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Arts & Resilience in a Rural Community

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CHAPTER 2

The value of participatory community arts for community resilience

Abstract

This chapter demonstrates the value of participatory community arts for community resilience. We discuss two participatory community arts projects in order to illustrate the various dimensions of social capital that participatory community arts can generate (bonding, bridging and linking). The chapter elaborates on how this contributes to the resilience of the communities where the projects took place. We argue that participatory community arts can assist communities in developing the capacity and resources to deal with the challenges that they face and to flourish.

2.1 Introduction

Since the early 2000s, the notion of resilience has begun to provide an important conceptual framework for understanding how communities respond and adapt to changes (Wilson, 2012). Resilience is rapidly gaining currency as both a targeted process of societal development and as a research topic in its own right (ibid.). The term, however, has been used to express various meanings by different academic disciplines and these have changed over time (see, for example, Chandler, 2014; McIntosh et al., 2008; Weichselgartner & Kelman, 2014). Beel et al. (2017) noted that ‘within the resilience literature, due to its founding within ecological studies [...] resilience is often framed around the context of how well communities respond to external shocks [such as natural disasters]’ (pp. 460-461). Resilient communities are those that bounce back to how they were before a disturbance, dealing with external shocks as they occur. However, as Weichselgartner & Kelman (2014) noted, other authors have extended this ecology-related notion, ‘aiming to better understand characteristics of vulnerability and resilience of individuals and communities in the face of socio-environmental challenges and changes – that is, how well society could deal with changes and disturbances’ (p. 251). Further, Davoudi (2012) observed that a socio-ecological (or evolutionary) view of resilience challenges the idea of returning to an equilibrium after a disturbance. Rather, drawing on Carpenter et al. (2005), she argued that resilience is about the ‘the ability of complex socio-ecological systems to change, adapt, and, crucially, *transform* in response to stresses and strains’ (p. 302, emphasis added). Weichselgartner & Kelman (2014) noted that these interpretations of resilience ‘have been moving towards “anticipation”, encompassing “capacity” and “capability” – and now coming the full way to being suggested as doing better than before by “bouncing forward”’ (p. 252). Here, resilience has become associated with communities having adaptive capacities that give them some level of control over their future direction, rather than being at the mercy of unmanageable external forces (McIntosh et al., 2008). In this chapter, we emphasize that social capital is one resource that communities can draw on to build such adaptive capacities. In line with the extended notion of resilience used in this chapter, we adopt the definition by Magis (2010, p. 402) who argued that community resilience concerns:

‘the existence, development, and engagement of community resources by community members to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise. Members of resilient communities intentionally develop personal and collective capacity that they engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities’ future’.

Community resilience can be developed in various ways. Magis (2010) outlined how communities have a variety of internal and external resources (economic, social, cultural, human, political, natural and built) on which they can draw to respond to change. White & O'Hare (2014), however, noted that resilience policy and practice encourages an "equilibrium approach", where resilience is characterized within spatial planning as 'a simple return to normality that is more analogous with planning norms, engineered responses, dominant interests, and technomanagerial trends' (p. 934). As a result, policies related to (disaster) resilience often focus on rebuilding the economic and physical infrastructure of a community. However, since resilience is a communitywide and holistic characteristic, other socio-cultural resources also warrant attention.

In this chapter, we look at participatory community arts as a resource and demonstrate their value for building community resilience, thereby giving attention to other socio-cultural resources. The literature suggests that participatory community arts can be of value to community resilience because of their ability to generate community participation and social capital (see, for example, Guetzkow, 2002; Jermyn, 2001; Newman et al., 2003; Williams, 1997). In line with Healy & Coté (2001), Larsen et al. (2004) and Sampson et al. (1997), we argue that social capital is one of the resources that play a role in a community's resilience because it stimulates community members' ability and willingness to work together for a common good and empowers them to protect and pursue their collective interests. This fits with the "evolutionary approach" to planning for resilience that is attuned to sociocultural conditions and embraces transformability (White & O'Hare, 2014).

To provide a theoretical backdrop for our discussion, the chapter begins by outlining the key aspects of social capital and how these relate to community resilience. We then briefly discuss participatory community arts and their relationship to community development. In building an argument for participatory community arts in building resilience, we examine two international participatory community arts projects. These projects illustrate dimensions of social capital (bonding, bridging and linking) that participatory community arts can generate, and how this contributed to the resilience of the communities where the projects took place.

