

CREATIVE INNOVATION HIGHLIGHTED IN PERTH.

Something very powerful happened in Perth this week (15th-17th April 2015) that was more than reassuring about the future of humanity. In total contrast to the cyclic boom and gloom of local economies and occasional threads of evil that universal connectedness now brings to us personally, this was a powerful demonstration of liberating world-wide human creativity.

The event in the shape of a 3 day Symposium with some 20 international speakers was initiated and managed by a local organisation FORM founded locally some years ago by creative people linked to the arts, but now transformed into an impressive collective able to liberate creative thinking into every aspect of life.

This symposium was entitled PUBLIC 2015 and focussed attention on concentrations of population in cities towards a future where human values can be liberated, and reengaged to transcend outdated ultra conservative traditions of bureaucratic civic dominance. In fact to invert and even replace them by a sense of priority engagement of people in activities inclusive of human values, and embracing all walks of life. Indeed a different and inclusive future that is actually now being created day by day elsewhere in the world, but also in modest ways here in WA.

In contrast to many Symposia comprising international speakers, in this case none of them were purely theorists demonstrating superior intellectual leadership alone. They were all relatively humble leaders of highly creative local free-thinking groups that have blossomed from lowly beginnings, now into world-wide connectedness.

Most of them began as small sociable not for profit groups, or even individuals, confronting dispiriting local problems that attracted young, conventionally unrecognised but very creative people. Confronted and frustrated with conventional bureaucratic resistance to novel solutions, they refused to accept lack of money and conformity and then, still with an abiding sense of community responsibility, reluctantly, said 'let's just do it – and ask civic forgiveness afterwards.'

These small community-minded 'can do' initiatives frequently resulted not only in civic 'forgiveness,' but most being wholeheartedly embraced and empowered by civic leaders, then using new internationally connected media 'conversations' their methods and genuine achievements are being rapidly networked regionally, and now all over the world.

From pop-up restaurants to weekend communal choir and musician corridor groups either side of wide pedestrian pathways in Helsinki; to pedestrian, cycling and bus-only lanes taking over car-dominated freeways in Bogota; to pop-up mobile mini parks and rest-areas taking over meter bays in central San Francisco, to public seating and cafes ejecting half of the car traffic from Times Square in New York.

From transformation of downtown Chicago and the lives of people who live there - beginning with modest creative arts, then spreading into re-use of disused buildings for community purposes and even self-help rebuilding of multi-use indoor spaces from reclaimed rubble. Bereft of any money and unable to obtain loans, they designed a paper 'bond,' carving it into remnant marble slabs, that each sold for thousands of dollars!

Other demonstrations included community-initiated urban renewal and city transformation - from cities in the Netherlands, to a concept of creating a system of Social Capital Credits for communities transforming themselves in Mumbai.

Creative innovation was further demonstrated through examples of very rapid take-up of business start-ups like the modest Spacecubed in Perth, into the huge cooperative of Creative Factory in Rotterdam.

Also in another way, the creative up-ending of Civil Service systems to give priority to the centrality of response to people and community, such as now in-progress Adelaide. This has been systematically researched, developed and officially applied by Mindlab in Denmark, where they have successfully focussed on creative processes applied in the context of public policy management and governance. This process is leading to the 'flattening' of conventional organisation structures to change from top-down policy and practice structures to prioritise the value and contribution of a creative and people-orientated individuals irrespective of internal status, able to sense and deliver the services more effectively in tune with real community need.

At home here in Perth this creative initiative driven by FORM already has over 30 enthusiastic private sector 'Partners' and sponsors, with strong representation from all levels of the private commercial sector, as well as various levels of Government.

The fascinating power unleashed by myriad networked world-wide 'Conversations' being made possible by universal on-line media is now demonstrating how very powerful this can be when used for creative advancement. Of course we know that humans are intrinsically social animals and that our advancement of civilisations has always derived from application of creative innovation, but to see that demonstrated today by an exposition of rejuvenated humble people-power here in Perth cannot be other than uplifting.

FORM completed the sense of local social inclusion at the Symposium by a gentle reminder of spirituality from ancient Aboriginal tradition –'treading barefoot softly on our sand to feel the energy coming to us from our wonderful world.