

DESIGN-LED RESPONSES FOR SOCIAL AND CULTURAL INCLUSION IN A RESOURCE-LED ECONOMY: THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES AND THE MINING BOOM IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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ABSTRACT

In this paper I will explore the contexts in which design activism has been a part of projects that target social needs as well as generally raise awareness of design and the creative industries. The projects discussed have contributed to change in a region of Australia that is currently dominated by a resources boom exporting iron ore, natural gas and other minerals primarily to China and Japan.

The creative industries, and the way design activism operates as part of the creative industries, are best understood in relation to specific local contexts and opportunities. The creative industries are most often related to the development of urban environments and urban regeneration. Instead, I will discuss examples of

creative development taking place in regional and remote locations.

Local non-profit organisations, such as FORM in Western Australia, have an important role to play as they can support relationships within the community and foster projects with a strong 'sense of place' that are responsive to locally identified circumstances.

INTRODUCTION

The promotion and support of the creative industries is a global phenomenon and an area of development that has given designers opportunities to find new modes of working and to forge new alliances with consumers and industry. These developments have also given designers the chance to respond to specific local needs at the same time as being in tune with global expectations and opportunities.

Increasingly there is a reliance on these industries for economic growth (UNCTAD and UNDP 2010; Julier and Moor 2009; Oakley 2009; Potts and Cunningham 2008).

This paper will provide a critical review of the specific characteristics and achievements of a locality where, over the last ten years, a response has been made to the economic conditions of a resource economy experiencing a minerals boom through exporting iron ore, natural gas and other minerals, primarily to China and Japan. I will explore the contexts in which design has been integral to projects that raise awareness of social needs as well as those that have contributed to economic development in Western Australia. In this context I am defining design activism as design for the greater good, for positive impact and sustainable solutions and social change.

To contextualise these projects, I will first consider the creative industries from an Australian perspective. I will then provide a critical appraisal of the work of FORM, a not-for-profit organisation promoting design. This research has been developed over the last seven years by monitoring developments in the West Australian design community. Collection of primary source material has taken place in the context of an ongoing review of the literature and relevant theoretical discussions.

FORM has engagement with a variety of groups including mining companies, indigenous artist groups and with designers across many areas of the creative industries. The projects to be examined are diverse and include the setting up of the Midland Atelier workshops and regenerations of old industrial sites, partnerships with Urban Art Projects (FORM 2010c). Regional projects include The Canning Stock Route Project, 'Yiwarra Kuju' project, which interprets the Canning Stock Route through Aboriginal eyes (FORM 2010a), support of the Roebourne Art Group, place activation projects in Port Hedland and 'The Pilbara Project.'

To learn from these projects, questions to be addressed include: How are the creative industries responding local conditions? How is the wider industrial base contributing to the creative communities agenda in Western Australia? In particular, how are industrial corporations being socially responsible through any investment in design and the creative industries so that they provide for the needs of the local the community? Who is lobbying for change? What organisations are creating opportunities or nurturing networks and effective communication? This paper suggests that the field of design needs the support of not-for-profit organisations. When effective, these organisations can raise awareness of design and initiate projects that bring different communities together in productive ways. The organisation to be examined in detail in this context is FORM, an independent not-for-profit organisation, with the aim of advocating and developing creativity in

Western Australia. The projects discussed will show the expansion of its work from an urban context in Perth to include remote regions across the north of the state. This includes towns in the Pilbara that have extreme climates with high summer temperatures. The inland summer temperature range is 37-42 degrees Celsius, with the coastal area just a few degrees cooler. The coast near Port Hedland is the most cyclone prone in Australia.