2.2 Social capital and community resilience

In this section, we first introduce the concept of social capital and distinguish three types of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking (see Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Magis, 2010; Woolcock, 2001). Following this, we elaborate on the link between social capital and community resilience.

Social capital is a widely debated concept. In the social sciences, Putnam's (1995) view of social capital has been highly influential (Daly, 2005; Hawkins & Maurer, 2010; Woodhouse, 2006; Woolcock, 2001). Putnam defined social capital as 'the features of social organization, such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation to mutual benefit' (1995, p. 67). Social interactions between community members form the basis of social capital. Williams (1997, p. 8), for instance, stated that 'the elements which increase social capital are mainly based on interactions [...] We need the opportunities to interact with a reasonably broad spread of people, and to build up a level of trust through positive rather than negative experiences'. Interaction enhances the formation of social links between community members and, as McCarthy et al. (2004) explained, these social links, or *bonds* and *bridges*, can lead to feelings of trust and expectations of reciprocity and can promote a sense of shared interest or common identity – which are necessary “ingredients” of social capital.

According to Delfmann et al. (2013), Hawkins & Maurer (2010) and Woolcock (2001), social capital encompasses bonding, bridging and linking capitals. *Bonding* capital refers to the close ties between people in similar situations, these are links that tie individuals together on the basis of homogeneity: around social identity (e.g., professional affiliation), sense of purpose (e.g., membership of a social club) or shared demographics (e.g., socioeconomic or ethnic status) (McCarthy et al., 2004). These ties can build trust, reciprocity and a shared sense of identity and belonging (Delfmann et al., 2013). *Bridging* capital on the other hand refers to relationships that are formed between diverse social groups and involves looser ties between people that might otherwise not interact. These looser ties expose people to diversity, enhance people's ability to work with each other and expand the resources available to them (Magis, 2010). Finally, *linking* capital is the extent to which individuals build relationships with individuals and institutions beyond their immediate community that have relative power over them (for instance by providing access to resources or services) (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010). Here, links between people and organizations and governmental bodies are also relevant. Citing Coleman (1988-1989), Magis (2010) argued that this linking social capital is particularly important for 'communities poor in resources' as 'the more they can link with sources of power and wealth, the greater their access to resources, the more opportunity they will have to make their voices heard, and the better situated they will be to take advantage of opportunities' (p. 407).

Scholars have argued that social capital is beneficial in building resilient communities (Anwar McHenry, 2011; Delfmann et al., 2013; Elstow, 2013; McIntosh et al., 2008; Steiner & Markantoni, 2013; Wilding, 2011). Delfmann et al. (2013), for example, show that the availability and use of social capital by a community determines, at least

in part, its ability to cope with stressors and accept changes in a constructive way. In general, social capital is considered to underpin the ability of a community 'to act as (and in the interests of) a community, and to identify and work towards community-based outcomes' (Dibden & Cocklin, 2005, p. 5). Revisiting Magis's definition of resilience, social capital thus supports community members in their personal and collective capacities 'to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities' future' (2010, p. 402).

Focusing on community resilience in the context of emergency management, Elstow (2013) provided some concrete examples of how social capital "works". She noted that social capital strengthens group social norms to which community members feel pressure to conform. In the context of an emergency, this is relevant as it could, for example, translate into: 'I am going to check on my elderly neighbour in a power cut or share my provisions or I am going to volunteer because I can see that others are doing it too' (Elstow, 2013, p. 10). Elstow (2013) further suggested that social capital increases access to information, as people are better connected to each other and therefore, 'will be able to pass on where help and assistance is, and what local risks and hazards are' (p. 10).

A community's social capital can, however, be put under pressure by the economic, social and environmental challenges that it faces. For example, processes such as population decline, economic pressures and austerity can lead to the closure of local facilities or services, such as shops, pubs and churches, that are relevant to maintaining social connections. In their study, Skerratt & Steiner (2013) found that such places not only fulfil their primary functions but also play 'an important part in enhancing inter-connectivity of the communities, creating invisible "glue" which helped communities function well' (p. 332). Such places provide opportunities for socializing and their disappearance may have a negative impact on a community's social capital. In addition to the closure of such key places, population decline can also lead to the departure of key players (such as local entrepreneurs and residents who run the community centre) who play an important role in enhancing the social capital of a community and contribute to its resilience (see Delfmann et al., 2013). The processes described above can subsequently impact on a community's ability to respond to other local threats (Lovell, 2009).

