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Moving from Transactional Partnerships to Collaborative University Community Engagement: A Case Study Evaluating Creative Placemaking in KwaZulu-Natal Province

Innocent Tinashe Mutero and Ivan Gunass Govender

Durban University of Technology Department of Entrepreneurial Studies and Management Durban, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Universities are expected to contribute towards the development of society through working collaboratively with communities. One of the many ways that the academy allows for community engagement is through the use of creative placemaking to intentionally inspire a raft of transformational changes to the economy, environment and physical and social infrastructure. However, the pursuit of transformational university community engagement is strewn with partnership challenges. Using a qualitative approach, this study engages selected key participants to assess the challenges, forms of power and influence underpinning the participation of different creative placemaking stakeholders and how their partnerships could be improved. Results revealed that partnership challenges include dissimilar management orientations, risk aversion and the reinforcement of unjust systems. The findings of the study suggest that engaged creative placemaking can be made effective through collaborative strategic thinking, strategic planning and the collective implementation of initiatives for it to be genuinely emancipatory, sustainable and scalable.

KEYWORDS

Community engagement;
creative placemaking;
partnership synergy

Introduction

This article examines the relationships between KwaZulu-Natal-based universities, local authorities and the creative industry community under the rubric of creative placemaking. The assessment covers the process by which engaged creative placemaking projects are developed, focusing on how partners from an arts background, with varied orientations, assumptions and training, create and co-create working relationships, plan and innovate along the way. The study also analyses the forms of power and influence underpinning the participation of different creative placemaking stakeholders and how their partnerships can be improved. To avoid an incoherent and unsystematic analysis of power-play in partnerships from other fields, the study focuses on community engagement projects linked only to creative placemaking (Akpan, Minkley, and Thakrar 2012).

Theoretically, the study is framed using the lens of the Partnership Synergy Framework expounded by Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001), which allows an investigation into

partnership functions and a determination of the causality of partnership effectiveness. According to Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001: 184), “the concept of synergy is subsumed under the broad definition of partnership. Synergy is manifested in the thinking and actions that result from collaboration and also in the relationship of partners to the broader community”. The partnership synergy framework’s suitability to frame an investigation into operations and their commensurate effectiveness allowed this study to conduct a causal analysis of partnership efficacy by unearthing what works, for whom, in what contexts and in what respects. By the same token and as presented in this study, the framework is useful in investigating what does not work, offering effective responses to partnership efficacy.

Creative placemaking is an evolving field of practice that intentionally leverages the power of the arts, culture and creativity to serve a community’s interests while driving a broader agenda for change, growth and transformation (Webb 2014). The creative industry and by extension creative placemaking stimulates local economies and leads to increased innovation, cultural diversity and civic engagement, albeit requiring multi-sectoral concerted effort to succeed (Snowball 2017). Relatively, universities may shape the social atmosphere of the place, providing social and intellectual potentials, as well as creating social ladders and place liveability. Contributing to the empowerment of local communities and the pursuit of social justice is increasingly becoming a major expectation from, and purpose of, the university.

The primary approach for advancing partnerships in universities has been for each school, faculty, department and individual staff member to independently negotiate and sustain a variety of relationships in community engagement initiatives (Strier 2011). While many positive results have been posted on community engagement, a number of challenges persist (Nhamo 2013). These challenges include a conceptual discord amongst practitioners (Bhagwan 2017a) and a subsequent lack of a monitoring and evaluation framework for the different community engagement projects (Nhamo 2013: 105) implemented by academics from both different disciplines and institutions. Pienaar-Steyn (2012: 40) posits that “community engagement remains a vague concept in South African higher education institutions. Conceptual frameworks are sorely lacking and there are no universally accepted standards against which to measure the impact of community engagement”. Suffice it to say, there is no model for university–community engagement and understandably so, as the community is heterogeneous, with plural needs and knowledges. This study therefore focuses on community engagement projects and partnerships involving creative arts academics, artists and architects involved with creative placemaking.