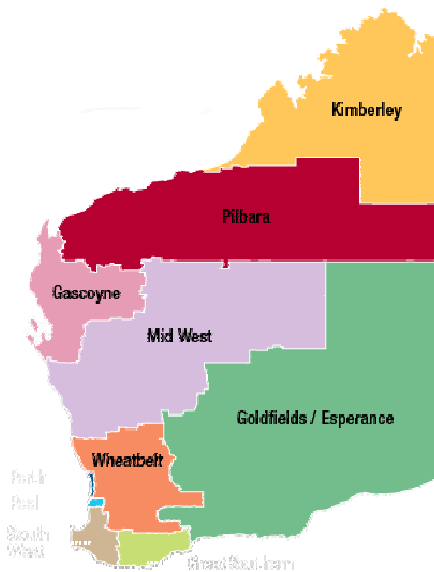
Sculpture for cyclone George March 2007 by Frederick Beel. Unveiled November 2007. Supported by BHP Billiton.



Port Hedland.

WESTERN AUSTRALIA AND THE RESOURCES BOOM

Western Australia is the largest state in Australia and covers almost one third of the continent. Most people (85%) live in the South West corner. Its 2.3 million inhabitants are 10% of the national total. The economy is driven by the mineral and gas industries, supported by agriculture and tourism. The mining industry continues to expand. In 2011-12 \$76 billion (AUD) will be invested in the mining industry; this is eight times the level preceding the current boom. This expansion will be led by large projects in the Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) industry, mainly off West Australia's coast (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011). WA is subsidising every other state and territory in the country, by providing 35 per cent of Australia's export income with just 10 per cent of the population. In comparison with other states Western Australia is a regionally isolated location with a small manufacturing industry. It is against this backdrop that interest in the creative industries has been developed.



Regions of Western Australia

THE CREATIVE INDUSTRIES IN WESTERN AUSTRALIA

Since 2001-2 the creative industries have been recognised in State policy initiatives. Geoff Gallop led the Labor party in State Government from 2001 and was re-elected in 2005. Gallop resigned in 2006 and Alan Carpenter became Premier, until losing the 2008 election to the Liberal National Coalition, with Colin Barnett becoming Premier. The Labor Government supported a Contemporary Music Ministerial Taskforce (2002), with Sheila McHale as Minister for the Arts, and a Premier’s Fashion Industry Taskforce (August 2003). In 2004 a Creative Industries Working Party was formed and a Creative Industries Report was published in 2007. These reports were followed up by award programs for fashion and popular music. FORM actively contributed to these discussions through their activities.

The Committee for Perth, formed in 2007, has taken an interest in creative communities, sustainable development and cultural diversity and is concerned with the urban environment, infrastructure and planning issues (Committee for Perth 2011). The creative workforce continues to be a focus for research. One ongoing project is a comparison between the creative workers in Vancouver, Canada and Glasgow, UK, led by Dawn Bennett at Curtin University (Bennett 2011).

Since 2008 a significant policy shift has been for increased support for regional Australia through the ‘Royalties for Regions’ funding. 25% of the State’s mining and onshore petroleum royalties, equivalent to almost 4% of the State’s budget, is put back into regional areas through this project (Department of Regional Development and Lands 2010). This has provided opportunities for cultural regional development and therefore opportunity for greater diversity in creative projects. FORM was already working in the regions so has been able to take advantage of this source of funding.

Support for Aboriginal arts has recently been increased with the initiation of the Indigenous Art Awards by the Art Gallery of WA in 2008 and the formation of the Aboriginal Art Centre Hub WA (AACHWA), which works with Aboriginal art centres across Western Australia as the only Indigenous visual arts peak body based in Western Australia. AACHWA provides professional support and development for art centre managers and

artists. They advocate for the sustainability and viability of the centres and aim to sustain communities, artists and their stories. Current member art centres are located in the Pilbara, Mid-West and Great Southern regions of WA. They include Martumili Artists, Mungart Boodja Art Centre, Roebourne Art Group, Tjukurba Gallery/Birriliburu Artists, Wirnda Barna Artists and Yamaji Art. <See <http://www.aachwa.com.au/>>