The discussion above highlights two important issues. First, social capital is *one* of the resources that contribute to a community's resilience. As Magis (2010) noted, there are also economic, cultural, human, political, natural and built resources from which communities can draw to respond to change. Stehlik (2003) also reminded us

that resilience is ‘much more than just social capital, for it acknowledges that there is ambivalence about this [social] cohesion, that it may not be successful in every situation’ (p. 93). In considering rural communities, McIntosh et al. (2008) noted that it is often not sufficient to possess the necessary social capital to be resilient because the social structures of such communities can be threatened by changes over which they have little or no control, and they could simply lack sufficient scale and critical mass. Second, although social capital was initially thought to be a one-dimensional construct that produced only positive outcomes (see, for example, Larsen et al., 2004), several authors have more recently reassessed the concept and it is generally now acknowledged that there is also a “dark side” to social capital (Beugelsdijk & Smulders, 2009; Lovell, 2009; McCarthy et al., 2004; McIntosh et al., 2008; Portes, 1998). For example, Lovell (2009) highlighted the “polarizing effects” of social capital, acknowledging that it can increase inequalities between different groups. Nevertheless, against the backdrop of economic, social and environmental challenges facing communities, social capital is found to have an important role in determining which communities will thrive and which will not (Woodhouse, 2006). Just as social capital can be regarded as the “social glue” of communities, it can also be regarded as a “lubricant” that facilitates the development of community resilience.

2.3 Participatory community arts in community development

As Bishop (2006, p. 178) noted, there has been a recent surge of artistic interest in ‘collectivity, collaboration, and direct engagement with specific social constituencies’. Such art practices, Bishop (2006) notes, go by a variety of names, such as socially engaged art, community-based art, dialogical art, participatory art and collaborative art. We adopt the term “participatory community arts” in this chapter, referring to ‘a collaborative process between a professional practicing artist and a community. It is a collective method of art-making, engaging professional artists and self-defined communities through collaborative artistic expression’ (Ontario Arts Council, 1998, p. 7). These artistic activities can take on any art form as long as the community members as well as an artist are involved in the process. Bishop (2006) noted that although the output and objectives of artists engaged in community arts can vary enormously, they are all ‘linked by a belief in the empowering creativity of collective action and shared ideas’ (p. 179). As a result, within the field of participatory community arts, both the resulting artwork and the creative process leading to it are regarded as important, with the process being seen as an essential tool for achieving “collective, collaborative, mutually-beneficial” results (Ontario Arts Council, 1998).

Guetzkow (2002) noted that, in practice, participatory community arts are often initiated in the form of projects that attempt to use “art” as a tool for human or material development. Projects are designed in the context of a larger goal (such as learning

about diverse cultures or improving a neighbourhood) and can involve people who are disadvantaged in some way (such as people in a poor neighbourhood, ethnic minorities or at-risk youth). The idea behind such projects is that the involved community members develop themselves and gather knowledge, skills or insights, and that such benefits extend beyond the individual, positively impacting the broader community. Kay (2000) highlighted the role the arts can play in community empowerment and helping communities deal with the challenges they face. Specifically, he stated that ‘local people [...] engage together, develop social and economic skills and assume the power to fashion their future’ (p. 415) thus fostering the community’s adaptive capacities. More recently, Anwar McHenry (2011) maintained ‘that the arts can build resilience by providing an avenue for increased social and civic participation’ (p. 251), implying that the arts can be a vehicle for building resilience.

The recognized benefits noted by Anwar McHenry (2009, 2011), Guetzkow (2002) and Kay (2000) are more broadly supported by a literature review by Newman et al. (2003) that specifically highlighted the social gains achieved through the adoption of community-based arts projects. Based on their review, Newman et al. (2003) identified four social gains: 1) *personal changes* such as being happier, more creative and confident, making new friends, taking up training; 2) *social changes* such as improved organizational skills and greater cross-cultural community understanding; 3) *economic changes* with an improved community image helping inward investment and impacting on the number of new jobs and people finding work; and 4) *educational changes* such as improved school performance. The personal, social and economic changes reflect the development of the necessary “ingredients” for building social capital (see also Anwar McHenry, 2011; Guetzkow, 2002; Jermyn, 2001; Kingma, 2001; Williams, 1997). Newman et al. (2003) noted that only a few unintended negative consequences of the community-based arts projects (such as tiredness after the event) were ever mentioned in the reviewed literature, but observed that there were some reservations expressed as ‘to what extent all sections of a community are reached’ (p. 12) by the projects.