Partnerships are receiving increased attention in community engagement, based on the belief that organisations and individuals can increase their productivity and efficiency through collaborative work (Dhillon 2009: 287). These partnerships, however, are not generic, and they produce different results to different effects. Vanasupa and Schlemmer (2014: 15) postulates that partnerships can either be transactional or relational. Some authors refer to relational partnerships as transformative partnerships (Butcher, Bezzina, and Moran 2011). According to Strier (2014: 156), “transactional partnerships are based on the achievement of individual or institutional interests through exchange processes. However, both parts which benefit from the interchange are likely to remain fundamentally unchanged”. Implied is that transactional partnerships are potentially toxic and

retrogressive. Mayo (1997) posits that partnerships are destructive, particularly for weaker partners. The implication is that partnerships might perpetuate inequalities that they purport or intend to address. The question arises, ; how can this be changed in a world full of inequalities? Can transactional relationships be improved into pacts that are based on equity? Ideally, how should people and organisations seeking to work together relate?

Comparatively, according to Butcher, Bezzina, and Moran (2011: 31), a transformative partnership “is one with a moral dimension in which the parties come together to pursue common purpose and create the possibility of generative growth and change through mutual interaction as they apply their resources to addressing complex problems”. Transformative partnerships mutate into sustainable collaborations (Dhillon 2009). Lasker, Weiss, and Miller (2001: 183) define a collaboration as “a process through which partners who see different aspects of a problem can creatively explore their differences and constructively explore their differences and search for solutions that go beyond their limited vision of what is possible”. Collaborations allow individual actors and organisations to combine their human, financial and material resources to achieve results that they would not achieve alone. It is thus desirable that university actors, local authorities, artists and community engagement partners working on creative placemaking projects in the KwaZulu-Natal province build and strengthen collaborations in order to defeat some of the internecine challenges facing citizens.

Context of the study

The study was carried out in KwaZulu-Natal province as part of a bigger project that studied the evaluation of community engagement in comprehensive universities and universities of technology. It focused on four institutions, namely, the Durban University of Technology, University of KwaZulu-Natal and Mangosuthu University of Technology, all based in eThekweni, as well the University of Zululand located in Richards Bay, 151 km away from eThekweni. The position of eThekweni as South Africa’s arts laboratory (eThekweni Integrated Development Plan 2017: 379) ushers in a very interesting analysis of community engagement and placemaking partnerships. According to the eThekweni Integrated Development Plan 2017–2022 (2017), eThekweni’s goal is to become “a city where people interact creatively to stimulate economic growth, learning, sustainability, social cohesion and unity in diversity”. This pronouncement by the eThekweni local authority flags a grand opportunity to capitalise on the interests and strengths of the city, universities and local artists to co-create knowledge and to advance the stability of the city through engaged creative placemaking, which is still developmental.

It is often found that artists have the skill and will but lack financial and material resources, which the university can potentially avail through community engagement initiatives. Rykuna, Yuzhaninova, and Vychuzhanina (2015: 364) advocate that “universities are strong constituents of the cultural space. For instance, using their infrastructure, they create a specific atmosphere of a cultural city”. Bhagwan (2017b: 316) also argues that the purpose of engagement is the sharing of the university’s knowledge and resources with those of the community to enhance social justice and enrich scholarship and creative activity amongst many other noble ends. This study therefore builds on eThekweni’s pledge to leverage creative placemaking and the Higher Education Institutions’ commitment to community engagement.

Creative placemaking and community engagement are dependent on concerted efforts by all community stakeholders to succeed in advancing positive social change and “place” is central to both. In other words, both are reliant on partnerships and are implemented in a specific locale. Moore (2014: 12) purports that “place” is important to the interactions of the university and the community as most are place-based, happening in a specific geographic location. She adds that an appreciation of place in the context of community engagement leads to an understanding of power play: “we learn what university actors believe about what could or should not be done in the that place/community, who could or should not be involved in the partnerships, and the primary beneficiaries of these activities” (Ibid.). The importance of partnerships in community engagement can never be over-emphasised. Brukardt et al. (2004: 8) also argue that “Partnerships are the currency of engagement, the medium of exchange between university and community and the measurement of an institution’s level of commitment to working collaboratively”. However, as mentioned earlier, the partnerships do not at all times offer mutual and emancipatory benefits to engagement partners, hence the need to gravitate towards transformative collaborations.

