the scale'.

Developing a common language

Interested in the children's ability to use words, Mary was interested in the children being able to express themselves fully, starting with a self portrait's module that asked, 'What makes me me?' and, 'How do I relate to other people?'

M: 'We had to make a dictionary of meanings, but it meant that everybody communally understood the meaning of these words and they were starting to marry the word with the feeling'.

'Day of the Dictionaries' was established at Chickenley when all children and staff were off timetable to decorate their classroom doors in the style of an emotion. Evidently the children and staff began to 'marry arts and feelings together'.

M: 'From the outset I wanted kids to be able to express themselves, but also to be able to view themselves as a person. A lot of our children don't know how to be.'

Early in the process of developing the project it was obvious that both Mary and the staff could see development. Having been involved in a number of high quality arts activities, some of the children with special educational needs who had previously found it difficult to express their feelings in words began to confidently use complex vocabulary to express their own feelings.

Building new rituals

Early in the development stages of the project it was becoming even clearer that transition to secondary school was a huge issue for many of the children, some of

whom were unable to make the change successfully. Mary had the idea to set out the transition as a 'rite of passage' for the children.

M: 'We started working with kids on going up to high school and because it's in walking distance from their school, we started doing it, literally, as a parade. For the kids, politically, it was really important that they had the opportunity to walk their streets, stop traffic and say 'Look at us, we've made these things, look at us, we are who we are'".

The first 'parade' took place in 2003 and the children wore hand made wings on their backs. As the children walked proudly up the long drive out of school towards the secondary school they were met by pupils from the secondary school and Mary remembers how 'they turned up and ran towards us... and they lined the path,' as the Chickenley children entered the school. It was a nerve-wracking moment for many of the children, but Mary had warned them that it was likely to be scary.

Collective responsibility

Early in the project Mary introduced the school staff to what she terms the 'six core strengths', inspired by the child development work of Bruce D Perry an American Psychiatrist. The core strengths include:

- Attachment – making relationships
- Self-regulation – containing impulses
- Affiliation – being part of a group
- Attunement – being aware of others
- Tolerance – accepting difference
- Respect – finding value in difference

Working individually, in pairs and then fusing ideas, she supported the staff to work as a team to consider how they could work together to understand how they could best understand and meet the needs of the children in the school.

The parade is now a regular yearly ritual on a 'certain Tuesday in July' and parents join in. Mary explained what happens when the Chickenley children arrive for their special assembly at the local secondary school:

M: 'They turn their backs on stage and show their wings and our head teacher talks about them as a group of talented individuals. She talks about them as.. 'Here we have mathematicians.. we have artists'. She points out that they are rounded human beings, they're persons in their own right. She takes a garland and hands it to the school's head teacher and says, 'Please take care of our children'.

And in that moment, it's charged. It's interesting, it has become what it has become and that was never written in advance. The whole sense of it being a ritual gives permission to be different but also everybody knows their part even if it's not written down. Certain things everybody knows are really important and the phrase has now been handed down to another head teacher. It's known that it is really important to say it, because they are our children, they're everybody's children, they are society's children in that moment. We're not dispensing with them, we're not handing them over in that sense to be pushed. We are giving them freely'

Art as gift

As part of the project Mary and the staff will regularly talk to the children about community and what it means. They ask the children, 'What kind of person do you need to be to be an adult?'

Mary and her team of artists arranged trips for the children to visit different professionals including Sainsbury, Open Art and the local railway station. On their return the children created big canvases based on their experiences as a group.

M: 'We invited all the adults, the professionals, and gifted them the paintings to hang in their workplaces. In that there was a lot about what kind of person you need to be, to be good with people, keep check of how you feel sometimes. When the professionals came to get the paintings we had tears, we had the works. Later the council put them up in their foyer and invited the children.'

This element of kindness and giving has been a central value of the project. As the project has evolved Mary has established a core team of artists and a coordinator and emphasised how important it was to pass on and nurture other professionals as part of the programme, either as professionals or volunteers or emerging artists. One young woman from the community who volunteered to help out is now employed to run the reception module of 'Roots and Wings'.

Making space

Mary talked of the need to 'fight for time and get people together' during the project. She talked of developing 'the lunchtime experience,' which involved adults having a sandwich and kids having open access to enjoy arts activities without instruction. A book was provided for the children to write their names in as they arrived and they had to tidy up after themselves.

M: 'Self- regulation, kids helping each other out, no-one directing them.'

It became evident to staff that there was a particular atmosphere created in the lunch room, with staff remarking, 'I've done nothing, they are doing it themselves'. Other staff have stated that even when the room is in apparent chaos, it is a calm place to be and that one teacher who joked that he was 'trying to stay out of trouble' one lunch time was told by one child to get himself to the art room because he wouldn't get into trouble and would have a really good time.

M: 'We get office staff who come up and literally walk through the door, take a deep breath in and a deep breath out and then leave, saying 'Thank you, Goodbye'.'

Openness and 'pathological optimism'

Mary remarked that she continues to learn so much from the staff and children at the school. Met with early resistance from staff Mary was clear that, 'We always said, we are working alongside you'.

As with any complex project, there have been challenging times. Mary has worked to ensure that a project is well supported within school and this aspect of project management is consistently time consuming task. Mary was keen to stress that when a project has gone well there is always something that can be developed and 'any relationship needs work all the time.' There has to be honest conversation and 'a communal will for it to happen' if it is to be a success.

M: 'We have always consciously modelled unconditional positive regard, to paraphrase from Carl Rogers. To me that's been the way forward. When people say, 'How do you cope with people who are anti-it?' we keep smiling and keep moving forward. Pathological optimism - for me that is it. I always think some of the most unpleasant

nasty stuff that can happen, happens in darkness, in dark corners, and if you shine a light on it, it can't happen. So, that's what we model to the children and I think that's what we have to model to adults. It doesn't mean to say we like everybody. It doesn't mean to say we are being duplicitous and it doesn't mean to say we are going out to be manipulative. We're going out for the best we can get for the children we are working with. That's what we are about.'