It is important to note that despite the general consensus on the contribution of participatory community arts to community capacity building, relatively few scholars associate this explicitly with the concepts of social capital and/or resilience (see, for example, Azmier, 2002; Matarasso, 1997). This is not surprising given Hutter & Kuhlicke’s (2013) claim that, in general, there has been little research ‘that connects the concept of resilience to existing assumptions, theories and concepts of social science and planning research’ (p. 295). This chapter aims to establish this link.

Having discussed both social capital and participatory community arts, the remainder of this chapter explores in greater depth how participatory community arts projects can generate various forms of social capital (bonding, bridging and linking) using two well-documented participatory arts projects as examples: *Closer* and *Connecting Places: Connected Lives*. It is important to note that our aim is not to present an exhaustive analysis of all participatory community arts projects but rather highlight important aspects in such projects that may contribute to, enrich even, communities' resilience. In our exploration of these two projects, we relied on secondary data, comprising academic articles, project reports, websites and a handbook on the role of the arts in building sustainable communities. We studied the available material and analysed how these projects had contributed to the social capital and resilience of the communities in which they took place.

2.4 Two participatory community arts projects

The first project we discuss is a participatory community arts project that was initiated by a housing organization to revitalize two neighbourhoods and create a thriving community. It demonstrates the potential of participatory community arts to engage community members in regeneration activities and yield benefits for the community. The second project was chosen because, in addition to illustrating the ability of participatory community arts to generate bridging capital, it highlights a specific benefit of an arts-based activity by addressing the role of material aspects in building social relationships. This project also engaged the larger community and was seen by the coordinator of the involved refugee-led community organization as far more successful than more formal activities that were also aimed at bringing the local communities together (Askins & Pain, 2011). These two projects were selected because, in contrast to many participatory community arts projects, they are relatively well documented (see also Daly, 2005; Jermyn, 2001; Reeves, 2002). This is essential for our discussion as we want to illustrate the various dimensions of social capital that participatory community arts can generate (i.e. bonding, bridging and linking), in order to understand the potential of participatory community arts in building community resilience. Furthermore, whereas *Closer* provides an example of a participatory community arts project that was open to the entire community and built social capital in two geographically separated neighbourhoods, *Connecting Places: Connected Lives* presents an example of a project that built social capital in an ethnically separated neighbourhood, with participants being selected based on their age and ethnicity.

In our discussions of the two projects, we first provide information on the communities where the projects took place, including the challenges they faced. We then describe the aim and process of each participatory community arts project. In our discussion,

we draw out how the project addressed social capital and contributed to building resilience in the community by helping community members deal with the challenges they faced. After discussing the two projects, we briefly reflect on three critical issues that came to the fore: the importance of sustaining the impacts of participatory community arts projects, the potential downsides of projects, and difficulties in getting funding and support for participatory community arts projects.

2.4.1 “Closer”

Closer is a community-based arts project that took place in 2001 in two Liverpool neighbourhoods (Speke and Garston) that are home to a total of around 25,000 people (Beedham & Wade, 2005; Carey & Sutton, 2002, 2004). The Liverpool History Society’s (LHS) website (2016) describes the neighbourhoods as the “lost villages” of Liverpool. They are areas of significant deprivation and disadvantage, with statistics indicating a high incidence of poverty and unemployment, low skills and poor educational achievement. From the LHS website, it is apparent that Speke and Garston have been neglected for decades, being low on the regeneration priority scale, resulting in ‘a community suffering from appallingly decayed housing stock, significant social problems, and a high crime rate’ (p.1). The website also mentions that there has been a lack of adequate social and community facilities and that the inhabitants felt that they were often regarded as “outsiders”, an indication of low levels of social capital. This environment of neglect and desperation led to ‘disillusionment, distrust and disenchantment with authority’ as Carey & Sutton (2002, p. 12) noted. They stated that, over the years, the communities in these neighbourhoods had been subjected to many unsuccessful “regenerative” activities. Participation in these initiatives has always been low, and tended to attract the same small group of committed community members. This is particularly indicative of a low level of linking social capital which, as explained above, is particularly important for “communities poor in resources” as it gives them more opportunities to make their voices heard and greater access to resources (see Magis, 2010).

Closer was initiated by South Liverpool Housing (SLH, the largest social landlord in the area) in partnership with Arts in Regeneration (AiR, a locally based community arts organization). The project was an expression of SLH’s mission ‘not just to revitalize the houses and the physical environment, but to work with all the people of Speke and Garston to create a vibrant, thriving community where people are proud to live and work’ (Carey & Sutton, 2002, p. 6). Although the authors did not use the terminology, this project’s mission implies that the activities were targeted at capacity building and aiming to contribute to Speke and Garston’s resilience – so that the neighbourhoods would “bounce forward”.