Key issues and power relations in community engagement partnerships

University community engagement debates are primarily affected by diverse understandings of “community”. According to Strier (2014: 156), community “may be represented by individuals (neighbours), institutions (school or community agencies) or social groups (geographical, functional or virtual communities)”. These differences have a bearing on the conception, development and institutionalisation of partnerships (Rykuna, Yuzhanina, and Vychuzhanina 2015). The processes and systems involved in, for example, a partnership between a university and a civil society organisation, are expectedly different from that between the former and an individual artist. The differences can either be advantageous or deleterious, regardless of how community is conceptualised. An institutionalised community can have the advantage of negotiating partnerships based on equality, a strength that a weak individual might lack (Lasker, Weiss, and Miller 2001:181; Lipcsei, Bruce, and Vinodrai 2015). On the other hand, when individuals do not mortgage their agency to groups, participation is more emancipatory as compared to representative participation (Mutero 2017: 299). The point emphasised here is that university–community relationships take different forms and consequently produce diverse results which can either be positive or negative.

Building relationships between academic programmes and community partners located in marginalised communities is touted as an effective strategy for creating ongoing opportunities in scholarship and development. Relationships are a fundamental requirement for effective community engagement to take place and Fourie (2006: 15) counsels that “the often-asymmetric power relations inherent in the relationship between university and community also needs careful thought”. However, at times engagement fails to reach its potential as insufficient attention is paid to critiquing power relations (Mahlomaholo and Matobako 2006). In the same vein, Allawhala et al. (2017: 14) raises a concern that “if not grounded in critical reflections about power, knowledge and equity the engagement may in fact serve to reproduce the very power relations it hopes to challenge”. It is therefore critical to investigate power relations between the university and community stakeholders involved in creative placemaking.

Community engagement projects strive for social justice. Hence they inherently become political, canvassing for equality. University community partnerships emphasise mutuality and reciprocity. The pursuant question is, how feasible is this reciprocity, equality and equity in an environment where resources and intentions are significantly different? Hagenmeier (2015: 9) posits that “in higher education partnerships in which one partner makes a larger financial contribution than the other, pursuant to its superior economic strength, the stronger partner’s influence on partnership decision-making processes is likely to be weightier”. This is particularly true for artists who are operating in an environment where most of them do not have qualifications to back their talents and there is no funding. Elsewhere, artists have accused researchers, not exclusively and not necessarily university actors, of manipulating them (Chipendo 2014). In transactional relations, communities and universities have unequal strengths, which inevitably leads to achieving inequitable results, with neither party worrying about the concerns of the other, thus defeating the sustainability of community engagement projects.

Some communities do not use or have a low uptake of recommendations proposed by researchers, probably because the research is either irrelevant to the communities’ context or they fail to interpret it. Strier (2011: 82) argues that Higher Education institutions are “socially detached and academically irrelevant to the great social diseases”. One of the major challenges faced with the academy in Sub-Saharan Africa is that currently only a few universities are engaged with valorisation of research (Ngwenya and Boshoff 2018: 215). Nonetheless, academics continue to carry out research in communities, raising suspicion that the academy is manipulating the community for selfish transactions. Orr (2016: 33) observes that universities dominate the research agenda and, often, terms of participation are due to bureaucracy and systems of running higher education institutions. The urge, however, is to see an increase in “participatory and democratic structures of community-based research projects [as they] are fundamental to how the university fulfils its public mission through research” (Albertyn and Daniels 2009: 420). These merit an exploration of university community partnerships in creative placemaking, which this study focuses on.

The university might have its power leveraged by exposure to better resources as compared to community members, especially artists. However, the university does not have a monopoly over knowledge, and some sections of society are questioning its importance, at times creating distrust and increasing the legitimacy gap (Bawa 2018: 1). Universities are alleged to be unresponsive to societal challenges and are seen as utopian. There is an increased awareness that learning within community settings needs to be recognised. Challenges on how best universities and communities can come up with and maintain participatory and democratic community-based research persist. At times these limit partnerships from transitioning into collaborations.

