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Unlike most of the authors represented here, **Nina Obuljen** is not a community cultural development practitioner or theorist per se, although the biography she shared with fellow participants has something in common with several of the practitioners, describing how her early training as a conventional artist opened out into social concerns:

I graduated both from the Academy of Music (violin) and the Faculty of Arts at the University of Zagreb. When the aggression on my country and particularly on my hometown Dubrovnik started, I left the violin to became active in a student organization that was trying to draw attention of the international community to the war in Croatia… We went on a hunger strike and were involved in many initiatives related to anti-war

and humanitarian efforts… anyway, when the war was over, it was too late to go back to playing violin!

Through her past work at UNESCO and her current work with the Culturelink network, along with her post in the Culture and Communication Department of the Institute for International Relations in Zagreb, Nina has been actively involved with international cultural policymakers. She was welcomed to the conference as an ambassador from an international cultural-policy world that has not always been accessible to community cultural development practitioners. In this essay, she analyzes the current state of diplomatic relations between these sectors and suggests some ways to open channels of communication.

Community Cultural Development, Cultural Policy Networks and Culturelink

by Nina Obuljen

The May 2001 Community, Culture and Globalization conference held at the Rockefeller Study and Conference Center in Bellagio, Italy, gathered community cultural development (CCD) practitioners who—despite the fact that they come from different countries and continents, different political systems and different cultural settings, and that they are accustomed to expression through various art forms—all shared an amazing energy and belief in what they do. Their work is much more than merely a way of addressing art, culture or social issues; it is a way of life. It is probably this personal touch that makes community cultural development so intriguing. These practitioners have a visible impact on their communities, and the response to their work is somehow stronger than what is usually received as feedback from any mainstream artistic activity. This personal experience, instead of an adherence to specific literature or methodology, will guide my examination of certain aspects of this field.

I decided to write about community cultural development and networking for two reasons. The first is that I work for Culturelink, a Network of Networks for Research and Cooperation in Cultural Development, so I would like to use Culturelink as a reference point for analyzing the scope of international cooperation and different aspects of cultural policy relevant to community cultural development.

The second reason is the fact that most participants at the recent Bellagio conference expressed their interest both in becoming more involved in networking and influencing cultural policymakers to recognize and support CCD. I would like to explore some of the potentials and constraints that membership in a network can bring to individuals and institutions in the field of community cultural development.

Culturelink was established with the support of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and the Council of Europe in 1989. The focal point of the Culturelink network is in its headquarters at the Institute for International Relations in Zagreb, Croatia. It gathers together about 1,000 networks and institutions from approximately 100 countries in all parts of the world that deal with cultural development, cultural policies and cooperation. The aim of this network is to strengthen communication among its members; to collect, process and disseminate information on worldwide cultural development, cultural life and policies; and to encourage regional, interregional and international joint research projects and cultural cooperation. Besides research, Culturelink network activities include development of the Cultural Development Data Bank and the publication of the *Culturelink* review, Culturelink Directory Series and Culturelink Joint Publication Series. Most Culturelink information, including the contents of the *Culturelink* review, is accessible free of charge through the Culturelink Web site. In effect, the entire space of the Culturelink network is open; this is important, since it means that the network can broaden the fields covered and reach new groups of users and readers without expanding the membership.

CULTURAL POLICES AND COMMUNITY CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

Comparative cultural–policy research and assistance in the adjustment of cultural policies to the demands of the modern age are goals guiding Culturelink in many ways. It would be impossible to talk about Culturelink without mentioning the Database on Cultural Policies. Work on comparative research in the field of cultural policies started in 1991 when the Culturelink research team, together with UNESCO, carried out the joint project Guide to the Current State and Trends in Cultural Policy and Life in UNESCO Member States, dealing with 160 UNESCO member states. Some country profiles drafted for the purpose of that project have been updated, starting in 1996, and can be found on the Culturelink Web site (www.culturelink.org). Textual, referral and bibliographical data covers national cultural–policy issues, such as administrative structures, financial and legislation schemes, cultural industries, sectoral activities and so on.