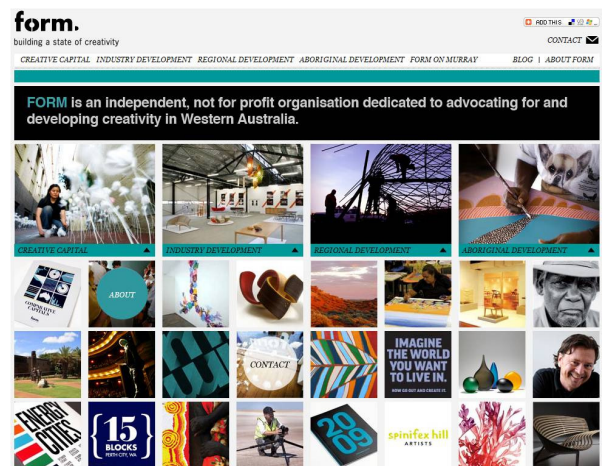
CREATIVE INDUSTRIES: THE AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

The creative industries in Australia have been documented by the Australian Research Council (ARC) Centre of Excellence in Creative Industries and Innovation (CCI 2011), which regularly reports on developments for the creative workforce, cultural policy and the relationship of creativity and innovation. CCI has also taken a strong interest in Asian developments, regularly reporting on expansion in this field in China. The creative industries in Australia have therefore always been situated in a global context, with comparisons and interchange being internationally orientated and a capacity to embrace the arts, media, design and popular culture across production and consumption. However, it has also been noted in an Australia Council report on the arts and creative industries that: “it is at local levels that arts agencies and institutions have often taken the lead within creative industry strategies” (O'Connor, Cunningham, and Jaaniste 2011, 99).

The Australian states of Victoria and Queensland have been active in their promotion of design through festivals for a number of years, and craft and design organisations in each state have come together under the umbrella organisation, Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC). A recent report has demonstrated their coverage through supporting artists, providing infrastructure, driving innovative projects including the use of new technologies, supporting indigenous cultural activity, recording and documenting creative activities and engaging new audiences. FORM is the West Australian contributor to this network (Australian Craft and Design Centres (ACDC) 2011).

NOT-FOR-PROFIT INITIATIVES

“Imagine the world you want to live in. Now go out and create it” (FORM 2010b).



<http://www.form.net.au/>

FORM works to support artistic excellence, community engagement and the conditions for creativity (FORM 2010b). The organisation actively works with public and private partners for change and the scale of its projects had grown both by expansion in the North of Western Australia and nationally, but more significantly the diversity of its involvement with the community has grown.

FORM has built its capacity by rebranding Craftwest in 2004 to become FORM. <See <http://www.form.net.au/>>. The rebranding was developed to communicate a change of focus from an organisation supporting traditional crafts to an organisation that had a stronger focus on design and industry development. One of the first projects following this change of emphasis was focussed on commercial markets through the development of a retail outlet, 'Aspects', in partnership with the Botanic Parks and Gardens Authority for the popular tourist destination of Kings Park in Perth.

This was part of a drive to improve the quality of work for sale. 'Aspects' gave a higher profile to craft and design and raised the quality of goods on offer for tourists. Situated in such an important botanical park, the venture became associated with the diversity of West Australian flora and natural resources. The variety of natural flora and fauna has inspired many of the artists whose work has been exhibited by FORM, including international visitors Louise Hibbert and Sarah Parker-Eaton.

Alongside this development, an industry development programme offered support through mentoring for practitioners. Clusters of designers were mentored in the metropolitan region and in the South West of the State, in the Great Southern and Margaret River regions (Lommerse, Eggleston, and Brankovic 2008). Exhibitions explored materials as specific themes and included 'Vast Terrain' showcasing the work of three designers, Robert Foster, Frank Bauer and Andrew Last, working with aluminium; wood and metal in the exhibition 'Genus Australis', glass featuring the work of Neil Wilkin and leather and bronze in the exhibition 'The Carrs'. This focus on materials continued throughout 2005 and was integrated with an on-going dialogue about sense of place and how designers were inspired by the scale, colours and unique fauna of the locality. FORM publicised this work through a series of magazines from December 2004 to 2006 which were supplemented and by a website providing an interactive knowledge space (FORM 2004).