Methodology

Designed as an exploratory multi-case study, this qualitative research makes an empirical investigation into the twin processes of community engagement and creative placemaking. The units of analysis are four universities in KwaZulu-Natal province: the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban University of Technology, Mangosuthu University of Technology and the University of Zululand. Data were collected using both structured and

unstructured interviews, ethnographic conversational interviews and observation. Four in-depth interviews were held with creative arts academics and a senior arts administrator involved in community engagement projects. The authors also held three unstructured interviews with postgraduate students who also happen to be practising artists. One focus group discussion was then conducted with community artists working at one of eThekweni's art centres. These participants were chosen purposively for their diverse and in-depth knowledges drawn from their years of experience. Observational data were also gathered through taking part in a guided city walk. All the interview sessions were held with full consent from the participants and were voice-recorded. The interviewed participants were decidedly kept at a small number in order to ensure that we maintain the dignity and care for respondents through investing a lot of our time in their responses (Baker and Edwards 2012: 39). In addition, we had to work with specific respondents pooled from a small community that identify as creative placemakers and are stakeholders of university community projects linked to arts.

As alluded to earlier, creative placemaking is a fairly new area of study in the South African context and there is little scholarly engagement on the evaluation of community engagement, hence the need for information-rich multiple perspectives and an exploratory study. The high levels of uncertainty and blurred boundaries in both creative placemaking and community engagement require an exploratory study in order to identify challenges, opportunities and salient variables relevant to the area of research (Yin 2003). The strength of qualitative research also lies in its ability to provide complex textual descriptions of how people experience a given research issue. It provides information about the "human" side of an issue—that is, the often-contradictory behaviours, beliefs, opinions, emotions and relationships of individuals.

Findings areas of contention/power issues in partnerships

Based on the literature review above, let us now turn to a discussion which engages responses from the study participants. This study sought to evaluate the relationships between KwaZulu-Natal-based universities, the creative industry community and the local authorities under the rubric of creative placemaking. Generally, the findings speak to both the inhibitory and enabling factors to successful transformative partnerships between university community engagement stakeholders in the arts arena.

Tangible results versus a transformative end

Community engagement is framed as either a transactional or transformational partnership to different effect (Stewart and Alrutz 2012; Strier 2014). The former is usually exploitative and led by individuals for immediate benefits (Stirling et al. 2016), while the latter redefines universities from curators of knowledge to dialectic partners who benefit all (Torres 2000). Often, artists engaged in creative placemaking are activists who claim that they are invested in processes for transformation. Their intentions might not be the same as, for example, academics who only do engagement to "tick boxes" (Frasz and Sidford 2015). University engagement fails to impact on community change because insufficient attention is paid to genuine engagement (Preece 2013: 265). A similar concern is raised by Bender (2008) that some university actors perceive community

engagement and service as “merely add-on, nice-to-have and philanthropic activities”. It is therefore imperative for community engagement actors to follow Hagenmeier’s (2015) counsel that it is vital for stakeholders to create clearly defined roles and responsibilities at the onset of a partnership and to understand the needs and perspectives of the community and its agencies.

The expectation is that when universities and communities collaborate, they should have a shared vision and it should be mutually beneficial. According to Yule (2012: 18), “Participation in research projects should not just be focused on attaining the research goals, but to transform participants”. Participation can be a mechanism for empowerment, but can also be a mechanism for rendering the “poor” even more powerless by an agenda that was not theirs to begin with (Chambers 1997). It is therefore important for collaborative researchers to ensure that the research process focuses on “the empowerment of individuals in terms of acquiring skills, knowledge and experience, leading to greater self-reliance” (Yule 2012: 18). Unfortunately, this is not always the case and it often leads to conflict, mistrust and unpleasant relations between the university and the community. The differences in goals for transformational and transactional engagement inevitably lead to conflict between community engagement partners. Hence, it is imperative for university actors to have a clear understanding of both their institution’s and partner’s community engagement vision.