It is evident that the position of the community cultural development field within national cultural policies remains ambiguous. In Chapter One of "Creative Community: The Art of Cultural Development," the authors highlighted one of the major problems in approaching this field in the United States: "Because it employs the same art forms as conventional arts disciplines (e.g., dance, painting, film), work in the field has mostly been treated as a marginal manifestation of mainstream arts activities … "[1] Similar obstacles are sometimes found if we compare the position of community cultural activities within different national cultural policies. In the publication "The Governance of Culture, Approaches to Integrated Cultural Planning and Policies," Anthony Everitt examines new ways of integrating culture into the fabric of public administration in Europe, and offers some observations regarding the perception of culture and social services in the eyes of government policymakers:

> In the social services, many public sector institutions and voluntary agencies are making use of the arts to deliver their policies. Thus prisons find that creativity is an effective tool of rehabilitation. Hospitals are beginning to acknowledge that performing arts programs and displays of visual arts in wards and corridors have a good effect on morale and on patient anxiety. Charitable organizations concerned with the care of the old and elderly or with the young devote substantial resources to artistic activity of all kinds. Much of this work is scarcely visible to the outside world and policy makers in government accord it low priority.[2]

Besides this, the fact remains that each country has differing divisions of responsibility in regards to culture, and, in most cases, cultural polices still concentrate more on mainstream art, financing, legislation and cultural budgets, rather than on other forms of artistic expression, intersectoral projects with cultural dimensions and the impact of new trends and technologies on cultural development. Still, it is important to stress that a number of countries have maintained some programs of support focused specifically on community cultural development, especially in the 1970s and '80s, sometimes under the rubrics of "community arts" (as in the United Kingdom) or *animation socio-culturelle* (in Francophone countries). Recent attention to privatization in cultural policymaking circles has caused many of these programs to be cut back, except in countries like Australia, where support continues to flow to a field known explicitly as "community cultural development."

For the past 25 years, at the international level, UNESCO, together with other international organizations, researchers and academics, has made efforts to promote the acknowledgment of culture as a *conditio sine qua non* of endogenous, compatible and balanced development. International conferences in Accra (1975) and Mexico City (1982), followed by "Our Creative Diversity," the 1995 report of the World Decade for Cultural Development, introduced

[1] Adams and Goldbard, *Creative Community*, op. cit., p. 4.

[2] Anthony Everitt, *The Governance of Culture: Approaches to Integrated Cultural Planning and Policies*, Cultural Policies Research and Development Unit, Policy Note No. 5 (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 1999), p. 16.

new approaches and mobilized governments in making visible steps to redesign cultural policies through the establishment of links with other sectors. The Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Polices for Development in Stockholm in 1998 was conceived to address some of these new challenges and help UNESCO member states in designing public policies that recognize the central role of culture in development. The Action Plan on Cultural Policies for Development adopted at this conference recommends that states adopt several policy objectives, including efforts to make cultural policy a key component of development strategy and to promote creativity and participation in cultural life.[3]

But how can the position of community cultural development be improved if it is frequently not even mentioned in cultural policy? As Simon Mundy states, even if a country decides not to have cultural policy, it has already formulated its cultural policy.[4] The same could be said of community cultural development. Although it may not be articulated within state policy, it remains an issue: it exists, and there are some general rules that need to be applied.

One of the first dilemmas is whether there is a way to ensure continuous support from institutions without making community cultural development projects inappropriately institutionalized. Community cultural development organizations share a problem also faced by most nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) when seeking funds from public or private funding bodies. Even when funds are available for their work, filling out the application forms and preparing project documentation requires a great deal of professional time. This is done simply to gain consideration for grants, with no guarantee that the project will receive funding. And even the success of a project does not guarantee continuous financing. As a result, CCD workers are in a state of constant fear that their funding will not be renewed, representing a severe problem in securing the necessary work space and entering into agreements with individuals whose cooperation is required.

