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VISITING CREATIVITY COUNTRY: A POLICY-MAKER'S TRAVEL GUIDE

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Abstract

This contribution looks at the theatre artist as facilitator in the social policy realm. The authors discuss alternative interpretive angles and mediating possibilities offered by embodied creative processes, which are not otherwise available to social policy researchers. We discuss why social policy-makers need to be not only 'informed' by applied theatre research and creative processes, but to have embodied creative processes integrated within their professional practice. The methodologies of theatre and policy-making both exist as carefully crafted distillations of thought, external data and experience. The most profound difference between them is that non- discursive artistic materials emerge as 'transcendent configurations' which clarify and make explicit the structure and meaning of 'lived experience'. The authors elaborate on the theoretical underpinnings that place the applied theatre artist at the centre of the collaborative research process, able to guide people through the terrain of creativity country, and bring new ideas to fruition.

Résumé

Cette contribution examine l'artiste de théâtre en tant que facilitateur dans le domaine de la politique sociale. Les auteurs discutent les angles d'interprétation alternatifs et des possibilités de médiation offertes par des méthodes de travail créatif incorporé, non disponibles normalement aux chercheurs en politique sociale. Nous discutons de la raison pour laquelle les décideurs en matière de politique sociale ont non seulement besoin d'être informés des résultats de la recherche théâtrale appliquée et des méthodes de travail créatif, mais doivent intégrer les méthodes de travail créatif incorporé dans leurs pratiques professionnelles. Les méthodologies appliquées au théâtre et en politique sociale existent toutes deux en tant que grandes distillations de pensées, de données extérieures et d'expériences. La différence la plus profonde réside dans le fait que les matériaux artistiques non-discursifs émergent en tant que 'configurations transcendantes' qui expliquent la structure et la signification de la 'vie vécue'. Les auteurs élaborent sur les fondements théoriques qui placent l'artiste de théâtre appliqué au centre d'une méthode de recherche collaborative, capable de guider les individus sur le chemin de la créativité, tout en apportant de nouvelles idées.

Resumen

Esta contribución ve al artista de teatro como un facilitador dentro del campo de la política social. Los autores deliberan sobre ángulos alternativos interpretativos y las posibilidades de mediación ofrecidas por procesos creativos representados, los cuales no se encuentran de otras maneras disponibles a los investigadores de la política social. Nosotros discutimos el porqué los elaboradores de la política social, necesitan estar "informados" no solamente por la investigación del teatro aplicado y los procesos creativos, sino el de tener procesos creativos representados integrados dentro de su práctica profesional. Ambas metodologías del teatro y la elaboración de políticas existen como destilaciones cuidadosamente confeccionadas procedentes del pensamiento, datos externos y la experiencia. La más profunda diferencia entre ellas es que los materiales artísticos que no son de índole discursivos surgen como

"configuraciones transcendentes" que aclaran y hacen explícita la estructura y el significado de la "experiencia vivida". Los autores profundizan sobre los fundamentos teóricos que colocan al artista del teatro aplicado en el centro del proceso de investigación colaboradora, capaz de guiar a las personas a través del terreno del país de la creatividad y que nuevas ideas den su fruto.

Authors' biographies

Dr Ainslie Yardley is a novelist, theatre artist, non-fiction author and digital multimedia essayist. Her current work focuses on embodied creativity, and the role narrative plays in consciousness and communication. Her community work has included youth theatre productions and projects with refugee claimants from many areas of conflict internationally.

John Bailey works for the Office of the Board of Studies in New South Wales. His academic research focuses on the development of theatrical performance within mental health care settings. Applied theatre work contexts include: refugee claimants, mental health services, youth, and forum theatre in rural and regional communities. John has lectured in theatre studies and performance skills, and facilitates workshops in forum theatre.

Biographies des auteurs

Dr Ainslie Yardley est un romancier, artiste de théâtre, auteur de documentaires et essayiste de multimédia digital. Son travail actuel se porte sur la créativité incorporée, et sur le rôle que la narration joue sur la conscience et la communication. Son travail communautaire inclut des productions de théâtre pour les jeunes et des projets avec des demandeurs d'asile issus de nombreuses régions de conflit international.