Generally, performing arts degrees and by extension careers are viewed with contempt, let alone the view of uneducated community artists (Hagg 2010: 50; Drummond and Snowball 2016). This is captured well by Joffe and Newton (2008: 3) when they assert that “the creative industries have long been neglected in mainstream trade and industry policy in South Africa, even though it is recognised as a significant contributor to the economies of developed economies such as Canada, the UK and Australia”. Contempt towards less-educated people is a common phenomenon as observed by Moore (2014: 12), who argues that society holds in contempt and treats people who have not earned a university degree as non-experts. It appears that partners in creative placemaking hold each other in a similar kind of contempt. On one hand, some artists argue that “those who cannot do, teach”, implying that academics are failed artists who should not hold an opinion. On the other hand, some academics, although with good intentions, make the mistake of wanting to teach practising artists. For instance, at one university a lecturer said that at times he assigns students to help a community group direct their plays when they ask him for help. While assigning students is an effective way of affording students experience, the unintended consequence is that the community artists often interpret the students’ interventions as condescending. A community leader professed that the assigning of students makes them feel less important because they would rather have lecturers than learners. Respondents claimed that at times students involved in community engagement projects take it as a transactional activity where they perform a duty or task to score academic marks. As a result, the effects are reflective in the engagement process, which fails to be transformative.

Reinforcement of unjust systems

Directly related to the issue of motivation towards engagement is the aspect of funding and the sustainability of the creative placemaking projects. Currently, collaboration is

determined by who is paying whom. In this case, where most of the artists are under-resourced, the university plays the role of the funder/benefactor through the provision of resources that range from finance to transport and physical infrastructure. Generally, there is an expectation that the university should play a leading role in countering vices such as inequality the world over (Archer 2017: 18). Pienaar-Steyn (2012: 43) stated that “universities also contribute to the public good by generating a critique of centres of economic and political power and by attempting to educate a critical citizenry”. The role of the university as a watchdog is potentially compromised by the control coming from those who control funding.

In turn, the noble position of the university as a funder in community engagement projects conflicts with intentions towards endogenous participation in community engagement. Strier (2014) argues that there is a paradox and tension in how both top-down and bottom-up approaches are expected to work favourably for the university and community respectively. Following a top-down approach is often associated with undemocratic tendencies, hence the urge to follow endogenous approaches which are participatory. On the other hand, some projects, especially those which have financial backing, require instructive and stringent monitoring by financial experts. Although necessary, this discipline can be misconstrued as a rough exogenous process, which limits participation.

Consequently, some university community partnerships work to reinforce the unjust system they claim to untangle. Ramaley (2000: 3) opines that often partnerships are fragmented by competing interests within the community on campus or both. There is a deliberate disregard of collaborative engagement principles, especially when engagement is done as a token. In instances where the university needs an artist for their expertise and not just to fulfil community engagement requirements they are allowed the autonomy to be who they are as an artist. This is quite different when the situation is reversed, both for the university and the local authority. Usually they dictate what an artist should do and at times subtly prescribe how. Failure to comply will lead to one’s removal from the project.

The urge is for the university and community partners to appreciate that community engagement is premised on an understanding that “tacit knowledge is unique to the individual, that even experts can learn from novices” (Buckley and Du Toit 2010: 2). Tension brews from not realising and accepting each partner’s background, orientation and strength. It is important for community engagement actors to be aware of the power they wield and how it can influence engagement either positively or negatively, as espoused by Bhagwan (2017a: 178). Due to the status that university actors are given by society, it is important that they validate projects that artists are carrying out. Such validation and acknowledgement raises community awareness and also serves as a good entry point.

Management systems orientations

University actors working with community artists encounter challenges in relation to community entry and identifying with the community partners, often with regard to efficiency and effective programming. In some instances, there is a genuine low level of education amongst some artists coupled with a lack of the requisite skills to carry out sustainable

projects. Sometimes university actors misunderstand and undermine the significance of and how community artists run their initiatives. As a result, they either fail to build lasting partnerships or the alliance is unjust. The artists allege that university actors are either overly critical for progress or they undermine both the potential impact and value of the projects conducted by the artists. In addition, artists accuse university partners of craft illiteracy and craft competency. The former refers to failing to design original frameworks or models of doing business, while the latter speaks to a failure to adapt borrowed frames (Moyo 1988: 51).

In addition, pre-existing relations determine whether one will be engaged by the university. An emphasis on the partner's track record closes opportunities for collaboration to those artists whose profiles are still small. Furthermore, it grows a "toxic bonding" social capital at the expense of a more "beneficial bridging" social capital. Directly related to management's orientation are monitoring and evaluation challenges. It is not participatory and the evaluation framework is not agreed to. Moreover, there seems to be little effort made towards coming up with a monitoring and evaluation framework which caters for qualitative and quantitative data, taking into account emotional artistic experiences as well as accounting for causality.