Community-based activities, even if designated as cultural, have a much wider scope then conventional forms of cultural expression. It is therefore understandable that their development, and the support offered, must be expanded beyond the usual borders of cultural policy. Community cultural development's content is commonly wider than the simple understanding of culture, regardless of whether it is theater in prisons, dance with the elderly, AIDS-awareness projects or activities for street children. In this sense, support for community cultural development activities reflects the general orientation of cultural policy and is closely connected to the importance of social-inclusion issues. In the introduction to the *Culturelink* dossier "Social Cohesion and Culture: Contrasting Some European and Canadian Approaches and Experiences,"[5] Sanjin Dragojevic argues that there are great differences between Canadian and European cultural policies in their approaches to the position of social

[3] Final Report of the Intergovernmental Conference on Cultural Policies for Development (Paris: UNESCO, 1998).

[4] Simon Mundy, "Requirements for a Sustainable Cultural Policy in Western Europe, North America and Australasia," *European Perspectives on Cultural Policy* (Paris: UNESCO, 2001), p. 61.

[5] *Culturelink*, No. 33. p. 127.

cohesion. The Canadian approach regards these issues as a central part of its cultural policy, whereas for most countries in Europe, this is not considered to be a priority. Repositioning community cultural development in cultural policy could require shifting from supporting exclusively professional art to more cohesion-directed cultural policy. In some places, this would mean asking officials to consider values and projects outside the official, professional cultural sector.

Another important issue where community cultural development workers depend on public policies is the status of the artist working in community-based art institutions. The position of experts in this field differs considerably from one country to another. If the field is not recognized, then policymakers cannot see them as working in that non-existent field. But even without official recognition, CCD practitioners do exist, and they do work. They some-times teach at universities or schools, they may run NGOs or small businesses, they can be employed by local governments or survive as independent artists. Some are even recognized as artists working for community-based projects. Recognition and status in the community can affect the way an organization operates and the funds that it receives.

One approach that could improve the place community cultural development initiatives occupy among priorities in public policies is to regard culture as a right and not a privilege, as asserted in a UNESCO report:

> Considerable progress has been made in the last few decades in the promotion of cultural democracy and the protection of human rights. Many individuals and communities throughout the world, particularly those belonging to minority groups or who are socially marginalized, are still excluded from the cultural life of their societies. Cultural rights are now recognized as belonging to a more recent generation of human rights. The core cultural right is that of each person to participate fully in cultural life. All such rights still need clearer definition, however. They should naturally be incorporated into the policy framework. Their legal status at the inter-national and national level should be strengthened through participatory negotiation between state agencies and diverse groups (indigenous peoples, minority groups, migrants) so that each group can contribute to the formulation of policies for their understanding, respect and acceptance.[6]

[6] *Our Creative Diversity, Report of the World Commission on Culture and Development* (Paris: UNESCO, second revised edition, 1996), p. 240.

In this context, community cultural development becomes one of the most important instruments in achieving these rights, because it is more flexible. It mobilizes people and invites them to participate in the creation process.

These are only a few examples of issues that arise from questioning the relationship between cultural policies and community-based activities. Supporters need to establish and lobby through networks to achieve a better position for community cultural development. As will be seen from my findings in the next section, there is obviously a great deal of space for

improvement here, requiring continuous international cooperation and communication among those interested in this field. Still, although the strategy of cultural development can be supported through global networks, it will not be successful unless true partnerships between all sectors at national levels become functional. There are many missing elements that need to be recognized and dealt with to support a process of public-policy transformation and the creation of more space for community-based cultural activities.

NETWORKING AND THE ROLE OF CULTURAL NETWORKS

The word network is very widely used in everyday life—there are financial networks, television networks or intellectual networks. It is a modern phenomenon, yet it is difficult to find any segment of human activity that has not been affected by some form of networking.