John Bailey travaille pour l'*Office of the Board of Studies* de Nouvelle Galles du Sud. Son travail de recherche se porte sur le développement des performances de théâtre dans les instituts psychiatriques. Les contextes de travail du théâtre appliqué comprennent : les demandeurs d'asile, les services psychiatriques, les jeunes, et le théâtre forum présent dans les campagnes et dans les communautés régionales. John a enseigné l'art théâtral et les techniques de performance, et il a animé des ateliers de théâtre forum.

Biografías de los autores

La Dra. Ainslie Yardley es una novelista, artista de teatro, autora de obras que no son de ficción y ensayista del multimedia digital. Sus obras actuales se enfocan en la personificación de la creatividad, y el rol que la narrativa juega en el conciente y la comunicación. Su trabajo en pro de la comunidad ha incluido producciones de teatro de jóvenes y proyectos con solicitantes de refugio procedentes de muchas áreas en conflicto a nivel internacional.

John Bailey trabaja para la Oficina de La Junta de Estudios en Nueva Gales del Sur. Su investigación de índole académica se enfoca en el desarrollo de la actuación teatral dentro del marco del cuido de salud mental. Las obras dentro del contexto de teatro aplicado incluyen: solicitantes de refugio, servicios de salud mental, jóvenes, y el foro teatral en las comunicaciones rurales y regionales. John ha dado cátedra en el estudio del teatro, destrezas en la representación y funge como facilitador en los foros del teatro.

VISITING CREATIVITY COUNTRY: A POLICY-MAKER'S TRAVEL GUIDE

Introduction

In this paper, we look at the theatre artist as facilitator in the social policy realm and discuss why social policy-makers need to be not only 'informed' by applied theatre research and creative processes, but to have embodied creative process integrated within their professional practice.

Policy-making, at its most effective, is a creative act. To be effective, policy-makers need to know how to personally occupy creative space in order to create good policy. We will contextualise our discussion by exploring recent directions in social policy development before examining how performative creative processes can be brought into play in social research.

Recent redirections in social policy development

Recent directions in social policy development have been influenced by theoretical preferences for compaction and segmentation. The policy emerging from this theoretical base has meant that, whether we are members of caring professions or support agencies, arts practitioners or academics, we will have been affected by the segmentation and compaction of our professional lives. Most of us no longer have the resources or the support — and in many cases are simply not permitted — to spend time with individual patients, clients, residents or students, let alone time to wander unharried in our own conceptual territory.

The Third Wave

Australian economic reforms over the past decade have followed similar patterns to other Western-style economies, such as the United Kingdom and New Zealand. In 2005, the Victorian state government asserted that the flood of national reforms Australia had been experiencing since the 1980s was not yet complete. In the early 1980s, the first wave of reform opened up the economy, floating the dollar, deregulating financial markets and ending tariff barriers. The second wave in the 1990s brought with it National Competition Policy. In a paper published before the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) meeting in February 2006 (Bracks 2005), the Victorian Bracks state government called for a 'third wave' of national reform focusing on developing 'human capital'. The paper promised that this 'third wave' would deliver greater productivity combined with higher labour force participation through the improvement of health, learning and work outcomes.

This third wave of reform appears to have some force behind it in terms of social policy development directions. Communiqué no. 1 of the February 2006 meeting of COAG (COAG 2006), entitled *National Reform Agenda — Human Capital Stream,* confirmed the support of the prime minister, premiers and chief ministers for this reform focus to be placed on the national agenda.

The recent New South Wales government's state plan focuses on the key priorities for the state government over the next ten years (Premier's Department, NSW 2006) and sets quantifiable outcomes for each of its priorities. In the area of health, for example, the plan defines the five stages of triage required to be followed in a hospital emergency ward and the acceptable waiting times within each of these stages. The wards keep count of all patients who come into the emergency ward, document their triage status and record how long it takes before they receive treatment. Inputs are based on this accounting system. But, as was witnessed in the emergency room of a major Australian hospital recently, human beings do not necessarily always fit these measures. The community at large sees a woman's miscarriage in a hospital toilet in the woman's terms: as a profoundly traumatic experience and a great human loss made worse by the environment in which she found herself. This is an embodied outcome, not a numerical one, the repercussions of which included a wave of emotion that reverberated throughout the community. An unanticipated outcome such as this is a policy-maker's worst nightmare. To account for embodied outcomes, policy-makers need methodological tools that account for embodied experience.