Reflective Practice

During difficult times when Mary has felt the quality of the experience for the staff and children has been compromised, she has gone back to the core team and considers that this kind of work cannot develop unless there is a significant cultural shift within an organisation to allow this way of being and carrying out a project to thrive.

It was evident from our conversation that Mary's practice had developed over many years. Mary was involved in setting up 'Common Knowledge' over ten years ago bringing professionals together from across arts, education, health, voluntary sector and local authorities. The bold aim of the project was, 'To change the way people work'. At the first event they considered a question that was seen as radical at the time, 'How can we meaningfully connect and become healthier neighbours of each other as professionals?'. They have also instigated 'The 6 hour coffee break' events where professional from many disciplines within a locality could meet and network.

M: 'Underpinning everything we do is reflective practice, so we do reflect a lot and pass it on to kids....I know I am a better practitioner than I was 12 years ago because I have professional supervision and I am constantly learning.'

Legacy and influencing practice

After the first tranche of funding from The Children's Fund the project attracted funding from the NHS through a Primary Care Trust. As the project has enjoyed some longevity there has been significant legacy locally and it has been possible to see the impact on the whole community from the children and school staff to local church officials and the police. Kirklees Council have called the 'Roots and Wings' project a 'jewel in the crown' and project learning has been shared with the whole of the learning service of Kirklees. As part of any presentation Mary always requests feedback. These comments are captured on the project website and are a rich testimony in terms of their power to engage others in thinking about how they could initiate arts based emotional literacy projects.

Parents talk in an unguarded way of the benefits they have seen for their children and a local arts organisation LOCA have started a project inspired by Chickenley called 'Inside Me'.

M: 'When parents are very happy for you to be dealing with some of the social and emotional issues that their children have had and have helped them with it, it's fantastic.'

And of the 6 core strengths around child development that Mary shared with staff, 'One of the Head teachers in the 'Inside Me' project has it in front of her desk all the time and is basing her whole curriculum around it.'

Mutual Creativity

M: 'There is a point where you know you need to come from your own deep knowledge of your own subject, but then the potential of what can happen in the spark between disciplines is fantastic. You are constantly learning from somebody else's perspective and for me it knocks on the head, all that, in my opinion, stuff about art is the answer. It's too simplistic. We haven't got it all and there is fantastic work happening out there and bringing it in to be about mutual creativity, that's really exciting. It grows, you get lots of strands of it heading up. Mutual creativity builds because it's about lots of relationships'

M: 'Curiosity fuels me, and the theory of development. If a child isn't curious, forget it. A lot of the time you are initiating creativity.'

Shared experience

Mary suggested that 360 degree experiences and the richness of hearing opinions from all those involved in the life of the school on what has happened are an important part of the project. She remarked that one of the school cleaners who is a teaching assistant and grand parent, holds the children's artwork in the highest regard and as exhibitions and pieces go on display she reads all of the artists' statements with a hanky in one hand, giving a criticism of the exhibition.

Staff, parents, children and visitors to Chickenley are all part of this shared experience and when discussing each others art work the children will talk about 'the work' with enormous respect for each other.

Freedom

M: 'The Chickenley project occupies liminal space. It's like water. It is free and filling the space. It's of interest to me that the project has no official constitution. We were applied for by the school as a project, then we got funding from the NHS and we're not a charity.'

Social education

Having entered into a conversation with Mary around whether she saw the work linked to social pedagogy, a term used to describe a range of work bridging social work and education where effectively care and education meet. Mary finds that she often describes herself as a 'social educator'.

M: 'Some of the practitioners of my ilk really do work with head, hands and heart and have bounded professional relationships with children that are predicated first and foremost on care.'

During my conversation with Mary, I consider to what extent the project's success has relied on the strength of her personality to drive the project.

M: 'People say 'But we haven't got a Mary Robson' and I can't say that doesn't matter, there is something about personality, but it is also about what that can inspire.'

Mary was keen to assert that there are so many crucial elements to a project and inspiring others to have the confidence to take things forward within the school has been key to the success of 'Roots and Wings.'

4.2 C Words: carbon, climate, capital, culture. How did you get here and where are we going?

'This isn't art which merely describes the problems of climate justice. C Words investigates how everything from carbon offsets and transport, to racism and bank accounts play their part in the carbon web. How will culture be produced in a low energy future? Can we imagine our way from here to there?'

C Words web text

Since 1983, artist-led London-based group PLATFORM has been working through interdisciplinary collaborations to address and advance social and ecological justice. The organisation take a long-term approach to projects and the driving force behind PLATFORM is the desire to pursue and realise radical political change. Much of this work has involved the complex practice of community building within a wide range of projects that span more than 25 years.

In 2009 PLATFORM were invited by the Arnolfini Gallery to put on an exhibition of their work.

C Words: carbon, climate, capital, culture, became an ambitious collaborative investigation by artist activist group PLATFORM and their collaborators as part of 100 Days artist activist season at Arnolfini Gallery in Bristol in 2009.

PLATFORM and their collaborators proposed C Words as a two-month, 50 day investigation into carbon, climate, capital and culture. Based on PLATFORM's 25 years of research, art and action, C Words aim was to cross-examine the present and look to the next two decades with PLATFORM members in residence at Arnolfini throughout the project. It aimed to ask many questions such as; 'How did we get here? Where are we going? Who's deciding? Who's made invisible? Whose future matters?'