The cultural community has also responded to these trends, and in Europe alone there are already more than 500 cultural networks.[7] Regardless of their differing aims, structures or means of operation, the role that cultural and artistic networks play in today's world is becoming more important. Networks provide channels for effective and timely cooperation, enable an exchange of information between members, stimulate dialogue and help in setting up joint projects or coproductions. Networks create links between institutions or individuals and, importantly, they respond to the specific needs of their members. Networks also provide opportunities for cooperation across national, disciplinary or sectoral boundaries. In today's world, where there is so much information accessible to so many people, 24 hours a day, networks also serve as channels for transmitting information most useful to specific users in particular fields.

There are at least five principal organizational characteristics of a network.[8] Networks are based on interpersonal relations, informal in character, and are multidirectional rather than hierarchic in their nature. Networks are subject to internal self-regulation and have an evolving and open character. Interestingly, these characteristics are also typical of community-based creative activities.

Networking, as one of the consequences of technological development, influences and transforms traditional methods of communication within communities:

> The network model of communication, and with it the new nature of
> spatial relations, is rapidly changing the locus of learning, leisure and cultural
> activities. It is now possible for many to pursue a wide range of activities
> from home. Without leaving our desk we can browse art collections of
> faraway museums, enjoy the pleasure of vicarious tourism, engage in a

[7] Milena Sesic-Dragievicevic, "Introduction," *European Cultural Networks,* Dimitrije Vujadinovic, ed. (Belgrade: Balkankult, 2001), p. 5.

[8] *La Mise en Réseau des Cultures —Le Rôle des Réseaux Culturels Européens,* Edition du Conseil d'Europe (Strasbourg: Council of Europe, 1999), pp. 29–30.

distance learning course, and conduct business transactions. Conversely, we can easily shop in a museum, have lunch in a bookstore, attend art exhibitions in shopping centers and surf the Internet from the hall of an airport. This disembedding of social networks from geographical and spatial places is transforming the nature of public spaces in contemporary society. With this transformation comes a radical change in the role of traditional urban space, which is acquiring new and diverse functions.[9]

[9]Editorial, "New Media, Urban Spaces & Social Inclusion," *Interchanges*, Newsletter of the Centre for Creative Communities, Iss. 21 (London, March 2000), p. 1.

For this publication, I analyzed the content of the quarterly *Culturelink* review for the past five years to discover the extent to which community cultural development work is present in this network, what kind of information is being shared and to whom this information is aimed. My search was not limited to only the explicit notion of community cultural development, because there are several terms covering similar areas and types of activities, such as "arts and civil society," "arts and education" or "assistance to NGOs." To better understand the context, it is important to remember that in 1989 when it was launched, the idea of a "network of networks" had a much different meaning than today when there are so many individuals and institutions exchanging information through the Internet. The initial goal of Culturelink was to serve as a clearinghouse and a place for exchanging information in the field of culture and development without specializing in any particular segment of research, theory or practice.

CULTURELINK REVIEW

The format of the *Culturelink* review has remained relatively consistent over the years, including information about networking; research and programs; news from UNESCO and the Council of Europe; reports from and announcements of conferences and meetings; information about documentation and new publications; and a dossier dedicated to specific topics related to cultural development.

My overview of the content demonstrated that the network disseminated a great deal of information for those interested in different aspects of cultural development, not only to researchers in the field of cultural policies or mainstream artists and art institutions. In addition to Culturelink members, other sources of information include international organizations, government agencies, research institutions and individual experts. However, the Culturelink membership includes very few institutions or individuals devoted to community-based work, which surely constrains the position of community cultural development projects and activities within the network.

One explanation is that mainstream art institutions, international organizations and research institutions are often able to devote substantial money and human resources to promoting their work, with the result that they are dominant as

the most visible actors on the scene. In contrast, information about CCD events or projects—without this type of access to resources—is often less visible within communities as within a broader international context. Another explanation must take into account Culturelink's outreach. While trying to preserve its image as a network of networks, it does not express any preference for certain types of organizations. One of the challenges of the Culturelink network, as stated by the network coordinator Biserka Cvjeticanin,[10] is to maintain a heterogeneous network. Culturelink brings together societies and individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds. It embraces different institutions, universities, research institutions, ministries, cultural centers and NGOs, as well as different professions. Therefore it is difficult for such a network to have higher representation of specific cultural activities, such as community cultural development.