But before we start down that discursive pathway, it is important to briefly explore some changes to the way that people charged with the delivery of social policy — the public sector — are managed. It is through this channel that social reform is also managed.

Ex-premier of Western Australia (and now director of the University of Sydney's Graduate School of

Government), Professor Geoff Gallop, charts the beginning of contemporary public sector reform to the 'New Public Management' movement of the 1980s. Agencies were no longer to be seen as part of a seamless public sector appointed for life to serve the needs of citizens. They were to be seen as separate entities employed to achieve specific outputs and outcomes established by government. Their role was to serve the interests of citizens 'as clients, customers or residents', rather than simply as taxpayers (Gallop 2006a).

In order to achieve these goals, it was necessary for agencies to judge themselves in terms of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Gallop suggests that what the concept of effectiveness might mean within the public realm was never adequately addressed. The concept of efficiency, on the other hand, proved a far simpler concept to apply, as resources were allocated via markets and benchmarks could be created to compare different jurisdictions. The primary role of government was seen to be to maximise the efficiency of their operations on behalf of their owners, the taxpayer.

The four pillars

In looking at the social security component of social policy, Robert Goodin (2000) refers to the commonly held view that social security rests on four pillars: 'the state, the market, the family and the community' (2000: 8). The New Public Management approach to the 'mixed economy of welfare' (Rainwater et al., cited in Goodin 2000: 10) was that the state share of the social welfare burden should be pared back and the other sectors 'allowed' to take on more of the burden. This policy is based on the assumption that the other three pillars are strong enough to bear the added burden, an assumption that Goodin says 'is radically untrue' (2000: 9). He argues that these three pillars are already collapsing under their current load:

1. Families are falling apart, with parents, grandparents and children separated by great distance.
2. The economic market no longer supplies stable incomes and support for private social security, due to the push for a flexible workforce and reduction in on-costs, such as leave and redundancy entitlements.
3. The large social security support offered within the community sector is becoming more difficult to realise with the increase in workforce participation by the traditional population of volunteers.

And the people are not happy.

On 26 September 2007, the *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article entitled 'Stop the Treadmill, We Want to Get Off' in which Tanya, a young voter from Western Sydney, was quoted as saying 'it feels like we're both earning really good money, but we're both pushing shit uphill trying to get ahead' (Wade 2007). Wade's article highlighted one of the most significant issues facing politicians today: that while Australia is supposedly in the midst of an economic golden age, voters appear ready to dump the government who claims the credit. This article reports on a paper published by Relationships Forum Australia (RFA), which challenges the use of the Gross Domestic Product to measure human welfare or well-being, quoting Robert Kennedy's critique of 1967:

Gross National Product does not allow for the health of our children, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages; the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials. It measures neither our wit nor our courage; neither our wisdom nor our learning; neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country; it measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile. (Wade 2007)

The triple bottom line

The RFA report argues that the only way to redress this failure is by focusing on developing 'true national wealth' across all sectors of government in which the three dimensions of social policy are taken into account — the 'triple bottom line' of economic, environmental and social objectives. It argues that the language must change, with goals, inputs and outcomes of social policy being expressed in 'language appropriate to the various aspects of life, rather than falling back on the language of economics' (Shepanski et al. 2007: 31). It argues that the relational aspects of the social dimension must be foregrounded. This aspect is emphasised by economics columnist Ross Gittins in a column in the *Sydney Morning Herald*, prompted by this same report, in which he asks why politicians 'find it so hard to accept that we might actually care about our families — even at the expense of a dollar or two' (Gittins 2007). This same need to focus on the triple bottom line is supported by Gallop as he argues for a strategic

government characterised by 'a desire to be more comprehensive, a concern for results, a belief in community engagement and a search for public purpose and priorities based on human need' (Gallop 2006b: 4).

Picture this: the third wave, like a giant tsunami, surges towards a level playing field where the four pillars of social security stand erect like a tech-age Stonehenge, fenced in by the triple bottom line.