PLATFORM created a newspaper as part of C Words, which places the work of such a 'prospective' in the thick of political and cultural change with many campaigns highlighted across human rights and environmental issues. But rather than showing the work of a solely activist organisation, PLATFORM's approach to creativity, research and collaboration is one of the main reasons why the work has the potential to be effective in provoking real change. The newspaper, publicity copy for C Words suggests that this effectiveness derives from PLATFORM's 'straddling of art, education and activism that is an approach recognized by the wider cultural world'.

The project involved over 60 artists, activists, campaigners and educators with 7 art commissions and some 70 events, with installations, performances, actions, walks, courses, discussions and skills-sharing set up to build towards the moment of public departure to the protests at the contested COP 15 conference in Copenhagen.

I interviewed Jane Trower, a member of the PLATFORM team, to find out more about the journey of the project from the seed of the idea and how it got located at Arnolfini.

Conversations

J: 'C Words started with a conversation between Tom Trevor, who is the Director of Arnolfini, and James Marriot my colleague here and Dan Gretton. Tom had been director of Spacex Gallery in Exeter and he had often invited PLATFORM to come down and talk about practice as part of the events programme that Spacex run. He invited us to come and create a retrospective of PLATFORM's work at Arnolfini which

as you know is a big arts centre in Bristol, with 5 galleries, cinema and theatre for 200 people, bookshop, café, meeting rooms. This was an absolutely enormous opportunity for us'

Working together

With both the Arnolfini and PLATFORM excited by the idea of collaboration, many conversations followed between the two organisations about, as Jane suggested 'what this retrospective might be and what it would feel like'.

JT: 'The very first title was something along the lines of 'together'.... that was the very first working title, because we felt that the thing we wanted to talk about was that because of the ease with which the art world will promote ego over collectivity, we wanted to promote the networks, the alliances, the inter-disciplinarity, the collaborations more than PLATFORM. '

Questioning

During this time the key challenge in developing the project was to overcome conflict inside PLATFORM once the money was agreed because the organisation was itself an interdisciplinary practice with members who identify as artists, writers and political activists and some with an experience of campaigning.

JT: 'At least five of our colleagues have no background in the arts at all which is exactly how we like it. So, some have background in campaigning or politics or research or science or humanities, human rights. We are already interdisciplinary and some of our colleagues at the time came through, when we realized there was a big grant coming from the Arts Council which was quite substantial amount...this big venue in Bristol. ...Bristol, why Bristol when all our work has been based in London?'

Colleagues were questioning the point of the project and what it would achieve:

JT: 'Some of our colleagues who are more campaign orientated were asking, "What is the political strategy?' All the usual questions we ask ourselves in PLATFORM apply, 'What is the political strategy? Who are we trying to influence? What's the change we are trying to make in the world? What leverage will this project have to create the change we want to see in the world?'

Jane explained that there was some discomfort in the team that the idea of a retrospective of PLATFORM's work might become 'art worldly, navel gazing and self-congratulatory.'

Stuckness

JT: 'So there was probably about a year and a half of stuckness.....Arnolfini was very patient. I think they were also very confused, because we are not the usual suspect for them and I think there was some 'Well what will it actually mean? We've invited these people. We think we know what the work is like. So, I think there was a bit of stuckness all round.'

At the third try, Arts Council England agreed to consider funding the collaboration at Arnolfini.

JT: 'So, the bid went in for a retrospective, but with this remit of... the together...the we, together did this.'

Jane returned from some time away from PLATFORM, and with a background in visual arts contemporary practice and knowledge and experience of education and pedagogy she took the contract to develop the project at Arnolfini in October 2008. Meetings with Tom Trevor and Alan Boulden at Arnolfini took place and Boulden's experience of setting up an influential MA in art and ecology at Dartington College was a big motivator to be a part of the Arnolfini 100 Days programme.

JT: 'We abolished the retrospective and we decided it was completely not the right thing to do. Some colleagues said, 'for heavens sake, we're busy, there are things to do, we don't want to talk about the past'.

As much of PLATFORM's work had been around fossil fuel dependency, human rights issues, social justice issues and climate, the decision was for the project to be, 'a prospective about carbon', and called it 'The Next 25: A Carbon Occupation.'

The spirit of activism

In December 2008, Jane proposed filling the gallery with activities and commissioning artist activist groups to come and make work in the galleries.

JT: 'We also realized that the timing of when we were offered the gallery was in the run up was to COP 15.'

In the run up to The UN Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP 15) Jane began to line up 7 activist groups who were going to do a commission, funding decisions were delayed until June 2010. With a two-month season due to start in October Jane reflected that;

JT: 'the schedule was crazy. Loads of things did not happen in the way that I would like to have happened or anybody would like them to happen but in another way perhaps that was in the spirit of activism... we just had the opportunity, we had the money, we just had to run at it.'

With 7 different activist groups going into overdrive to realize their concepts over the summer, Jane and PLATFORM programmed over 70 events for the 50 days.

Consensus seeking

JT: 'It was then that we changed the title. We established the title through consensus which I think is one of the hardest things in the whole thing. 35 people came up with C Words: Carbon Climate Capital Culture.'

Embodying politics through practice

JT: 'There had been a theme, a core value that we should embody the politics through the practice, so we shouldn't put on an exhibition about climate change and then transport heavy things using low loaders across many thousands of miles. We were determined that we were going to try and show how you could do a show about climate change in a way that was also showing a solution to how you do a show... and so that question that was 'How did you get here and where are we going? was sort of a question to the audience.'

In the planning stages of 'C Words' all of the commissioned artists were invited to think about their materials, travel slowly, consider the impact on their practice on taking care and paying attention to their carbon footprint.

JT: 'Arnolfini were quite exercised by this because of course their normal practices like all these venues are carbon intensive.'

Whilst key considerations had been made to reduce carbon emissions within the gallery it was evident that much carbon was spent moving curators, artists and objects round the planet to mount many of the exhibitions. Both Arnolfini and PLATFORM had many conversations around these considerations.