Closer set out to develop and deliver six arts and culture projects, each involving a professional artist collaborating with local people, in six different locations throughout Speke and Garston. Activities conducted in the context of *Closer* included two environmental arts projects that focused on the development of children's play areas, a video documentary following the redevelopment of the area in which residents were actively involved in the production and content, and an internet radio station that worked with residents from local sheltered accommodation in setting up the station (see Carey & Sutton, 2002, pp. 4-5, 2004, p. 125). In adopting a participatory approach, *Closer* aimed to create a framework for participation that would yield several benefits for the community including training and support for residents in order to increase their participation and self-reliance, and continued skills development after the completion of *Closer* by joining in other regeneration initiatives (Beedham & Wade, 2005). Such benefits contribute to a community's adaptive capacities and make it more resilient by providing the community with some level of control over its future direction (McIntosh et al., 2008).

Beedham & Wade's (2005) handbook on the role of the arts in building sustainable communities cited *Closer* as a successful and exemplary project, largely because of its ability to "bring the community together". In line with this, Carey & Sutton (2002) concluded, in their evaluation report on *Closer*, that the project met its aim of increasing participation. They found that many people were involved in the project as well as in their community. In a later publication, they noted that there was now 'a greater sense of solidarity and commitment to the community from people who live and work in the area' (2004, p. 133), which they viewed as an important long-term legacy of the project. In terms of McCarthy et al.'s definition cited above, this suggests that *bonding capital* had been developed within Speke and Garston. Carey & Sutton (2002) argued that it was the project's arts focus that encouraged people to become involved. They cited (p. 25) a resident who said: 'people are wary of authority, whereas with this being art it's been less formal and friendly'. Participation in the *Closer* project also resulted in the development of a range of individual skills and qualities that Beedham & Wade (2005) and Carey & Sutton (2002) summarized as including: IT and broadcasting skills; organisational, budgeting, intercommunicative and social skills; increased self-confidence and assertiveness. It is noteworthy that at least some residents intended to expand these skills by 'opting to attend personal capacity building courses to maximize their input into the area' (Carey & Sutton, 2004, p. 132).

Benefits of the *Closer* projects extended beyond the boundaries of the individual neighbourhoods. First, Carey & Sutton (2002) emphasized that *Closer* helped to bring the people from the two distinct areas together: prior to the project 'it [was] evident

that residents from both Speke and Garston view[ed] each other with a certain degree of suspicion and distrust – “*them & us*”. This project has gone some way to healing this rift’ (p. 24, original emphasis). They argued that the project’s arts focus had ‘encouraged inclusion through getting different groups of people to work together’ (p. 25). The ability to collaborate, and thus expand the resources available to the community, demonstrates the building up of *bridging capital* (see Magis, 2010). Second, evidence was noted of stronger links with key agencies both within and beyond Speke and Garston (Carey & Sutton, 2004). Beedham & Wade (2005) noted that *Closer* raised the profile of SLH and changed residents’ perceptions of it. They cited the project leader (the New Business Initiatives Manager from SLH), who said: ‘it [*Closer*] brought the community together so it was no longer a struggle to get people involved – now people trust us’ (p. 45). Such relationships between individuals and institutions beyond their immediate community who have relative power over them are associated with *linking capital* (Hawkins & Maurer, 2010). As outlined earlier, and especially for disadvantaged and rundown neighbourhoods such as Speke and Garston, such linking capital is significant in expanding access to resources and opportunities (see Magis, 2010). In addition, Carey & Sutton (2002) noted that *Closer* positively changed people’s perceptions of the value of art as a tool for participation and regeneration, and maintained that the dialogue between the community members and the artists greatly contributed to this. To illustrate this, they quoted a resident who stated: ‘because the artists came out and listened to people and explained what art can be... that was the thing, that got things going’ (p. 26).

To summarize, we can conclude that *Closer* contributed to the development of bonding, bridging and linking capitals in Speke and Garston and, in this way, contributed to the resilience of the neighbourhoods by increasing the capacity of the community members ‘to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities’ future’ (Magis, 2010, p. 402).