The theatre artist as facilitator in the social policy realm

Applied theatre practitioners and researchers, along with NGOs and community-based social service providers, have themselves felt the need, over the last 15 years or so, to absorb and use the language of New Public Management and economics in their search for legitimacy and a place at the funding table. Any words or phrases to do with nurturing and relationality seem to have become pejoratives. They are seen as motherhood statements and emotional deviations characteristic of a nanny state, and therefore worthy of excision from the policy-makers' and policy implementers' lexicon. In the process, the language of creativity and communication withers and atrophies.

The language of theatre is an embodied language — tingling, thudding, rumbling, sighing; full of anxiety and hope; anchored in and reflecting multi-layered lived-time and lived-space. There are no certainties and absolutes here. Well for goodness sake, you can't write policy in language like that! Maybe not, but conceptualising what might be possible in social policy development becomes more than an intellectual exercise, or an exercise in logistical and fiscal control, if the body and the space the body occupies with other bodies are not forgotten.

What can we do to keep our language and our practice vital and alive when we are asked to be accountable only on the basis of quantifiable results? Jenny Hughes (2006) identifies the challenges faced by applied theatre researchers in 'measuring and theorising sensate experience and the notion of the unpredictable, constructed and experimental nature of cultural and social activity' (2006: 2). She identifies an irony in the growing pressure for applied theatre to adopt social science research methods just as social science is looking to the arts to generate new methodologies that step inside the kind of embodied theoretical space that applied theatre has always occupied. It was, after all, the work of applied theatre practitioners, along with writers, musicians and visual artists in the community, that initially helped to lure the social scientists in. The social sciences have recognised that creative methodologies deepen the discourse.

The pain-full world

The 'space and time' of pain and social disruption

Returning to the idea of embodied outcomes, Jean Jackson describes a 'pain-full world' (Jackson in Csordas 1994: 215) and Merleau-Ponty (1962) writes of 'pain infested space' (1962: 93). Both are describing a 'space and time' of physical, emotional or social disruption that exists in parallel to the everyday world, a space where the building blocks of the perceived world can dissolve into 'existential affliction' and suffering. We have created just such a space in our new-millennium global world, where stalking the illusion of certainty has become an obsession, and fear and suspicion dominate. The majority of us live our real lives in parallel with, but alienated from, the golden economic era that, we are told, belongs to us.

The 'space and time' of creativity country

The 'controlled' disruption of creativity, on the other hand, is an energy-filled, joy-infested space that truly belongs to us, where the everyday world dissolves into expanded consciousness and receptivity. Both creativity and pain are experienced within the crossover space between worlds where experiences are mediated and transformed, for good or ill. Since the purpose of social policy is to mediate experience, policy-makers need to learn to use this space well. Here is where we turn to our most effective and valuable allies, the folk who have the skills to lead us in and guide us through the country of creativity (Yardley 2004).

The structure of meaning given to 'creativity' in this paper fully recognises its spatial and temporal qualities. This concept of creativity is imbued with a dimensional quality, a quality of enfolding space which envelops us as creative beings and supports our ability to create. It is a multi-dimensional space (physical, conceptual, metaphorical) which we inhabit as we go about the serious business of bringing

something new into being — including something as crucial to our flourishing as social policy.

Creativity has both a 'moment' and a 'territory', existing in time and space (in a country of a kind). It is the emerging place of all that is brought into being from the mind: all new thought, all new human construction, all new experience, all new knowledge that is central to our existence as human beings (Yardley 2004). We make this connection, within the limits of our understanding, with the Aboriginal concept of country (Cowan 1994) not in any flippant or simplistic way but to provide conceptual associations — associations that can give greater depth of meaning to representations of creativity as we consider it to be: a place of belonging, to be entered with seriousness and reverence. This conceptual connection also reinforces the idea that there are ethical implications of being in country, both for those entering and for those 'guarding' the borders — and that includes the policy-makers who may determine how difficult entering 'country' might become.