Partnerships between artists, universities and local authorities are also threatened by challenges emanating from the attitude either party has towards committing to projects whose success is guaranteed with certainty or counted as outputs. This caution is often juxtaposed to real and imagined risky activities led by creatives or artists. In their work, creatives are often spurred into productivity by different forms of inspiration including being play (Bateson 2015) and many people think, incorrectly, that some contexts do not allow "frivolous activity". Creativity here is understood as "the generation of original and practical ideas by an individual or team members working together" (Kark, Dijk, and Vashdi 2018: 186). Curiosity and creativity have a symbiotic relationship, with some researchers arguing that the former sparks the latter, while others argue vice versa (Harrison 2016).

Risk aversion as a barrier to creative partnerships

The university is in part called "an ivory tower" because of its stern and rigid approach to intellectualism (Buckley 2012: 334). This attribute of universities and other formal institutions like the local authority present challenges when partnering with creatives. Although universities are expected to be risk-averse, this attribute is often a barrier in community engagement (Lipcsei, Bruce, and Vinodrai 2015: 7). Interviewed artists are of the view that creative placemaking projects in eThekweni are stalled by both the local authority and university's fear of risks. "We do not know what the outcome, is but most importantly it is not about outcomes" stated one of the participants. A running thread in the artists' view of why the university and the city are not keen on taking chances with some of the creative placemaking projects is the uncertainty of the projects. Creative placemaking goes against the norm. It is disruptive and therefore authorities find it to be unsafe, creating partnership challenges between the university, local authorities and artists. One of the participants said that:

eThekweni is not willing to engage with concepts and ideas that are bigger than just trying to find immediate solutions for problems. It is important to caution that the problem is not necessarily unique to eThekweni. South Africa has a national problem of dealing with effects, rather than the causes of the problems it faces.

Comparatively, the university, unlike the city, appreciates uncertainty and is curious. Hence the university has been keen on working together with disruptive artists. There is a growing awakening within universities on the role of artistic imagination in challenging the classroom and the syllabus. Although commendable, this awakening has not translated to projects that involve the wider community as yet.

The idea of collective creativity is slowly becoming popular in the city of eThekweni, particularly with the use of public art in development and gentrification (Lion and Chapman 2018). However, two challenges arise: the first is that collective creativity is still being applied on the surface, where for example an artist is not only commissioned to paint an already built structure but is directed on how to do it, instead of being consulted at the conceptualisation stage. Aptly put, academics and the local authority have not fully embraced the idea of participatory/collaborative research with “unlearned” community members. Second, gentrification is exclusionary. Artists and, by association, citizens from previously disadvantaged communities often claim that gentrification is repulsive. Booyens (2012) also observes how place regeneration through art has had adverse gentrification effects, partly due to skewed engagement processes. The core of the problem lies in the methods of participation used when public arts projects are conceptualised. This is a persistent problem which Bhagwan (2017b: 179) articulates as thus: “very often, two-way partnerships with communities are thwarted because university research activities are narrowly designed with community partners who are viewed as passive participants, not partners in discovery”. As a result, the partnerships are not necessarily collaborative. Art and artists remain options. This is in direct contrast to the expectations of artists who hope to see a situation where an engineer, a councillor and an artist sit together to conceptualise ideas, thus the development of transdisciplinary praxis.

Towards better engagement

While this study is by no means conclusive due to its exploratory design, the findings gathered thus far point to a need to move towards better relationships. The partnership challenges exposed thus far show that engagement is not democratic, there is both a lack of respect and a misunderstanding of partners’ backgrounds. As a result, the partnership projects are either unsustainable or they perpetuate an unjust system. Stirling et al. (2016: 523) argues that for community engagement to be transformational, it should be “designed with a long-term, sustainable focus, with several respondents stating the old adage of ‘teach a man to fish’, thus promoting giving a hand-up rather than a hand-out”. The academy, local authority and the community can work together in an interactive, democratic, emancipatory and sustainable engagement through following principles of reciprocity, passing it forward, hand-holding and validation explained below.

