

Social Plan, Cultural Policy

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Always was, always will be blackfella country. I'm a boat person (a ship person, actually); and I thank those who know what it means to belong this country, for the opportunity they may offer my daughter (who was born here) to learn what belonging may mean. The fact that this gift may still be available, in the face of all that has happened in the last two hundred years, constantly fills me with wonder and with gratitude.

But, if we really want to authentically belong this country, to transcend being simply occupiers, we must, beyond reaching a mutually agreed accommodation with the custodians, be prepared to learn from them what the responsibilities are that go with nurturing, rather than exploiting, country.

Germaine Greer got it exactly right when she pointed out that blackfellas have spent over two hundred years trying to civilise the new arrivals and their offspring. They haven't given up on us yet, but we still have a lot to learn.

I imagine that you expect that what you're going to hear from me now is an elegantly argued exposition on the necessity for all public authorities to develop cultural policy.

In fact, you're going to hear something approaching the opposite. I'm convinced that cultural policy is a terrible idea, to be avoided at all costs. I know I'm going against the flow with this but if you'll hear me out, I'm pretty sure I'll manage, if not to convince you, to at least have you entertain an alternative.

But why should you bother listening to me at all?

I've been doing this lecture thing for a couple of years now and one of the things I've learnt from the blackfellas with whom I've shared podiums is that the credibility and effectiveness of one's arguments depend upon one's life: that ideas are refined from experience and that, unless I'm able to connect my thoughts to their sources, to my story, the ideas will just drift away. That it is my responsibility, as a public speaker, to give you my story.

So, what is my story?

Well, I'm the child of an English missionary and a Canadian hippie.

The first books I can recall reading were adventure stories about missionaries in Africa and the Pacific.

My early childhood was spent in Trinidad before arriving on King Island at the age of 10.

The first book I remember profoundly influencing my life was Joseph Conrad's 'Heart of Darkness'.

My first political protest was against the South African government on the third anniversary of the Sharpeville Massacre. I was seventeen.

My first experience of accumulating money was as a performer in a collectively organised commercial musical. I was eighteen.

The first contemporary play I can recall reading was Arthur Kopit's '*Oh Dad Poor Dad, Mama's Locked Me In The Cupboard & I'm Feeling So Sad*'.

My first paid gig was as a lighthouse keeper.

My first long term job was as a bookseller.

My second as the editor of *GoSet*, the sixties teen phenomenon.

Monash and Carlton from the mid-sixties to the mid-seventies were my places; the ground which formed me. Feminism, collectivism, marxism, anarchism, psychedelia and scepticism were the chief ingredients of my diet.

Reading was a consuming passion: *The Female Eunuch*, *Be Here Now*, *Catch 22*, Doris Lessing, Fritz Perls, John Berger, RD Laing, Jack Kerouac, Simone de Beauvoir, Ivan Illich, Allan Ginsberg, Paolo Freire, Wilhelm Reich, Susan Sontag, Herman Hesse, Kenneth Tynan, Chairman Mao, Carlos Castaneda. The standard fare, I guess, of that era. Music and movies were as important, but enough lists. What I'm getting at, as I'm sure you can tell, is that who I am and what I think were formed as much by reading as by action.

Of which there was lots.

Theatre became my chief outlet, first with the Australian Performing Group at the Pram Factory and then Circus Oz. Life in a collective cutting edge performance group aggressively striving to invent a new Australian theatrical language was full of passion, struggle and excitement. For fourteen years, off and on, I trod that path. I ended up, at the age of 36, as a juggler and strongman in a travelling circus.

And then one day, while touring Europe with Circus Oz, we arrived in a Dutch town where the presenters of our show had already designed and distributed their own poster. Across an image of a human pyramid was imposed a very long Dutch word that I couldn't understand.

Upon asking, I was told that the English translation was 'highstanders' and it referred to those brave souls who climbed to the top of these human walls of flesh. And what was the word to describe the poor buggers on the bottom, I asked. 'Understanders', I was told. It was an epiphany. In a flash, I realised my vocation. As a direct result, here I am now.

Well not quite; the intervening twenty years have included fatherhood, stints in public service, long periods of being a kept man and, most recently, writing.

And I guess that's really why I'm here. I have written a book, or more accurately, a monograph. Two and a half years ago, under commission from the Cultural Development Network of Victoria, I wrote this slim volume entitled *The Fourth Pillar of Sustainability: culture's essential role in public planning*. This publication was specifically designed for local government readership and begins with this summary:

'A society's values are the basis upon which all else is built. These values and the ways they are expressed are a society's culture. The way a society governs itself cannot be fully democratic without there being clear avenues for the expression of community values, and unless these expressions directly affect the directions society takes. These processes are culture at work.

'Cultural vitality is as essential to a healthy and sustainable society as social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability. In order for public planning to be more effective, its methodology should include an integrated framework of cultural evaluation along similar lines to those being developed for social, environmental and economic impact assessment.'