Jane spoke of Tom Trevor's very strong interest in environmental issues coming from a small gallery in Exeter to a big gallery that had just been developed with substantial lottery investment. Evidently, there had been little regard given to environmental considerations or sustainable practices so that a building that had just been transformed before his arrival had a low energy efficiency rating. Also, the floors above the gallery were occupied by NGO's like Forum For the Future and Sustrans, and with Arnolfini as the landlord there was some promise for what could be done.

JT: 'Alan and Tom came in together to say, 'we are going to make this a micro model of practice'. So there was excitement but also nervousness because they know that we mean it, we are not just making work about it, we mean it. I am not saying that artists who make work about environmental issues don't mean it, I mean we mean that you should embody the politics in your practice and if you fail you should speak loudly about that.'

Future thinking and achieving change

Jane was clear that the decision not to have a retrospective but a 'prospective' with a future facing trajectory was a good move and helped to solve many of the internal conflicts about the project from voices within PLATFORM.

JT: 'We are coming from different politics but also different notions of how to achieve the change that we are all passionately involved with. How we can move away from carbon dependency, how we move away from abuse of human rights through resource exploitation. So it was a very good move to go to the future, a very good platform, it solved so many internal questions.'

JT: We tasked all of our groups. We said, it's part of your contract that you answer our 'Next 25' questions. We had 5 questions that they needed to address, to build that in and it made it rich and made it layered. We could have done an exhibition just about carbon and climate change. Not everyone picked up on the 25 year thing in a core way but it meant it stimulated the imagination in different ways.'

Art as enquiry

Some of the activist commissions were not familiar with thinking about climate change but were challenged to think it through for their commission to give an interesting take on the subject.

JT: 'The group we invited from Liverpool called 'The Institute for the Art and Practice of Dissent at Home', are two performance artists and their three kids. ...They were saying 'we haven't really thought about climate change' so we had lots of chats about what

they see in Liverpool and they are clever, smart people and saw this notion of environmental justice and the future all began to add up and it added a whole richness’.

Amongst others, Virtual Migrants who had been working for 12 years on asylum seeker refugee issues and grass roots solidarity work in Manchester, were asked ‘Have you ever thought about climate justice and migration in relation to climate change?’ and they rose to the challenge.

Spinwatch, a research organisation that looks at government and corporate spin, collaborated with Hollington and Kyprianou who also rose to the question, ‘How about spin and climate change, or spin and oil, or spin and capitalism?’ They staged ‘Adams and Smith - auctioneers of late capitalist artefacts,’ a sale featuring rare mass produced objects from the ‘late-Capitalist oil era’

With Laboratory of the Insurrectionary Imagination (Lab of ii) there was direct artist activism and most of the commissions identified as artist activist. Ackroyd and Harvey’s art commission issued a call to participate in ‘The Walking Forest’, collecting trees from members of the public to be planted out permanently in Bristol.

As with much of PLATFORM’s work there was controversy, debate and discussion about the work.

JT: ‘All the projects caused a lot of comment and then there were all the events programmed. Mostly not people from the arts – the new economics foundation, feral trade and lots of film screenings. So the idea was that the spaces would be activated by these events.’

Learning and reflection

Three months after C Words had finished, PLATFORM reflected on leading the C Words collaboration with Arnolfini and such a broad range of individuals and organisations across disciplines. It was clear that C Words had split the audience – from ecstatic feedback from the direct action community that it was refreshing, not conceptual or ‘art market’ and of the best things they had ever seen at Arnolfini. Those more likely to come to the gallery from the arts community and gallery staff feedback was also mixed, with some feeling that it was as if the gallery space had been rented out, that it was some form of theatre and the art were just props. PLATFORM were clear that they had wanted to generate a strong reaction.

Jane’s intention was to, ‘create a hubbub and show plurality and diversity and things running up against each other that might seem contradictory or problematic’ and that the programme, ‘wasn’t interested in the conventions of conceptual art.’

Jane noted the short run in time and the strains of this had a negative impact on the project for many involved and it meant that it was not possible to seed the kind of in depth outreach work PLATFORM are used to doing that take ‘slow thinking’.

JT: ‘You have to do it with enormous integrity and long-term thinking and I didn’t have that. We had three months.’

By all accounts C Words was well attended, with 34,140 people passing through the gallery in 8 weeks and then another 2,000 deliberate audience members who came for specific talks and events, which compares favourably with similar successful exhibitions at the gallery. The audience was not Arnolfini’s usual audience as it drew in people concerned with politics, environment, human rights and activism as well as art with the

aim as Jane says, 'to contribute to the debate about how culture can address climate change'.

All involved in the collaboration have learnt from the experience. PLATFORM are not an organisation that shows work in galleries. Jane stated that Arts Council England has found PLATFORM's work interesting because 'it's everywhere else except conventional arts spaces.'

Inevitably, as the work was shown in a gallery the question, 'Was it art or not?' was posed regularly during the project.

JT: 'The benefit of not doing it in a gallery is that you don't have to ask that question. You can just do it and whatever it is, it is what it is... and that can be debated but nobody can make a claim for it.'

Both Arnolfini and PLATFORM recognize that with more time to plan together learning could have been richer from the project, but valuable conversations were had about what happens when a gallery programmes a social process into its space, and what questions to ask an art gallery for any future collaborations.

Social process

As there was a long gestation period as partners waited for funding decisions there were many discussions and emails between organisations. Jane suggests that without PLATFORM's past record partners may have dropped out along the way. People evidently trusted in the organisation, its politics and track record and they knew, 'what PLATFORM stands for'. They were willing to be part of an experiment mainly because of their trust in what Jane calls, 'the social process side'.

JT: 'You cannot do solidarity work and movement building and work in alliance with all kinds of eclectic communities as we do, without having a very evolved notion of socially just processes and transparency and ethics.'