Reciprocity

It is imperative for stakeholders in community engagement to awaken dormant reciprocity in their different actions, which include but are not limited to commitment, love, respect, etc. for engagement to be successful. Bloch, Genicot, and Ray (2007: 66) argue that at all times in working groups “at every date an individual either needs help or is in a position to

offer it". To elaborate on in support of reciprocity in community engagement projects Sheehan (2006: 5) argues that:

Engagement with the human community is not just service to the community through imparting knowledge about social issues and problems. Engagement is a reciprocal process whereby communication is backed up, if possible, by interaction in ways that can effectively alter the way the problem is perceived by oneself and others. Genuine engagement moves beyond the level of mere service and allows the opportunity for societal response to help redefine the nature of the problem itself and perhaps forge innovative solutions.

Implied here is that community engagement has the potential to strengthen stakeholders' social capital and subsequently increase positive externalities through reciprocity. The university, local authority and community actors should have an awareness that they have it within themselves to help the community engagement project succeed.

Relationships founded on trust and common goals

It was apparent from the interviews that the relationship between the community engagement partners was not premised on trust. Artists feared that university actors might want to selfishly exploit them for their research projects, while university actors do not trust both the integrity and capacity of some of their arts partners. Evidently, such a foundation is not healthy for any collaborative engagement. Tschannen-Moran and Hoy (2000: 56) argue that it is imperative to focus on and iron out any issues affecting trust in order to cooperate towards accomplishing a common goal in transformational collaborations. Butcher, Bezzina, and Moran (2011: 37) advocate that "much of the trust developed in a transformational [relationships] is dependent on the honesty with which the shared purpose has been created". Pre-requisites for success include telling the truth from the inception of the collaboration and believing in the partners' ability to deliver.

Hand-holding

It is important for actors engaged in creative placemaking to understand both the strengths and weaknesses of their partners and in the process devise ways of complementing each other. There is need for university partners and community artists to desist from condescending behaviour and move towards fostering healthy relationships in which there is mutual respect. This will open up space for sharing experience and skills, which is important for the success of community engagement initiatives.

Validation

Appreciation of different players' efforts towards creative placemaking has the potential to strengthen community engagement initiatives. One of the dominant complaints amongst community artists is that the university strives for an unrealistically utopian society, thus hindering both their recognition and assessment of creative placemaking initiatives led by community artists. Partnerships and the participation of universities in community-led projects is viewed as an important validation. It is important to note that although validation and endorsement are often conflated, they are not the same. Community artists in this case and perhaps any partner who is less resourced and feels inferior need validation. Acknowledging or accepting the community's efforts goes a long way towards

strengthening relations between institutions and actors from both the academy and the community. Put differently, validation is saying “I see what you are doing, good start!” Endorsement will probably say “I see what you are doing. Let us replicate the effort!” Both are great commends, but instead of validating each other’s efforts, players often dismiss initiatives which do not hold on to their views.

Asset-based community engagement

Transactional relations thrive on material resources. Often, power and influence are skewed in favour of the party that owns the resources. Evidently, therefore, material resources play a significant role in projects, hence the need to “sufficiently resource them if any success is to be registered” (Butcher, Bezzina, and Moran 2011: 39). However, Butcher and colleagues caution that an over-reliance on material resources is transactional and hence unsustainable. The urge is to look up to people as resources, following the tenets of asset-based community development (Kretzmann 2010). Community engagement partners should leverage their different and often complementary strengths, rather than focusing on deficiencies. A focus on partners’ unique strengths has the potential to distil condescending attitudes between partners (Oliver 2002).

Conclusion

University actors involved in community engagement should strive to facilitate an equitable inclusion of players in order to increase the sustainability and community ownership of community engagement projects. A good starting point could be purposefully creating an enabling environment for all stakeholders to flourish and meaningfully contribute towards transformation through upholding tenets of just and democratic participation. It is through collaborative strategic thinking, strategic planning and collective implementation that community engagement can be genuinely emancipatory, sustainable and perhaps scalable. While financial and material resources are important in running successful engagement projects, at the centre of collaborative engagements are human beings (stakeholders) who have a duty to facilitate the transition of relationships from short-lived transactions to sustainable collaborations.

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ORCID

Innocent Tinashe Mutero  <http://orcid.org/0000-0002-6640-9322>

Ivan Gunass Govender  <http://orcid.org/0000-0001-6896-8454>

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