Ainslie's story of Wolf and Tony

Some years ago, I was director of an arts facility in a major psychiatric hospital in New Zealand (Yardley 2004). As part of an Arts Health Hui held at the hospital, we were conducting a dance workshop in the rec hall, with choreographers Jamie Bull and Wolfgang Stange — the London- based founder of Amici Dance Theatre. Around 70 people were gathered in the hall. Wolfgang and Jamie had led everyone (all 70) through a series of exercises to warm up and integrate this large and disparate group. One of the resident patients who had been brought along to participate was a middle-aged man confined to a wheelchair — totally blind, profoundly deaf and paralysed by a degenerative muscular disease; a man who was often in pain. This man's multiple disabilities had made participation in the range of activities available to patients in the hospital increasingly difficult. For the most part, he was simply brought to events and parked where someone would stand by, often with their hand on his shoulder.

Jamie Bull was working one side of the room and Wolfgang the other. The hall had become a writhing mass of bodies swaying and pounding the wooden sprung floor with Tony, our wheelchair-bound man, sitting off to one side. Initially he sat as usual, looking uncomfortable and bored. Sometimes he looked downright miserable. It was this expression of misery and isolation that attracted Wolfgang's attention and sent him off to delve into his box of tricks.

As the floor vibrated, Tony's expression changed. He was not unused to sitting through dances or sporting events, and the vibrations told him to some degree what was going on. His initial change in expression seemed to say: 'Ah yes, they've started, they're moving now.' An expression of mild interest followed, perhaps asking: 'What's this? Square dancing? Volley ball?'

— two regular entertainments conducted in the hall, in which Tony had himself participated before his sight and hearing were lost completely. This initial interest was overtaken by an expression of puzzlement, perhaps because the vibrations were not as uniformly rhythmical as might be expected from square dancing, nor as randomly exuberant as those of not very skilful volleyball players who often fell with a thud to the floor. Tony seemed to be aware that something different was happening in the room this time — and he seemed to be waiting for further information to come his way.

Wolfgang had returned with an armload of fabric — rolled strips of silk of various widths and lengths, some several metres long. He threw open a length of this silk which unfurled and landed over Tony's face and head. Gently Wolfgang pulled the fabric across the skin of Tony's face and neck and over and around his shoulders. You could feel the sensation of this in your own body as you watched: cool, smooth, soft; the gentle tug. Tony's face dissolved into a smile, and for a time he sat passively and enjoyed the sensation of the silk and its pull and tug against his body.

Wolfgang threw a bundle of silk to another dancer, who joined him in a three-way exchange with Tony, whose face lit up with delight as he received the vital information through his body that he needed to understand what was happening to and around him. He had recognised the addition of another 'player', and that this exchange was not random but intentional. He had also recognised his own status as player and immediately swung forward in the direction of the other dancer's movement, then, using his own body weight, swung himself sideways, tugging against the silk. These movements developed into a rhythmic dance that was truly beautiful to watch.

There was no verbal language in this communication, no visual language or sound either as far as Tony was concerned, but the communication between the three was profound and commanded the attention of everyone in the room. All eyes were riveted on Tony — taking in his body and the scarves, feeling the caress of the silk, the pull and tug, his relationship to Wolfgang and the third dancer, all eyes focused on

the expression of his body in the dance, reflected in the expression of pure joy in his face. These are the kinds of experiences that have lured the social sciences over the methodological threshold.

This collaborative event was recognised by everyone present as a creative and transformative moment. This beautiful exchange and many others like it have made us acutely aware of the physical nature of the creative act, aware that it cannot just comprise an individual acuity of a particular type of brain, but that it resides in the whole of the relational body — whatever the form employed — performance, painting, film, writing, scientific research, integrating psychological affects, policy-making or the creative process of becoming well.

Emotion and feeling

The detail of Tony's lived experience, how he might have perceived his part in Wolfgang's silken dance improvisation, will remain forever a mystery. There is no conventional means by which Tony could communicate what that experience felt like for him. All we have to go on are stories told by other participants of their own embodied experience of the dance, their experience of Tony and their feelings about the emotional interaction that occurred between them. That and the evidence presented by his body — its deliberate motion, its animation, its sudden appearance of lightness and fluidity, its eagerness to reach out and connect. This was not how he appeared before the dance. Nothing like. Watsiji describes such a moment as 'the "betweenness" govern(ing) the life-space' of experience (cited in Yuasa and Kasulis 1987: 50). The 'betweenness' experienced by Wolfgang and Tony as they danced without a doubt governed the space we were all in as we watched and participated. No words were spoken to describe what was taking place. It was purely emotion translated into feeling that contributed to the subtle layers of 'interconnected meanings' we all constructed between our bodies through time and space. We were mapping the space between us, and our relationship one to another — that apparently indefinable mystery that policy-makers find so problematic.