One example of these ethics in practice and the level of care in terms of social processes is the importance of consensus and 'copying everyone in' to messages, on the understanding that some may not respond but that if you want to contribute then you are vocal.

Connecting

Jane is clear that in terms of interdisciplinarity, it is not possible to claim that all involved worked collaboratively, but by having all presenting work together under the same roof PLATFORM were saying, 'we are all connected, because we are all here'.

JT: 'What did happen was that different participants were going to different events and discussing finance and literature and science... The interdisciplinary practice was suffusing the whole thing. We were saying, 'it's all connected. The whole thing was interdisciplinary and we wanted the audience to come across it themselves by experiencing these things one against the other, one alongside the other.'

4.4 Artist as Leader Lab

'Art is a way of looking at the world rather than a job title.'

Tom Shakespeare, Artist As Leader Lab 2008

Over 20 years, PAL (Performing Arts Labs) have provided time and space for practitioners from a wide range of disciplines to undertake research, to experiment with innovative ways of working and to push limits of their practice and to challenge the context in which they work.

PAL has evolved a methodology that encourages cross-disciplinary collaboration across the arts, sciences, new technologies and the creative industries as well as in education and policy. Since 1989, PAL has run more than 140 labs, bringing together people from different disciplines and providing a safe space for immersive residential experiences centred around practical making with peers in a non-hierarchical environment. The Labs provide a safe space for experimentation and the unexpected and they seek to re-invigorate and transform professional practice and inform arts policy.

My experience of several Labs (Creative Science Teaching Labs 2003-6 and Volatile and Challenging Young People 2006) have been very powerful, with those from different disciplines able to share their knowledge and experience and generally go through a process of living with each other and making together, with a carefully curated balance of openness, structure, stretch and support.

For the last case study I wanted to revisit the PAL approach and interview Susan Benn founder of PAL on the journey of the 2008 Artist as Leader Lab.

To give some context, Anne Douglas describes how this PAL Lab was part of the wider Artist as Leader research. The wider Artist as Leader Research was, developed through a partnership between four organisations drawing together the academic, professional arts and business support and training sectors and including On the Edge research (OTE), Performing Arts Labs (PAL), The Cultural Enterprise Office (CEO) and The Scottish Leadership Foundation (SLF).

The Artist as Leader Lab was 'specifically constructed to make the issue of artistic leadership explicit'. By invitation it brought together artists, policy makers and organisational leaders in a unique experiment conducted through two separate but interrelated events. Part 1 of the Lab was held at Hospitalfield in Arbroath for 5 days in January 2008 and Part 2 was held at Royal Scottish Academy of Music and Drama, Glasgow for 2 days in June 2008.

Anne Douglas explains in her research report that, 'Each participant offered to the shared space their past experience as well as challenges and desires for the future. This Lab was structured around an exchange of different practices that shape artistic creativity and its presence in the public sphere - artists to organisational leaders to policy makers. Individuals were invited in to learn from each other and to contribute to the research, conceptually as well as by developing new forms of practice and creative partnerships.'

The PAL Artist as Leader Lab programme brought together artists and arts practice together with government, corporate and cultural policymakers to create and deliver policy. Over the course of the year 15 leading artists and policymakers from Scotland and England, examined ways in which they could demonstrate leadership through the practice of making art. The initiative was set up to address serious challenges for

cultural policymakers at a time of enormous political change in Scotland and the Artists as Leader Research Report 2009 shows results are producing a significant impact on the practice of all those involved.

Dialogue at policy level

The embodiment of the first attempt bringing artists and policy makers together was the Artist as Leader Lab in 2008.

SB: 'In the 19th year of PAL, I think we all working in the organisation made the commitment to making sure that policy makers, particularly in the cultural sector, paid attention to what we were doing. We had been serving artists and practitioners across the sciences and education and the arts to make work, but often the people who made decisions at policy level were not there. The top table was not inviting us; either because we were too radical; or because they didn't know about us; or because they don't like change and feel comfortable reinforcing their prejudices and didn't like being challenged. It's our mission and responsibility to find policy makers to come to labs from now on.'

Framing questions

Having identified a network of artists, organisational leaders and policy makers to contribute, interviews addressed a framework of five questions: What does the artist as leader mean to you? What do you understand by leadership? Why is it an important question? Participants in the research fell into overlapping categories as artists, organisational leaders and policy makers, Where do you position yourself? What are the limits of the idea and where does it break down?

The interviews were analysed as part of the research process and the practice-based element of the research was The Artist as Leader Lab.

Developing new understanding

SB: 'We sent a letter of invitation to a lot of artists and people asking them if were they interested. We picked mature artists. We had 5 artists, 5 policy makers and 5 provocateurs.'

Participants had to be willing to share their practices within the Lab in order, as Anne Douglas suggests, 'to develop new understandings about the current and potential role of artists in change'. Provocateurs were to join the group for short periods to 'challenge and shape discussion'. The emerging thinking on artistic leadership drawing on the interviews was shared and discussed as part of the Lab process and there has been wider dissemination of the research through networks and published papers, conference reports and on the web.

Leading through practice

The Lab was also a response to a rise in leadership programmes such as The Clore Leadership Programme and the Cultural Leadership Programme focused on developing cultural leaders to lead organisations. Over time these leadership initiatives have started to invite artists to take part, but Susan and PAL were concerned that artists who were leading through their practice were not being invited onto programmes and that they were still overly focused on developing specific skills to lead arts organisations.

SB: 'The Artists as Leaders Lab was an experiment to see if artists and policy makers would be interested in exploring leadership through artistic practice.'

The PAL methodology has developed over 20 years and Susan Benn detailed some of the key processes involved in a residential LAB that brought the group together with the shared goal to consider the active role of artists in changing and making cultural policy.