The rebranding as FORM also signalled a diversification of funding, with funding from government sources, including The WA Department of Industry and Resources, Australia Council, Arts WA, being supplemented by stronger corporate investment. For example, renewed funding came from Wesfarmers Arts and the Rio Tinto WA Future Fund. There was a new three year allocation of funding from Alcoa World Alumina Australia and the Alcoa Foundation and,

from 2005, exhibition funding from BHP Billiton. The annual turnover rose from \$500,000AUD in 2000 to \$1,500,000AUD in 2004 (FORM 2004). This rise was related to a growth in activities, including a second forum to launch the expansion of the Designing Futures project.

DESIGNING FUTURES

The Designing Futures Forum of 2004 built on the momentum of an earlier forum. At the previous Designing Futures Forum of 2002, international speakers, such as Bruce Mau and Marco Susani, spoke about general design issues and makers from the USA and Australia, including, Ray Leier, William Hunter, Robert Foster, and Khai Liew, addressed the specific needs of the timber industry. A Residency Program with makers, Todd Hoyer (US) and Hayley Smith (UK) was organised for local fine wood makers. A central focus was sustainability; in 2001, logging had been banned in unlogged old growth timber forest in Western Australia. The program recognised the need to both raise the aesthetic quality of work being produced in Western Australia and also embrace social awareness of supply chains and how consumers could influence design through making informed choices about materials in consumer artefacts. This was a theme that continued to be developed through FORM's exhibition focus on materials. This was in recognition of creating a 'sense of place', for supporting and recognising quality in production and as the focal point for introducing design ideas and to demonstrate the value of creative practice to the resources

industry. Theoretical contributions to the creative industries were also represented. In particular, the work of David Throsby on cultural and economic policy and the creative worker (Throsby 2001).

The 2004 'Designing Change' Forum showcased design success stories with Bombay Sapphire Design Discovery Award winner Jon Goulder, Steve Ormandy of Dinosaur Design and international award winner Rina Bernabei presenting on their work and discussing how to develop a personal design philosophy, collaboration, new technologies and sense of place. Jon Goulder developed a long-term mentoring role in connection with FORM's projects, especially after he relocated his workshops to the Midland Atelier in 2006.

MIDLAND ATELIER

The Midland Atelier project has taken the design futures philosophy to maturity in an urban regeneration project in partnership with the Midland Redevelopment Authority. Midland is a suburb east of Perth where, until 1990, railway workshops were located for the West Australian Government Railway. The workshops are located in the Old Foundry and Pattern Shop and form the focus for redevelopment in the area. The Midland Atelier aims to provide facilities so that designers do not need to leave the state to find work opportunities. It provides facilities for furniture makers and jewellery designers, is the location for residencies and exhibitions (FORM 2010b).

CREATIVE CAPITAL

From 2005 a lecture series was held in Perth that explored ideas about creative communities and compared global strategies with the possibilities for development in Perth. This expanded the work of FORM beyond the mentoring of designers in the context of their industrial development and signalled a wider view of design that was in tune with international debates on cultural policy and creative communities. The aim of a series of events, called 'Creative Capital', was to develop a view of this debate that would be concerned with the specific conditions and identity of one of the remotest cities in the world. Speakers included John Howkins, Richard Florida, Mark Kingwall, Charles Leadbeater and Richard Smith-Bingham, Charles Landry, Carol Coletta, Jeff Kennett and John Worthington, all experts on creative communities and cultural policy.

Howkins argued that "Creativity can lead to innovation; innovation never leads to creativity" and emphasised the need for individual freedom and the competitive process of creativity (Howkins 2005, 14). Richard Florida's ideas, as represented in his book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002) and where he argued that having a creative class would lead to a more liveable city, was a message FORM was keen to take to government and policy makers. FORM was therefore expanding its role to lobby and actively participate in the creation of infrastructure for design and creativity more generally in the community, rather than

infrastructure primarily for the commercial concerns of designers and makers.