Now these are not original ideas, nor are they particularly profound, but they seem to have caught a wave, a wave built on the growing recognition that the dominant religion of the last twenty years, economic fundamentalism, is inhumane, silly and dangerous. And despite the rhetoric of rationalism espoused by its crusaders, it becomes clearer by the minute that its roots are no less mystical and faith-dependent than other religions. Consider for a moment the 'science' of economic modelling: build as close to a lifelike model of existence as possible (life in this case being those things that can be measured economically) then stick pins into the model, see what it does and believe that whatever the model does is what will happen in the real world. This is not science, it's voodoo.

But enough name calling. There's not much point putting energy into demolishing an ideology that is energetically demolishing itself with each passing day. Better to be considering alternatives. Where to from here? Rather than why where we are now is such a sorry spot.

As you'll recall from the the material I quoted earlier, I am utterly convinced that there is an essential connection between culture and democracy.

However, the current use of the concept of culture has become so attenuated and compromised that this connection has all but disappeared.

It's not that culture has gone off the agenda. Indeed, local governments have been developing cultural policies for at least two decades and the pressure is increasing on them to do so. But most of them have been arts policies, which, in itself is no bad thing, except that, by calling them cultural policies, public servants have deprived themselves of an exceptionally useful tool in their planning kits.

This lumping together of arts and culture began because culture was originally introduced into the public planning lexicon on the back of the arts. 'Arts and culture' rapidly became a cliché and a counterproductive misnomer (imagine a chapter in a cookbook called 'broccoli and vegetables') that has weakened our capacity to deal productively with either arts or culture.

This unfortunate development is nowhere better illustrated than in the regular government response to being asked where libraries fit into their vision of cultural policy. More often than not the reply is that they don't. Libraries are in a different department, I'm regularly told. (I know, that at least in local governments in New South Wales, libraries are often coalesced with heritage, arts and other 'cultural' manifestations – but even here, at the State Government level, libraries are in their own little silo). How can this be, I ask. How can the keeping places of our ideas, the crucibles in which new visions are formed, new memories expressed and recorded, the sites where new generations explore the wisdoms and perspectives of their forebears and deposit their versions of what it all means, be excluded from the cultural overview. Well, they have their own policies it seems.

At first I was shocked. But then I realised that perhaps this was a good thing – every government should have a library policy, and an arts policy, and a recreation policy, and a heritage policy, and a communications policy and an education policy – all significant aspects

of culture. And then came the light bulb flashing – if public planning and policy are about expressing social goals, aspirations and visions then **all** policy is cultural. Indeed public policy is the most refined expression of cultural development that there is.

The positives and negatives of this position are manifest in one of the most comprehensive cultural policies produced in this country. In July 1991, the Kirner Government in Victoria published *'Mapping our Culture: A policy for Victoria'*. This document expressed such a wide ranging view of culture that in the year that government had before its downfall to Kennett, the policy resulted in virtually nothing except territorial bickering, arguments about implementation authority and paranoia about interference. What was written as a template for inclusivity became a vehicle for divisiveness.

What is needed is not more cultural policy but a cultural perspective to be applied to all policies.

It was this realisation that motivated me to write *'The Fourth Pillar'*.

In this small volume, I use 'culture' in what is known as its 'anthropological' sense (it is also the sense in which it is used in the 1996 UNESCO Declaration of Cultural Rights).

In this context, the concept 'culture' describes:

- our values and aspirations;
- the ways we develop, receive and transmit these values, and
- the ways of life these processes produce.

While this outline is fine as a dictionary definition, it misses the heart and the guts of culture.

Some months ago, I was asked by Deborah Mills to comment on a draft of Cultural Planning Guidelines for Local Government in New South Wales. Building on her original work, I suggested this preamble as a description of culture:

Our culture embodies the sense we make of our lives; it is built on the values we share and the ways we come to terms with our differences; it deals with what matters to people and communities: relationships, memories, experiences, identities, backgrounds, hopes and dreams in all their diversity. And most of all, our culture expresses our visions of the future: what it is we want to pass on to future generations.

Our culture connects our present with our pasts and with the future we imagine. It is with culture that we make the connections, the networks of meanings and values, and of friendship and interest, that hold us together in time, in place and in society.

Our culture describes the ways we tell each other our stories, how we create our sense of ourselves, how we remember who we are, how we imagine who we want to become, how we relax, how we celebrate, how we argue, how we bring up our children, the spaces we make for ourselves.

Our culture is the expression of our desires to be happy, our desires to belong, our desires to survive and, above all, our desires to be creative.

This description demonstrates that culture describes those facets of our being that make us human; it embodies our essence.

This usage of 'culture' can be summarised as 'the social production of meaning', or simply 'making sense'.

And, of all the things we make, 'sense' is the most important; we need to recognise and facilitate this process in the ways we organise our society.