2.4.2 “Connecting Places: Connected Lives”

Connecting Places: Connected Lives was a participatory community arts project that was conducted in Newcastle upon Tyne in the UK in 2006-2007. It involved children from African refugee and from white British backgrounds. As Askins & Pain (2011) noted, separation and hostility between existing and newly arrived groups were key current social and political issues of concern in the UK (and elsewhere). Connected to this, the notion of “community cohesion” had become a central theme for social policy in the UK, with an ‘acceleration of efforts to bring different communities together’ (Askins & Pain, 2011, p. 804) and the UK government placing a ‘high priority on the promotion of integration and development of resilient communities through the Cohesion Delivery Framework and Guidance on Meaningful Interaction’ (ibid.,

p. 805). Askins & Pain (2011) explained that community cohesion is outlined as an attempt to build communities with four key characteristics: ‘a common vision and a sense of belonging for all; the valuing of diversity; similar life opportunities for all; and strong and positive relationships between people from different backgrounds and circumstances in the workplace, in schools, and within neighbourhoods’ (ibid., p. 804). What resonates in this is the need to build *bridging capital* which, as explained above, exposes people to diversity, enhances their ability to work with each other and expands the resources available to them (Magis, 2010). This contributes to a community’s resilience as it creates the “glue” that helps communities to function well and deal with the challenges they face.

2 In fact, it was the researchers Askins & Pain themselves who initiated *Connecting Places: Connected Lives*, which ‘set out to use participatory art to explore emotional topographies, everyday exclusions, and notions of belonging’ (Askins & Pain, 2011, p. 803; see also Pain et al., 2007; Durham University, 2016). The project was conducted in collaboration with African Community Advice North East (ACANE), a refugee-led community organization that aims to ‘support the settlement of asylum seekers and refugees from the African continent, who have been dispersed to the North East region and Tyneside in particular, and to actively promote their integration with the host community so that they can lead full and active lives, and participate in and contribute to the community on an equal basis’ (quoted from Involve NorthEast, 2016). Askins & Pain (2011) explained that although ‘interaction was part of the collaborative framing of what the project was about’, and that ACANE’s manager hoped that there would also be benefits in terms of interaction from the project’s process itself, that ‘the research was not specially designed to facilitate it’ (p. 808).

Connecting Places: Connected Lives involved 21 children aged 5-16 who met at ACANE’s community centre with the researchers. They discussed and expressed their feelings about bullying and commonly held negative images of African countries, using diagrams, cartoons and sketches. Their ideas were then developed into images using acrylic paints. First, the participants focused on African countries, then on Newcastle. Subsequently, the connections between these places were discussed. The paintings were an attempt to promote positive images of African countries and of Newcastle, and highlight some of the connections between them (see Askins & Pain, 2011; Durham University, 2016).

Connecting Places: Connected Lives contributed to the community in Newcastle upon Tyne by providing a meeting place for African and British children. It stimulated the building of *bridging capital* and, in this way, contributed to the community’s resilience. The project engaged the local community, which Askins & Pain (2011) regarded as

crucial for success in a community cohesion initiative. They noted that, for ACANE's coordinator, the project was part of a series of efforts to bring the local communities together, and was seen as far more successful than more formal activities (which are not further specified). A quote from ACANE's coordinator illustrates this: 'I'm happy because they [the two groups] can now even meet, because it used to be that black and white kids were not mixing very much. But I'm happy because we start to have those activities where they can come together and let the community know about the things that are important to them – to try to break this ice between those communities' (ibid., p. 817). Pain et al. (2007) further reported that the participatory art techniques used in the project helped in this process of breaking down barriers between the children in the group. In addition, they were 'useful for expressing feelings, ideas and images of places which are sometimes difficult to put into words' (ibid, p. 2). Not only the paintings themselves, but also the processes and discussion that went into producing them, 'began to identify points of similarity between the young people from different backgrounds' (Askins & Pain, 2011, p. 809).

Reflecting on the project, Askins & Pain (2011) noted that, initially, there were negative interactions between the young participants and that 'dominant social groupings and power relations were played out through the use/control of objects [that were used in the creative process]' (p. 813). In this sense, the divisive social relationships that the participants encountered in their everyday lives were also present on the site of the project. However, they noted that this changed as the project progressed and interactions between the ethnic groups increased. They stated, for example, that 'as young people began to explore *shared* themes about their separate lives in the neighbourhood, unexpected new alliances began to form' (ibid., p. 811, original emphasis) and that 'the young people began to interact with us [the researchers] and each other to develop the key themes and produce artwork around them' (ibid., p. 811). As such, bridges were constructed between the research participants, across the two ethnic groups, thereby generating *bridging capital*.