It is not possible to give a simple answer to the question of whether the presence of community cultural development projects within the Culturelink network was satisfactory. Information exists, it appears regularly and in different formats, but it is surely not dominant when assessing the content of the review. The content of *Culturelink* has always depended more on the contributions received from its members than on some strict concept reflecting the specific interests of its host institution, the Institute for International Relations in Zagreb, or principal partners, such as UNESCO or the Council of Europe. If Culturelink is not doing all it can to reach CCD practitioners, the question remains whether there is interest within the CCD field to be more present in this network and what type of information being shared through the network can be relevant for this field.

The *Culturelink* review has featured a range of national networks or umbrella organizations of use to CCD practitioners. There are numerous organizations that gather NGOs and representatives of civil society where CCD organizations can find support for their work. For instance, in one of its earlier issues (No. 19, p. 13), *Culturelink* presented the Canadian Artists Network: Black Artists in Action, a national multidisciplinary organization of professional artists, cultural workers, curators, art educators and art enthusiasts committed to developing public awareness and appreciation for excellence in "Black art" and promoting African-Canadian artists at home and throughout the world. CCD practitioners might also be interested in some of the networks based on common language—be it between countries with the same official tongue or within communities where a minority uses a specific language. One example (No. 32, p. 8) is ACEP, the Association for Cooperation between Peoples, which gathers Portuguese-speaking NGOs from Portugal, Brazil, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde, São Tomé, Angola, Mozambique and East Timor. It offers assistance to organizations that share common objectives in sustainable development, human rights or fighting exclusion.

[10] Biserka Cvjeticanin, "La Mise en Réseau des Cultures et les Défis de Culturelink," *Dynamics of Communication and Cultural Exchange, Proceedings of the First World Culturelink Conference*, B.Cvjeticanin, ed. (Zagreb: IRMO, 1996), p. 315.

The search for funds remains one of the most important issues for every organization or community-based association. *Culturelink* has devoted significant space to funding news, for example (No. 33, p. 25), the presentation of national funding bodies such as the National Arts Council of South Africa (NAC), a funding structure for the promotion of South African culture through the arts and free and creative expression. NAC includes a special program, Applying the Arts, with the aim of rekindling and supporting the union of the arts and artists as resources in the continuing process of community cultural development. Or a guide to European Union (EU) funding for NGOs—"Your Way Through the Labyrinth," reviewed in one of the latest issues of *Culturelink* (No. 32, p. 121)—offers practical information on how to draft an application, how to create a budget (the issues of cofunding and voluntary work are important here), how to manage a project and produce financial reports. It also gives information on funding outside the EU.

A special emphasis in Culturelink network activities is the promotion of joint research programs among its members. There is little information about research programs dealing exclusively with community cultural development, but there are many accounts of research projects covering aspects of cultural development and civil society or the position of NGOs and their role in achieving sustainable development. Special Issue 2000 (the most recent), entitled "Culture and Development vs. Cultural Development," presented several practical papers giving best-practice examples and others explaining more theoretical views of culture and development, showing how different concepts that arise in trying to elaborate these issues can be reconciled.

There are two types of training activities aimed at community cultural development workers that have been either described or announced in the review: the first involves practices, methodology and approaches relevant for specific art forms; the second is oriented more toward cultural management and financing.

Issue No. 28 (p. 28) contained information about the MA/Postgraduate Diploma Course on Theater for Development, a one-year program combining theory and practice of making theater with communities, together with a study of some developmental issues. In a recent issue (No. 33, p. 38) was an article about the program activities of the Institute for Culture and Development in South Africa, an interesting initiative to provide training and design curricula for cultural managers, leaders, officials, administrators and policymakers in cultural institutions including community arts centers. Culturelink also tries to publish as much information as possible on workshops and special training and, through its Web site and the Cultural Development Database, provides links to institutions that offer different forms of training.