The concept of creative capital became the core for coordinating seemingly divergent activities undertaken by FORM. It was named the 'alpha' idea in 2007, providing a mandate guiding four programming areas, indigenous development, industry development, regional programming and place activation. Lynda Dorrington, FORM's Executive Director noted: "in Western Australia we no longer hear the words 'boom and bust' as an excuse for doing 'business as usual', or for considering Perth to be a resources hub and nothing more. Rather, we are now hearing people ask what form the legacy will take.....this in turn prompts questions of how we can invest now to create an environment we will still want to be part of in the long-term" (FORM 2007b, 7). FORM's use of expert speakers was complemented by a research project generating ideas about connectivity, talent, well-being and using the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), and working with PricewaterhouseCoopers, providing information for benchmarking Perth against other cities. A model for this study was the work of Joe Cartright in *City Vitals* (2006), which was published by the US based organisation, CEOs for Cities (FORM 2008). Publications included *Comparative Capitals* (2008) and *Energy Cities* (2009). Creative Capital was further extended through events, such as visioning workshops and publications resulting from Charles Landry working as a 'Thinker in Residence' in 2007. A stronger focus was

therefore being placed on the urban built environment as sustainable community development. This was complemented by an exhibition, *New Trends of Architecture in Europe and Asia-Pacific 2006-2007* and the development of an urban activation project developing city laneways.



Creative Capital publications. <See

<http://www.form.net.au>>

WELL-BEING AND IDENTITY FOR REMOTE COMMUNITIES - SUSTAINABILITY, SOCIAL AND ECONOMIC CHANGE

FORM's capacity to support the crafts and design was extended from 2005 with support from the mining industry, through funding from BHP Billiton Iron Ore, and other organisations. FORM was able to show its support for indigenous crafts through showcasing work from other craft organisations. In 2004 FORM hosted a travelling exhibition 'Art on a String: Threaded Objects from the Central Desert and Arnhem Land' which had been curated by Louise Hamby and Diana Young for Object, Australian Centre for Craft and Design in Sydney and showed threaded and beaded objects. This

exhibition, and the exhibition 'Seven Sisters: Fibre Works Arising from the West' held around the same time at a nearby venue, the Central TAFE Art Gallery in Perth, provided significant documentation and interpretation of the work of indigenous women artists, where there was cross-fertilisation between traditional cultural practices and contemporary art. This exhibition was curated by Kevin Murray and included Australian artists working with textiles and indigenous artists who were mentored by a non-indigenous textile artist, Nalda Searles. Seven Sisters refers to a traditional Australian Western Desert story, the *Kungkarangkalpa* song, about the Pleiades star cluster, where seven sisters take refuge in the sky after been pursued by a hunter.

Support for indigenous development was strengthened in 2005 when Carly Davenport Acker joined FORM as Manager, Indigenous Development. Acker had over 10 years' experience working with aboriginal artists and curating their work (Acker 2005).

In 2006 the 'Woven Forms: Contemporary Basket Making in Australia' exhibition, which originated with Object in Sydney, was shown at FORM and supplemented by a public program. These events surveyed weaving and basketry; and included non-indigenous and indigenous artists, whose work showed a remarkable range of products styles and approaches to using fibre in construction. Appreciation of the long history of aboriginal work

in this area was integrated with a future-orientated cultural understanding concerning people, place, plant materials and ecological research. The social benefits of weaving as a means of integrating links between nature, culture and an income was also significant and welcomed (Cunningham 2006, 10). It was an area with potential rather than an established one. For example, in 2004-5, one large art centre sold \$2 million (AUD) in artworks but only \$7,500 (AUD) in baskets or craft (Acker 2006, 94).