In their article, Askins & Pain (2011) highlighted 'the materiality of art (the tools) within participatory practices (the doing of it) in contributing to a space where interactions might take place' (p. 803). They highlighted the important role played by the materials with which the participants worked: 'through engaging with materials, then, interaction among the young people increased *and changed* – subtly, but there was a tangible shift in individuals' behaviours with each other' (p. 814, original emphasis). The authors explained that the materials that were used in the project (e.g. pens, tubes of paint) 'appeared to suggest interactions, demand communications, and enable conversations across and between the research participants, and researchers and participants – they were *part of our contact*' (p. 813, original emphasis). For example,

the participants had to share the materials around within the overall group, asked each other questions regarding the use of the materials, and also used the materials in “non-art” ways (such as using paintbrushes as swords in mock sword fights). Askins & Pain (2011) concluded that new social relationships could be prompted or enabled by the physical and embodied experiences of making art and using art-related materials. In their *Connecting Places: Connected Lives* project, they saw how race-based divides began to break down and new relationships were formed (which were also visible beyond the project), specifically through the use of the “stuff” of the art project.

Connecting Places: Connected Lives demonstrates the ability of participatory community arts to generate *bridging capital* – in particular between ethnic groups – that can stimulate community cohesion and help in developing community resources that are beneficial in terms of increasing community resilience.

2.4.3 Critical reflections

Before turning to our conclusions on the value of participatory community arts in building community resilience, it is important to note three critical issues that emerged from the discussed projects.

First, in the literature on both projects, the authors identified the importance of sustaining the impacts of the participatory community arts projects. As such a long-term perspective is highly relevant in light of community resilience, which requires communities that can ‘thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise’ (Magis, 2010, p. 402). Although a single participatory community arts event has the potential to facilitate new social relationships, Askins & Pain (2011) argued that ‘policy should recognize the need for repeated activities [...] if any transformative changes in relations between people are to become routinized and a new norm’ (p. 818). On a similar note, Carey & Sutton (2004) stated that the real value of community development is only achieved if participatory community arts projects are sustainable. They argued that a “long-term legacy” should be an important outcome of projects and that, ideally, ‘projects should not “finish”, but should evolve to meet the expanding capacity and aspirations of the community, as well as building on success’ (p. 133). In considering *Closer*, they commented that there was a concern among the residents that involvement would be undermined if the successes of the project were not built upon, and that a failure to do so would undermine residents’ sense of achievement and belonging.

Second, it is important to bear in mind that participatory community arts projects can also have downsides. Matarasso (1997) noted that arts projects can be poorly planned or executed, or produce negative outcomes such as damaged personal or community

confidence. Further, projects could provide unequal opportunities for participation and, in this way, contribute to the exclusion of certain groups in the community (see, for example, Mattern, 2001). Some of the literature tends to ignore these negative aspects, and failed participatory community arts projects are often not documented at all (Belfiore, 2006; Guetzkow, 2002). In contrast, when reflecting on *Connecting Places: Connected Lives*, Askins & Pain (2011) quite extensively reflected on a second, in their eyes less successful, part of the project. This second part involved a local professional artist and was intended to produce a display at an established public art site. Whereas the first part of the project was hands on, this second part was distinctly less participatory, with the artist doing all the work while the young people watched. Askins & Pain noted how this had a negative impact on relationships among the young people: ‘relations between young people that had previously begun to shift from avoidance to interaction to positive encounters seemed to be reverting back to longer held and enacted exclusions’ (ibid., p. 812). Also, when it came to reflecting on *Closer*, Carey & Sutton (2004) provided some more critical reflections on the participatory community arts project. They reflected on some frustrations that were present in the process of planning and managing *Closer* (including in the fundraising process and in the relationships between the artists and managers involved), and noted that the short timescale of *Closer* indirectly led to some residents feeling excluded and disappointed. They explained that, as a consequence of the project’s short timescale (six months), several of the micro-projects were unfinished by the time of the grand finale (a party to showcase the work that had been achieved through the project) and that this created negative feelings among some of the residents who were involved in the unfinished micro-projects.

Third, from Carey & Sutton’s (2004) reflections, it becomes clear that it can be difficult to obtain the necessary funding and support for a participatory community arts project. They commented that accessing funds for *Closer* took considerable effort and was “extremely time-consuming”. Moreover, they observed that ‘some fund-holders’ regulations mitigate against project sustainability by ruling out bids from already existing projects’ (ibid., p. 128), which they saw as a possible threat to any future development.