Tony used his emotional 'intel' to great effect, analysing the stimulus provided to him by the push and pull on the scarves and the flow of the fabric across his body to be transmuted into thoughts about the nature of the exchange between himself and the other dancers. Tony recognised an act of friendship and respect when he felt one, recognised a creative opportunity when he felt it, an opportunity to share a deep human connection, to make meaning with his fellow dancers, in order that they might communicate with everyone present. How can we make any judgment about Tony's lived experiences if he cannot tell us about them in words? Tony, like everyone else, conveys meaning through movement and touch, through the 'language' of his body, effectively using its capacity to express emotion, character and mood. He does this both intuitively and intentionally — by choice. The understanding we all gained from experiencing through our own senses what was passing between Tony and the other performers is an embodied outcome, a relational one. This relationality, according to Van Manen, stems from the 'phenomenological fact that we are always bodily in the world' (Van Manen 1990: 102–04). We have shared an interpersonal experience in the lived space and time of the world.

My invitation to Wolfgang to come to work with me in New Zealand was prompted by seeing him work in London with a large group of sighted, sight-impaired, intellectually able and intellectually disabled professional and non-professional dancers. A mouthful of a sentence to describe a challenging collaboration and a fascinating piece of work that focused on the life of German artist Kathe Kollwitz. As I watched Wolfgang work the room in rehearsal (and assisted where I could), I realised that his choreography, which included non-sighted people becoming airborne in giant leaps across the stage, was dependent on emotional anchoring, a physical mapping of the space through touch — each physical movement by one dancer connecting, however lightly, with another. Touch gave direction, became a marker point, positioning everyone in space and time as though they were all connected by invisible threads.

Wolfgang's dancers shared a life-space in which they could map, in which they were given enough time to learn to map, with the body and the soul. Time to thoroughly and authentically perceive what each person encountered through emotion. No truncated, segmented version of Wolfgang's rehearsal process could have made that space safe enough to dance blind. None of it could have happened without duration, without interconnected meaning developing between the dancers to govern their life-space, to make safe and joyful and liberating that giant leap through the dark.

Augusto Boal is also very familiar with mapping of relational space — it is at the core of his practice. In *Legislative Theatre* (1998), he describes working with a group of officials from the Street Workers' Union.

This predominately male group (25 men, one woman) were so macho they were not prepared to allow any physical contact. They wouldn't even allow Boal, as part of a theatre exercise, to tap them on the shoulder (Boal 1998: 42). The breakthrough came with Boal's invitation to the group to present the image of the union before this group took over. They agreed with reluctance, but once underway experienced, and were carried forward by, the embodied power of the form. When asked to create an image of the union as it was in the present they chose not to create a single image but to map their whole experience, including the transition steps to both successes and failures. Bodily contact was no longer an issue — it had become essential in the making of the theatre they were interested in, a theatre to help make sense of their struggle.

The reason these macho unionists were able to create the depth of the communication and interconnected meaning they achieved was not simple chance for them any more than it was for Tony. Wolfgang Stange and Augusto Boal had the skill to lead their creative collaborators through their exploration of creativity country and safely out again. Without giving our experiences of the world the 'duration' they require, we are engaged in a constant knee-jerk reaction to the world. Duration is not a code word for costly time-wasting self-gratification. Imagine a policy-maker being routinely given the time, space and skilled facilitation to map the life-space they share with the people who will ultimately be at the business end of their policies.

The duration of creativity is not simply about having 'enough time' to do a job. Nor is it something that can be protracted or contracted to fit the segmentation of the 'real world'. It is more than time; it is configured to fit a very particular problem, it contains energy and purpose precisely right for that idea, it has propulsion, it is 'like the flight of Zeno's arrow … the distance between what is and what ought to be' (Bergson 1911: 319) and, in the words of Bergson, 'he who installs himself in becoming sees in duration the very life of things, the fundamental reality' (1911: 317–19).