CANNING STOCK ROUTE PROJECT

By 2007 the Canning Stock Route Project was becoming a key aspect of the indigenous development program. <See <http://www.form.net.au/aboriginal-development/canning-stock-route-project/about> and http://www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/yiwarra_kuju/> This project ran parallel to regional developments where, with support from BHP Billiton Iron Ore, FORM were developing community enrichment projects in the Pilbara region, such as Writers Workshops, photography exhibitions, artists visits and the development of the Courthouse Gallery in Port Hedland. These were significant additions to the cultural activities of a booming mining region and were planned to be the background for public events and provide convivial leisure spaces for the developing community. Port Hedland has a population of about 15,000 and is the highest tonnage port in Australia, serving the iron ore industry and

increasingly serving an expanding offshore natural gas industry. By 2010 around 50% of FORM's programming was in regional Australia, chiefly in the Pilbara region (Dorrington 2010). The Royalties for Regions funding was significant for these developments.

The Canning Stock Route Project was developed to support the aboriginal communities along the Canning Stock Route and provide creative opportunities for other to join the project and develop a wide range of creative skills, including painting, photography, video, multimedia, writing and curatorial skills. The project further integrated contributions from cultural advisors, anthropologists, language workers, administrators and general support workers. Support came from BHP Billiton Iron Ore, the Indigenous Land Corporation, Lotterywest and the West Australian Government (FORM 2007a).

The Canning Stock Route was developed from 1906 by Alfred Canning to transport cattle across remote and arid areas, from Halls Creek to Wiluna. By 1910, 51 watering points were completed. The route, which was important for moving cattle until the 1950s, is 1700kms long and runs about the length of one third of Australia and travels through a region that supports nine Aboriginal language groups. Along this route Aboriginal and European history have become intertwined, with sites along the route forming the first points of contact for Aboriginals with Europeans, bringing a mix of employment and

negative outcomes including water degradation and massacres. Documentation provided by the project made the indigenous history visible. This was recognised by the National Museum of Australia, which bought the entire collection of 116 works by 60 artists (National Museum of Australia 2009) and provided an extensive venue for its display in 2010. The Museum recognised the combination of visual expression and social document. As Michael Pickering, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Program Director at the Museum noted:

“But while the works themselves are wonderful, they are only part of the collection. Their full potential is only realised when we add in the massive social documentation that accompanies them, allowing them to be placed firmly in their historical and cultural contexts. Without this information, any work of art is little more than decorative” (Pickering 2010).

The Canning Stock Route Project takes in nine art centres and with 20,000 photographs and over 200 hours of film footage the project is well documented. 80 of the 120 stories were translated so there is a rich oral history resulting from the project. What is significant about this project is the extent to which a project initiated in the context of indigenous development becomes an archive of cultural history. Not only is there the professional development and sustainable business engagement for the communities resulting from the production of the project but the resulting collection has engaged with a wider

national audience, reinforcing the community economic sustainability but also providing the context for understanding and celebrating cultural identity.

THE PILBARA

FORM has also developed projects in the Pilbara that were supportive of the Spinifex Hill Group of artists working in Port Hedland and the Roebourne Art Group in Roebourne. The Spinifex Hill Group’s exhibition, ‘Before the Town got Big’ was a two year project and included art mentors, writers and an anthropologist working with the artists to develop work based on shared memories for exhibition in the Courthouse Gallery, Port Hedland. <See

<http://spinifexhillartists.tumblr.com/>>

The Roebourne Art Group was established in 2005 and is located in Yirramagadu or Roebourne town, Karratha, about 1500 kilometres north of Perth. Through FORM the group is presenting their work at the Courthouse Gallery in Port Hedland and also in Perth. The ‘Big Rain Coming Exhibition’ (27 May to 26 August 2011) at the FORM Gallery, Murray Street Perth, shows the artists diversifying their painting into other art forms. This involves co-designing with mentors and producing work for public art commissions and batch production of artefacts in other materials. Public art in Baynton West in the Pilbara will be an outcome of a professional development program with the Brisbane group, Urban Art Projects, where the artists have adapted their skills and used 3D formats. This project was initiated by LandCorp and further coordinated by FORM. The art group

has obtained support from the WA Government's Royalties for Regions for a new purpose-built art centre currently being erected in Roebourne. The total cost is \$2.3million with \$1.5million from Royalties for Regions.(Grylls 2010)



Roebourne Art Group.