Space, time, trust

SB: 'We give space, time, trust, prep about thinking, a task to come up with something tangible that you do afterwards, an insistence on being generous, being open, being responsible for this thing and for taking responsibility afterwards. We challenge fixed positions and to encourage people to listen, think again and challenge the status quo in both practical and imaginative ways.'

Provocation and pressure

Susan explained that at the start of the process everyone is on a high, but that there will always be a moment where this dissipates and the group can be very down. At this point what Susan calls the 'PAL Pressure cooker factor' occurs where there is pressure applied deliberately on people to begin to resolve problems or issues.

SB: 'That's when you bring the provocateurs because everybody is vulnerable and so you say, 'Well, what are we doing here then?' It's tough. If they are the right provocateurs they are going to say, 'Well we are all behind you, we don't want to demolish, but you have got to examine and look harder and think again if it's not working'. It takes people who are down in the dumps to be themselves a bit so they can see the bigger picture...when you hit rock bottom, you are thrown back at yourself.'

Susan describes this part of the process as the 'working out stage' that is harder than the first section of the lab when 'you put the pressure on to say, 'you have to work it out', in however many days there are left together.

SB: 'We have to come up with something beyond all these possibilities. So then there is a narrowing down of the focus and that sharpens people out of their despond. Or, in a few cases it makes people think 'I can't do it, I'm going home.' But there are so few cases.'

Bringing people together in a safe space

A key element of PAL Labs is the residential aspect, where participants live together, sharing and sometimes preparing meals together as a group. Ample sustenance is provided in the way of food and surroundings, giving people a real sense of being valued for their time and contribution to the intense Lab process.

I asked Susan, 'What drives the desire to answer a question with others and why bring people together from different disciplines?'

SB: 'Because if they were by themselves they wouldn't have such a rich and challenging experience. It is worth doing because people don't meet. At the beginning of the lab there is freedom to open ideas and think as broadly as possible, as widely as possible, as comprehensively as possible about the challenge or a practical problem. Everything gets out on the table. You hear other people's contributions that are mind enhancing and expanding and then you begin to get to know people through their work, their ideas, their daring ideas. The ideas they haven't dared to think, or maybe the

things they are scared about, but they are safe in that space so they reveal them. And there are others who say, 'That's great' or 'I'm not sure, let's work it out.' It's very raw and vulnerable and exciting'.

Sharing emerging ideas

Following the first Lab in January 2008, new emergent project ideas were presented in the second Lab in June 2008 along with interim research findings.

SB: 'It was clear from that review day that there were ideas that were as big as having a lab day for the whole country where everybody at every level of society from local government and all the departments of Scottish Parliament would all take part. There was big thinking and there were lots of smaller things and what it made me feel was that people were not used to this way of thinking at all and they were all very excited.'

Equality and common challenges

Susan commented on the fact that policy makers who give out money very rarely spent hours, let alone days with artists;

SB: 'actually working alongside them and talking about their work; and what it is to be them; and what their challenges are. Not because they want money from them, but because they are human beings taking part in a process in which everybody is equal. And so, everybody's challenges are each other's challenges. There was an expectation that practical outcomes would be the result, that there would be tangible outcomes and that they would be in policy terms of 'how we do things differently at policy level?' not a delivery of policy level. These were people who were anticipating new policies to be formed'.

Future development and achieving change

In many ways The Artist as Leader Lab feels like the beginning of this important work and is part of a process that is challenging PAL to consider how to bring policy makers and practitioners together from across disciplines to actively change policy and the way in which it is decided.

SB: 'So, as a result of that experience, I thought this is really too complicated for us to work out how to change policy unless we have artists shadowing government ministers and businessmen'.

Susan explained what had reinforced the need for next steps after the Lab:

SB: 'It was reinforced by the positive reaction that policy makers had to hanging out with artists. To see how they responded to each other and were not afraid to tackle anything. What was so interesting about the civil servants when they came to work with the artists was that they were not used to this at all. Within a day they were relaxed and were talking about their ideas and I thought that was pretty normal, but everyone, bar one, said 'Thank you so much for giving us space to say what we really think'. And if some of those things that you learn in that experience last for a year, or two years, or 17 years, as someone has just written to me about, that's something profound. I haven't made that happen. I have allowed it to happen, but it's very much to do with the individuals in every PAL lab to do it themselves, it's a very grown up, responsible process. It's not about being fed.'

As Anne Douglas states in the Artist as Leader Research Report that;
'The research concludes that cultural leadership should be about more than simply well-run cultural organisations. It should include an understanding of the capacity and value of artists leading through practice. The current and emerging leaders of cultural organisations need to understand the capacity of artists to lead through practice, not least because the leaders are often negotiating with other sectors to involve these artists. Artists correspondingly need to know how to work with organisations and how to establish parameters that give them sufficient creative, critical freedom. Working with cultural organisations is essential to the visibility of artistic endeavour and is increasingly where challenging opportunities lie for innovative work.'

It is evident that the approach of network development and exploratory interview combined with the Lab element enabled the building of a network with the interest and experience to inform the issue of artistic leadership from different positions: artist, policy maker and organisational leader.

Ambition

As Graham Devlin writes in 'A Place to Think: Arts Research and Innovation', 'The ambitious aim of this research is to create opportunities in 2011 for senior civil servants and politicians to each have an artist shadowing them. PAL want to see artists at the centre of government, working together with policy makers on a day-to-day basis, to address real world problems and opportunities through the making of art.'

PAL aim to see a cross party Lab set up to work out the practicalities of making the above happen and a Lab in the autumn of 2010 will begin to address this idea.

'We are different in order to know our interdependence'
Desmond Tutu, 2010.

