

The social impact of participation in the arts

'The case for supporting participatory arts projects arises principally from their contribution to social policy objectives' From **Francois Matarasso** *Use or Ornament?: The Social Impact of Participation in the Arts* (1997) Comedia
(<http://web.me.com/matarasso/one/Publications.html>)

Personal development

- Increase people's confidence & sense of self worth
- Extend involvement in social activity
- Give people influence over how they are seen by others
- Stimulate interest & confidence in the arts
- Provide a forum to explore personal rights & responsibilities
- Contribute to the educational development of children
- Encourage adults to take up education & training opportunities
- Help build new skills & work experience
- Contribute to people's employability
- Help people take up or develop careers in the arts

Social cohesion

- Reduce isolation by helping people to make friends
- Develop community networks & sociability
- Promote tolerance and contribute to conflict resolution
- Provide a forum for intercultural understanding & friendship
- Help validate the contribution of a whole community
- Promote intercultural contact & co-operation
- Develop contact between the generations
- Help offenders and victims address issues of crime
- Provide a route to rehabilitation & integration of offenders

Community empowerment & self-determination

- Build community organisational capacity
- Encourage local self-reliance & project management
- Help people extend control over their own lives
- Be a means of gaining insight into political & social ideas
- Facilitate effective public consultation & participation

- Help involve local people in the regeneration process
- Facilitate the development of partnership
- Build support for community projects
- Strengthen community co-operation & networking

Local image & identity

- Develop pride in local traditions & cultures
- Help people feel a sense of belonging & involvement
- Create community traditions in new towns or neighbourhoods
- Involve residents in environmental improvements
- Provide reasons for people to develop community activities
- Improve perceptions of marginalised groups
- Help transform the image of public bodies
- Make people feel better about where they live

Imagination & vision

- Help people develop their creativity
- Erode the distinction between consumer & creator
- Allow people to explore their values, meanings & dreams
- Enrich the practice of professionals in the public & voluntary sectors
- Transform the responsiveness of public service organisations
- Encourage people to accept risk positively
- Help community groups raise their vision beyond the immediate
- Challenge conventional service delivery
- Raise expectations about what is possible and desirable

Health & well-being

- Have a positive impact on how people feel
- Be an effective means of health education
- Contribute to a more relaxed atmosphere in health centres
- Help improve the quality of life of people with poor health
- Provide a unique & deep source of enjoyment