Port Hedland has benefited from ongoing place activation projects. Public art projects have added interest to an otherwise industrially dominated landscape. FORM's work at the Courthouse Gallery has also included improving the landscaping around the gallery, with the inclusion of urban art work and the rescue, installation and fit-out of a 1930's railway dining car that had been a gift to the area from AMAX an American mining company. This is complemented by the 'Pilbara Project' where photographers have been creating an online visual identity for the area that is teamed with commentaries about the region.

<See

<http://www.thepilbaraproject.com/journeys>>



Courthouse Gallery and Dining Car.

CONCLUSION

From the examples given of some of the key projects delivered by FORM, over the last 10 or so years, it is apparent that the organisation has been central to providing a specific identity for the creative industries in Western Australia. Their activities started with an examination of ideas and themes that were being discussed and promoted internationally, with the contribution of Bruce Mau and Marco Susani at events in Perth to promote design in 2002 and continued with the creative capital discussions with visitors Richard Florida and Charles Landry from 2005. The meetings held on the potential of the creative industries were open to ideas from other contexts; in particular the ideas from Carole Coletta, from CEOs for Cities, were a catalyst for discussions about creating a vibrant city centre and getting corporate support. This was one way the organisation led local industries and corporate interests, in this case for planning and architecture

most specifically. But the aim was also to influence policy makers so that there could be a more ambitious and sustainable vision communicated by politicians for the future of a state, where the population was expanding as a consequence of a mining boom.

FORM's initial responses were to the needs of local practitioners in the creative industries, including architects, designers and applied artists; but in examining the changes of the last decade it is noticeable that design has also become embedded in other industries, crossing over with management and entrepreneurship. FORM has played a role in this change by providing leadership for broadening the remit of design.

The projects discussed also show responses to social sustainability from local industry where companies are working in partnership through investment in design and the creative industries for the needs of the local the community. This is especially evident in the outcomes of projects in the regions, where mining companies have partnered with FORM, local government and other organisations. They have improved urban landscapes, initiated projects promoting community involvement in the arts and supported Aboriginal arts developments. Projects, such as the Canning Stock Route Project, and support of the Roebourne artists, go beyond producing artefacts for local or tourist markets, although those aspects are important, and take on the

challenge of documenting cultural heritage and giving a voice to Aboriginal communities.

FORM has been effective in lobbying for change, but has also followed this through into many tangible outcomes. One reason for this is its move from reliance on funding from arts and government sources to successfully gaining a corporate funding stream. However these partnerships are also dependent on a belief in creativity by those companies. For this to be successful, nurturing networks and effective communications is a vital part of FORM's work. The networks have to be effective with multiple stakeholders – sponsors, designers and audience. FORM has also been effective in developing the infrastructure for their programs to happen. At Port Hedland, the Gallery is more than just a design shop window and offers a focus for community activities.

I therefore conclude that designers need not just the support of not-for-profit organisations for communicating their capabilities and disseminating ideas about their work, but designers also need to work in a similar way; in teams and as co-producers where they are responsive to the needs of users and clients as ideas evolve, and with an awareness of the way the design process brings different communities together in productive ways. As Marco Susani wrote:

“And this is what makes visionary design today so exciting and important: never before has the culture of design been so strategically necessary (for communities), so socially relevant (for the users), so impactful (for entire ecosystems) and so communicative (of new aesthetics)” (Butler 2010, 65).

Local not-for-profit organisations have an important design activist role to play. I have shown that they can promote specific relationships to place and location. Notable responses have centred on the environment and sense of place, or more recently, have been future orientated, aiming to ensure that economic and social opportunities will continue to be felt when the mining boom is over. This means planning for a broader range of employment opportunities or investments in social and economic infrastructure that provide longer-term opportunities for the community. The activation of projects that are an investment in liveable communities, offer protection for the environment and expand social capital are at the forefront of design interventions (Landry 2007, 2008).

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