5. Key themes

As you can see above, having had the conversations with those who led the four case study projects, I started to draw together what felt like common themes. Often these were stated clearly as key ingredients to the process and it was simple to provide a sub heading title from the actual words spoken in conversation. At other times I drew on my own experience of collaboration to try and group and describe some of the detail of the journey of each project together in order to start to lay out some of the ingredients for effective interdisciplinary collaboration.

What is evident is that there is certainly not a set of definitive ingredients for leading interdisciplinary collaboration. Each project had a specific shared goal that called for a particular kind of leadership – with leaders at times taking many different roles such as gentle facilitator, director, challenger or provocateur. At other times leadership was entirely shared with other partners working together for a common goal.

However, looking across the four case study projects, I have drawn together what might stand as some common themes. Whilst it is beyond the scope of this project to look at all of these common themes in great detail, I would like to suggest that successful interdisciplinary projects are generally dependent on a number of factors. Where possible I have given examples of how each of these common themes played out in two or more of the case studies:

Imagination and radical ambition

Whilst each of the case study project is unique, each showed a great deal of imagination and mutual creativity in the way in which they addressed a specific need within a community or a community of interest. The Manifesto of Possibilities aimed to change policy from the outset, questioning existing paradigms and involving early, honest conversation and dialogue with cultural policy makers about what would help them most. PLATFORM's 'prospective' was forward thinking and bold in it's scale, working alongside many people including artists, activists, environmentalists, gallery staff and members of the public for 100 days of events the project sought to consider the challenge of 'How did we get here and where are we going?'

Artist as Leader Lab involved interdisciplinary collaboration that pro-actively involved cultural policy makers in the practical process of mapping out and finding new and radical solutions to how artists can lead through their practice, with a long-term view in mind.

Each of the projects had a clear and bold clarity of purpose with tangible long-term outcomes. The Roots and Wings work at Chickenley school having a lasting effect, but that will be a transition for children that will need future support for each new generation in coming years.

'Pathological optimism' and a genuine belief that change is possible

Mary Robson spoke of the need to lead with and foster 'pathological optimism' within her project. Working with children and communities at a time when negativity and disaffection were in strong supply, it was important for her to encourage positivity in the way in which she led the project. It was essential when building the emotional resilience of a community that she helped all involved to treat each other with respect and 'unconditional positive regard,' so that all within the project felt valued.

The initiation of each of the projects came from a strong, confident and ambitious desire to effect positive change. The confidence in each case study project came from those who have led collaborative projects for decades and have evolved methodologies that have been tested. Each of the individuals were consummate facilitators, assisting people to move forward and increasing the likelihood of positive progress.

All of the case studies took a long-term view of change and were interested in sustaining the outcomes of the programme long after the project came to a close. Infact, the Manifesto of Possibilities mind map poster and Artist as Leader Lab are very much the start in terms of changing the way in which people might work together in future.

Cultivating a spirit of activism

The projects showed resilient approaches to overcoming challenge and 'stuckness' such as PAL using the 'pressure cooker' approach and provocateurs to force decision-making when participants were at their lowest ebb, unable to see as clear pathway to building solutions.

There was also a genuine belief in the power of building collective responsibility across all those involved in the project, with both Manifesto of Possibilities and PLATFORM using democratic processes such as consensus seeking to build decision-making, equality and a positive spirit of activism across the project.

PLATFORM was also clear than interdisciplinary practice suffused the C Word events at Arnolfini, showing work from so many different perspective side by side in order to spark discussion and debate.

The Roots and Wings project involved a collaboration between artists, teachers, school staff, children and parents across the community in order that they could act confidently on their own behalf and express pride in their achievements.

Humility, lack of ego and letting go

I was struck how each project was led with humility, an avoidance of being led by ego or being drawn into self-congratulation when things went well. Each were able to let go of successes, let go of ideas and facilitate authentic change that was owned by all those involved. Jane Trower spoke of the importance of promoting 'collectivity over ego'.

The Manifesto of Possibilities launch, rather than being self-congratulatory provided an opportunity to test the outcomes of the process. Roots and Wings quite literally developed ideas with the children and staff and then let them have a life of their own. The parade in July has become a rite of passage created effectively to give the children a sense of pride and confidence in themselves, allowing the school to be able to 'let go', to walk alongside them up their new life at secondary school.

'Deep hanging around'

Mary Robson's term above strikes me as a reminder of the time and genuine curiosity we need to initiate community building projects. Getting to know others in order to work alongside them is also key to the PAL process as it gives a great deal of attention to creating conditions for trust and mutual understanding to thrive in an informal Lab setting.

Each project in their own way had evolved social processes that helped connect people and build relationships between people from different spheres, to foster trust in the process. Mary Robson's notion of the importance of 'deep hanging around' and getting to know the people you will work with was key to establishing trust and to work alongside others.

In many ways PLATFORM's 'prospective' at Arnolfini allowed the organisations to spend a good degree of time with the gallery, entering into informal conversations with artists, activists, gallery staff and others about many aspects of the work.

Informal conversations during the lead into project work, discussion and conversation over food are all ways in which the projects helped to build relationships between people. In effect Mary Robson, Susan Benn, Jane Trower and Cameron Cartiere were establishing an environment where they could facilitate change by working alongside others.

Stimulating thinking and ideas through exposure to new perspectives

Manifesto of Possibilities and Artist as Leader Lab openly invited artists and professionals from a range of specialisms to enter into dialogue. Provocateurs within the Lab process and the Manifesto debate series allowed people to hear a range of different perspectives to stimulate thinking and new ideas.

Each of those who led collaborations relished the sharing of and testing of emerging ideas. By the same token each were clear in the knowledge that a key aspect to successful leadership in these interdisciplinary contexts is to work alongside all of those involved to gently facilitate the collaborative journey, offering just the right amount of freedom, structure and stretch to get the best out of people and ensure that collectively the tangible outcome are the best that they can be.

Reflective practice and commitment and capacity to learn

Of all of the themes from across these projects, ensuring time for reflection and a willingness to learn during each project was key.