2.5 Conclusions

In this chapter, we argue that participatory community arts should be considered in community development processes as a means for building community resilience. Resilience policy and practice have to date often focused on rebuilding the economic and physical infrastructure of a community (White & O’Hare, 2014). However, as Boon et al. (2012) observed, community events that support social networks and build a sense of place deserve similar emphasis. Together with other resilience-building

initiatives, they can assist communities in developing the capacity and resources to deal with the challenges they face and to flourish.

2 An evolutionary approach to planning for resilience, i.e. one which is more attuned to sociocultural conditions and embraces transformability (White & O'Hare, 2014), offers a suitable framework for including participatory community arts in community development processes. Participatory community arts projects can positively contribute to “resilience-in-process” (see Davoudi, 2012) because they offer the potential to generate various forms of social capital that contribute to a community's adaptive capacity ‘to thrive in an environment characterized by change, uncertainty, unpredictability, and surprise’ (Magis, 2010, p. 402). Generally speaking, because of the build-up of social capital, community members can become more connected to each other and to their community. Subsequently, they are more willing to contribute to their community and its development (Brennan et al., 2009; Derrett, 2003). This is important for community resilience, as resilience requires (pro-)active communities that are capable of helping themselves (Steiner & Markantoni, 2013), with community members intentionally developing ‘personal and collective capacity that they engage to respond to and influence change, to sustain and renew the community, and to develop new trajectories for the communities' future’ (Magis, 2010, p. 402).

As discussed above, various studies have shown how participatory community arts provide a context for social interaction between various and often very different community members, bringing people together, stimulating direct social interaction and, thus, providing opportunities for building bonds (see, for example, Anwar McHenry, 2011; Guetzkow, 2002; Jermyn, 2001; Kingma, 2001; Newman et al., 2003; Williams, 1997). In the two projects we explored in depth, the arts were specifically credited with helping to involve people and to facilitate interactions. *Closer* targeted community members from two geographically separated neighbourhoods, whereas *Connecting Places, Connected Lives* involved participants from within an ethnically separated neighbourhood. Both projects illustrate the ability of participatory community arts to generate various types of social capital. By supporting social networks and building a sense of place, they are excellent examples of the kind of community events that Boon et al. (2012) urged be included in resilience-building initiatives. It is important to note that the successful projects we discussed both took place in a UK context. Other spatial contexts, as well as processes or events that put pressure on local communities (such as those discussed in other chapters of this book), may require different forms of participatory community arts projects.

Participatory community arts projects often take their cues from the everyday, lived experiences of communities and use these to formulate goals for human development

(see, for example, Askins & Pain, 2011; Derrett, 2003). In doing so, they can offer interesting tools as part of a resilience policy that ‘is being directed towards smaller spatial scales and everyday practices’ rather than ‘a command and control approach from central government’ (Coaffee, 2013, p. 333). Coaffee (2013) further noted that such ‘*letting go*’ by institutions and organizations is needed to ‘creat[e] the necessary framework for action’ (p. 333, original emphasis). He regarded ‘this integration of a range of resiliency approaches at the *local* level’ as representing ‘the latest generation of resilience practices that planners are increasingly being asked to adopt’ (p. 325, original emphasis).

However, Christopherson et al. (2010, p. 9) emphasized that ‘we should avoid assuming that the same drivers of change are at work everywhere and if we just pull the right levers, the appropriate drivers will respond and deliver the required outcomes’. We would therefore like to stress the need to take the specific socio-spatial context in which a participatory community arts project is planned into account when planning for resilience, as each community will have its own characteristics and needs.

In addition, one should be aware of the importance of sustaining the impacts of participatory community arts projects, of the potential downsides of projects, and of the difficulties in obtaining funding and support for projects – critical issues that came to the fore in the two cases we investigated. Mattern (2001) provided a good example of the dividing potential of the arts, showing that they can also act more as a “social solvent”, dividing two groups, than as a “social glue”. Moreover, when discussing the value of participatory community arts in building community resilience, it is important to note, as Burnell (2012) argued, that they cannot alone resolve the complex socioeconomic issues that many communities face. Nevertheless, Burnell (2012) promoted culture as ‘an essential resource for change’ (p. 138), arguing that the arts and cultural resources ‘provide a wide range of diverse opportunities aimed at unlocking intangible assets and social capital – opportunities that can lead to an increase in tangible assets being accumulated with the aim of reducing vulnerability and building more resilient and sustainable communities’ (p. 147). A view which our findings support.