What the Wolf and Tony story highlights so clearly is that assumptions one might reasonably make about the needs, abilities and aspirations of other people do not necessarily provide the policy-maker with the best starting point for genuinely responding to human need and experience.

It might reasonably be assumed that providing a dance workshop for a deaf, blind, mute quadriplegic would not only be a scandalous waste of time and money, but also an affront to that person's basic human dignity — a case of accepting and acting upon the 'bleeding obvious'. The 'bleeding obvious' in this case, however, proved to be quite an inadequate measure of what this particular profoundly disabled man wanted out of an exchange with others, or what others wanted with him. Nor was it a reasonable determinant of the depth of communication either was capable of achieving with the other. Once that initial depth of human contact is made, communication of other kinds can be engaged in of similar complexity. This is neither wasteful of time or money, nor an affront to dignity, but protective of all three. There is a need to deepen the public discourse and extend the dialogue to include what we may learn from embodied experience and relationality through performance and other creative products. According to Van Manen (1990), such apparently non-discursive artistic materials are 'transcendent configurations' that can be employed discursively to clarify and make explicit the 'structure of meaning of lived experience' (1990: 77).

Does this mean that before every policy is drafted or every decision made the policy- makers and the bureaucrats should head for the theatre or the dance workshop? Of course it doesn't. But there were policy-makers in that room dancing, and the experience did change them. Going into 'creativity country' (Yardley 2004), crossing the liminal threshold into creative space is like riding a bike: once you've learnt how, you can go there again and again.

Prevailing assumptions often do govern what planning and action is undertaken. These are assumptions about the kinds of dialogue that can or cannot take place — for example, between Muslims and Christians, between Sudanese immigrants and regional white Australians, between governments and their constituents, between environmentalists and timber workers, between the health system and the profoundly disabled or the mentally ill, between those who feel irrepressible rage at injustice and those who don't. Ideological divisions, predictable behaviours, inherent incapacities or immovable obstinacies are often seen as an inevitable, and predictable, obstacles to dialogue. Rather than being a guide or safety net in decision-making, these kinds of assumptions become obstacles in themselves when grappling with issues of complexity.

Many of the people witnessing and participating in the 'Wolf and Tony' dance were people responsible for the development of mental health policy. What they discovered from this experience was that it is

possible to receive the clearest of communication directly, without results-based accountability measures, without lengthy submissions, sometimes without words. Tony 'spoke' for himself, through his body. In the process of developing national, state or regional policy agendas, an expressive, embodied 'voice' like Tony's could never be 'heard' without the facilitation of someone as well trained and skilful as Wolfgang being part of the 'consultative' process. A common misconception might be that the only value of Tony's participation as a dancer in this workshop lay in the opportunity for him to be included, to be paid attention to, to 'play' with others and to respond to what they gave him. This would negate the relational quality of the interaction, the embodied discourse that took place and the value of the opportunity Tony gave us to learn from him. This was an exchange of creative ideas of equal merit, not a one-sided charitable gift from the able-bodied to the disabled. Developing techniques to facilitate genuine creative communication is what applied theatre facilitators do. Tony's experience (and ours) is one example of how a creative, embodied, relational process allowed people to cross a significant communication barrier and understand each other better. The techniques used to achieve this outcome have, in skilful hands, a broad application in the public discourse that feeds into policy, precisely because of their capacity to bridge even the widest communication divide. They provide us with the possibility of broaching areas of extreme discord and difficulty where individuals and communities hold very firm opinions and beliefs. Performative and other creative practices can help us to explore complex ethical questions and deliver the kind of knowledge and understanding that is experienced and 'felt' through all our senses, embodied knowledge that includes what cannot be expressed in words. Without a collaborative, relational focus, a 'third wave' — like a tsunami — has power but no real public purpose.

Entering 'creativity country' with or without a guide takes courage. The skilled facilitator provides an environment of safety in which individuals and groups cross the border together, whatever their differences or the complexity of their needs. The skilled facilitator can also provide the tools that work, and the guidance to learn to map and govern the terrain of collective life-space, to make safe, and joyful and liberating that giant imaginative leap through the dark.

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