Mary Robson and Jane Trower spoke about the importance of reflective practice in their work over many years and the importance of learning from past and present experience. The Roots and Wings website and Manifesto Wiki invited critical feedback at every stage and PLATFORM's many years of leading interdisciplinary projects always involves reflection throughout the process, as an organisation asking key questions about why they should be involved in a particular project, to post project reflection and evaluation internally with staff and between partners.

Whilst each had evolved methods of working with others over many years, with a well-developed discourse about their practice, each had a huge capacity to continually reflect, to question and to continually learn new ways of refining their practice for each new situation or challenge that may present itself.

Each of the case studies used questioning and enquiry in their work, whether posing questions about climate change, artists as leaders, the making of public art or a question posed to the children at Chickenley for them to consider, 'What makes me, me.'

6. Conclusion

'Speed is a defence against depth and meaning. Nothing important happens quickly. Choose quality experience over speed. The world changes from depth of commitment and capacity to learn.'

Block 2000.

In setting about answering my research question 'How do we achieve shared goals through leading interdisciplinary collaboration?' I have been on a journey through four unique projects.

As I explored methodologies my research tutor reminded me that I needed to remain open to the process and that rather than providing a blueprint for interdisciplinary collaboration, I was simply providing a map with many potential routes through to new territory.

Leading interdisciplinary projects is certainly dependent on the modelling of the themes and values I have highlighted in key themes above by leading through practice. Each of the projects provide rich learning for how we might work together to achieve shared local, national and global challenges and were committed to using evolved methodologies and high quality working methods that take time to develop.

Many solutions need to be found for profound social, education, environmental and cultural issues affecting both individuals and organisations. Having learnt more about the detail of the projects above, it strikes me that leading effective collaboration to find solutions together is like navigating a complex maze. However, it is a maze worth exploring to bring together specific communities of interest to make connections and develop a shared dialogue. When partners from other disciplines bring their collective knowledge to a task it will increase the likelihood that it will meet the needs of those that have needs to be met.

As these case studies have shown, leading effective collaboration across disciplines is a complex journey and one that shouldn't be started unless you have a well- developed and mature sense of both the needs of the community you are trying to support or culture you are trying to shift. Alongside this we need to understand the social processes involved in working with others to find solutions.

The time it takes to achieve change is considerable and there are very few ways in which we can 'fast track' to change. PLATFORM's experience of leading the C Words collaboration with Arnolfini, with funding delays, is a fine example of a forced need to work together quickly to achieve a common goal. Over 25 years of experience and in depth understanding of social processes involved in working alongside others such as consensus seeking, transparency and building trust, ensured that the project had impact.

For me this research has underlined the need to spend time with others with expertise beyond our own disciplines to get to know and understand others and their different perspectives so that we can work together more productively to meet shared goals, whether they are social, cultural, environmental or educational.

Completing this research has left me with some new questions that I am curious about and I want to discuss with others in conversation.

- How can we encourage artists, educationalists, social activists, policy makers environmentalists, scientists and others to spend time together and learn about each others' worlds?
- What is the unique contribution of the arts in any interdisciplinary collaboration?
- Is there a need for us to highlight the unique role of the arts in helping us find radical solutions to social, environmental, economic and other problems we are facing now and in the future?
- How do we support artists to lead through their practice when working with other disciplines?

So, when different currents meet it might be difficult to find our way in the fog sometimes but collective intelligence, or what Mary Robson calls 'mutual creativity,' can produce rich outcomes.

One way forward may be to revisit that early Common Knowledge question; 'How can we meaningfully connect and become healthier neighbours of each other as professionals?'

The strength of learning exchange that can happen when we spend time with others who stimulate your thinking from other perspectives and experience can be an immensely powerful catalyst to change. Whether that is through time to work intensively together, to have extended conversations, or simply initiating some 'deep hanging around,' it has the potential to help us work more effectively together to find radical and practical policies to solve so many local and global issues that affect us now and in the future.

7. Bibliography

Claxton, G - *Creative Partnerships conference*, Bristol, February 2009

Perkins, D - from *Groups, like People Can be intelligent* – Beth Potier interview article with Professor David Perkins on *King Arthur's Round Table: How Collaborative Conversations Create Smart Organizations* (John Wiley & Sons 2003)
<http://www.news.harvard.edu/gazette/2003/07.17/03-kingarthur.html>

Zeldin, T - *Conversation, How Talk Can Change Our Lives*, 1998

Perkins, D - *Harvard University; 10th International Conference on Thinking*, June 2002, Harrogate

Manifesto of Possibilities: Mind map

http://wiki.bbk.ac.uk/Buildingcultures/images/c/cb/SpiderChart_small.jpg

Manifesto pdf

<http://wiki.bbk.ac.uk/Buildingcultures/images/7/74/Manifesto.pdf>

Shirley, R www.leisurecentre.org.uk

Robson, M – *Roots and Wings* www.maryrobson.com

Perry, Dr B.D - 6 Core Strengths, www.childtrauma.org

C Words Web link <http://www.arnolfini.org.uk/whatson/exhibitions/details/416>

C Words newspaper marketing copy, Arnolfini and PLATFORM, July 2009

Devlin, G - *A Place to Think: Arts research and innovation*, July 2010

Tutu, D - Importance of inclusion to the London 2012 Legacy, 4 Feb 2010.

8. Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Dr Cameron Cartiere, Mary Robson, Jane Trower, Susan Benn, Sue Ridge, Catherine Crabtree, Paul Collard, Helen Chambers, Jocelyn Cunningham, The Clore Leadership Programme Team and other Clore Fellows that I have had conversations with over the past year.

This research paper was completed with funding from the Arts and Humanities Research Council as Clore Learning Fellow 2008/9 on the Clore Leadership Programme.