Reviewed publications and books, articles (most often published in special issues or in dossiers at the end of each regular issue), reports from conferences and announcements of meetings contain critical information of interest to NGOs, community-based organizations and alternative art initiatives. *Culturelink* also publishes information about festivals, exhibitions, fairs or various gatherings of NGOs. The dossier in the latest issue of the review (No. 34, p. 119) presented four papers from a conference on the Role of the Arts in Processes of Social Change, focusing on the contribution of the arts and arts mediation within the processes of social change and on future policy strategies.

Culturelink also regularly presents the work of its members, their publications, projects and activities. For example, the Centre for Creative Communities (the former British-American Arts Association) advocates links between arts practice and cultural policy with the activities of other sectors, and its Web site (www.creativecommunities.org.uk) and *Interchanges* newsletter include information about meetings, conferences, projects and publications in the field of community cultural development. AMARC, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (www.amarc.org), another Culturelink member, is an international organization that seeks to develop and promote community-oriented radio broadcasting as a viable and alternative model of communication and a tool for development, peace, justice and solidarity, and to facilitate cooperation and information exchange among community radio stations.

The Culturelink network embraces many other specialized networks that can use it to transmit information about their work to a more diverse public, as well as to attract new members and look for potential partners.

IN CONCLUSION

To change cultural policy and increase inclusion of the community cultural development field in cultural-policy debates, it is essential for CCD workers to be involved in networking. An interesting observation in relation to community-based creative artists appeared in an editorial in *Interchanges*: "Many such artists are ignorant of each other's work; they may have no affiliation with an arts organization and very often the mainstream arts organizations in their locality are not aware of the work that goes on."[11]

[11] Editorial, "Arts and Human Services," *Interchanges*, newsletter of the International Arts and Education Initiative (London, Nov. 1994), p. 1.

Networking is undeniably important for community cultural development theory and practice. The field needs recognition, but so do the people who are involved in it. Their work has to be appreciated and recognized, and the communities in which they operate have to ensure sustainable support for their work. Public policies, and especially cultural policies, should continue

their transformation. Even if major shifts that would neglect mainstream art forms and institutions cannot realistically be expected, it is still important to lobby for the opening of new space and increased visibility and support to community-based activities.

Merely bringing together people who share the same interests and concerns is not enough to create an efficient network. We live in a world where there is so much information floating around and so many possibilities, but very little time. An examination of a day in the life of a person who is fighting for funds, recognition and support, but who also does actual, creative community work, leads to the inevitable question of whether there is any time left for networking.

Even if there is no time, there should be. Simply knowing there are other people doing similar "impossible things" could help overcome crises when an organization or individual is faced with a lack of funding or is denied support from the local community. Sharing information about best-practice examples and innovative ways to seek funding helps others who may be encountering similar problems as they attempt to launch new projects or sustain existing ones. Networking which aims to promote better dialogue with public and private grantmakers can help experts working in the field as well as policymakers.

Culturelink is committed to promoting such partnerships, and I hope that the activities described in this chapter can serve as interesting examples of the possibilities that are offered by this form of networking. Because of its specific nature, Culturelink can not and should not replace specialized networks already established around different themes or art practices used by various CCD organizations. But it can help in bridging gaps between mainstream institutions and community-based organizations, between policy-makers and CCD practitioners. Through its information services (Web site, database on cultural development and cultural policy, and Culturelink publications), Culturelink can offer more information about specific challenges of community cultural development and, as described earlier, offer practical information about funding possibilities, research or training programs. One

of the main ideas inspiring the Culturelink team during all these years has been *partnership*. In order to be able to dedicate additional space to this field, Culturelink depends on its partners—members as well as other organizations and individuals willing to share their experiences, best–practice examples or research projects.

Culturelink has always been committed to inspiring others in strengthening existing networks and setting up new ones. In that sense, this chapter represents an invitation to the practitioners working in the CCD field to contribute in making community cultural development more present and visible in the Culturelink network.