(And, by the bye, where is this sense most often stored? – in our libraries, of course)

Never has there been more political rhetoric about values than now. But current public planning tools contain no mechanisms that formally facilitate ongoing, regular and accessible ways of connecting the generation, expression and influence of community values and aspirations to the development and evaluation of public planning. This is why I support the application of a fourth, cultural, perspective to stand alongside the standard triangle of social, environmental and economic 'pillars'.

Not least, because it is through cultural action:

- that we make sense of our existence and the environment we inhabit;
- that we find common expressions of our values and needs, and,
- that we meet the challenges presented by our continuing stewardship of the planet.

Without culture, we are, quite literally, not human.

And a system of governance that lacks an integrated cultural perspective is equally bereft.

My main objective in writing *'The Fourth Pillar'* was to get a cultural perspective onto the agenda. I didn't really put much thought into the functionality of the other three

perspectives, or indeed, of the comprehensiveness of the four perspectives as an integrated totality.

Shortly after publication, I noticed that others were developing critiques of the triangular model as well. Among these, one in particular stood out for me. It was one that proposed 'governance' as a fourth perspective (and, incidentally, relegated 'cultural' to being a subset of 'social').

Now, being a political animal at heart, I recognised that governance (describing the way we organise ourselves, the nature, structure and dynamics of power relations) was indeed a critical issue in any planning framework, and kicked myself for not having given it enough thought.

What I realised was, that in obsessing on getting culture up, I had accepted the other three perspectives as given. This was very silly of me.

This is best illustrated by my tacit acceptance of the triple bottom line as a reasonable concept, simply requiring the addition of a fourth line to make it work effectively. What I've realised since writing *The Fourth Pillar* is that the triple bottom line is, in reality, a spectacular scam. Its rhetoric sounds like a profound development from the singular perspective of the economic fundamentalists, but in fact, all it really is is an attempt to bring social and environmental issues into an economic context – unless the workers and consumers are comfy, business will not be able to achieve maximum performance; unless the environment is still there, business will be unable to continue to make a profit from it. Humanising the market, yes, but simultaneously, marketising the human.

So, one of the things I've been doing since *The Fourth Pillar* came out is looking very carefully at the other three perspectives. What I have come to realise is just how pernicious and extensive the ideology of economic rationalism has been. The crusaders of this fundamentalist cult have not only promoted the 'free market' (an oxymoron as pernicious as that other myth - 'healthy competition') as the basis of all human relations, they have transformed the meanings of great slabs of our vocabulary.

This is nowhere more evident than in the concepts of economic and social policy. Under the new religion, economic policy has come to refer solely to matters concerned with operations of 'the market' and social policy to looking after those so damaged that they can't find their way to the market.

So, just as the concept of culture needed to be extended beyond its popular usage in order to make it a useful planning tool, I think we need to do a similar job on the other three perspectives.

Rather than work backwards, that is, to start with the nominated perspectives and attempt to re-jig them, I've tried to go back to taws, to imagine what the essential planning issues are and to work from there towards a framework that is comprehensive but simple enough to be useful.

I think that it's reasonable to break down public planning into four distinct (but utterly inter-related) components. These can be framed as quite simple questions:

ONE: What are we starting with? OR, What have we got?

TWO: Where do we want to go? OR Why do we want to go anywhere at all?

THREE: How do we get there? OR How do we organise ourselves?

FOUR: Who benefits? OR Is everyone on board?

Question one deals with the CONTEXT in which we find ourselves; the RESOURCES we have to work with.

Question two deals with the PURPOSE of our proposed actions; the IDEAS that inform our directions.

Question three deals with the STRUCTURE through which we will implement our objectives; the decision-making processes, the distribution of POWER.

Question four deals with the PRODUCTION that will take place; the WEALTH (in its widest sense) that will be accumulated and how it will be distributed.

Do these ideas bear any resemblance to the Four Perspectives that are currently proposed?

I believe they do, provided we expand the narrow lenses through which environmental, cultural, social and economic analyses have come to focus.

LENS ONE: the creation, distribution and maintenance of RESOURCES – the CONTEXT: this is the Environmental Perspective

This perspective should not simply refer to the earth's physical resources and our exploitation of them, but to the living systems of which we are a part and the entire heritage for which we are responsible.

That is, an environmental perspective gives us the opportunity to analyse our behaviour and our intentions in the **context** of ecological dynamics; to look at **all** our resources – finite and renewable, human and physical, built and natural – and to plan for their protection, maintenance and regeneration.

This approach would allow the environmental perspective to facilitate the development of a wider appreciation of the global ecological system in which we exist and upon which we are dependent.

It would also locate our heritage in a context that takes into account its variety, its value and its multifarious forms, both tangible and intangible.

LENS TWO: the creation, distribution and maintenance of IDEAS – the PURPOSE: this is the Cultural Perspective

When it is mentioned at all, ‘culture’ usually refers to the arts and/or the ‘cultural industries’, and is often viewed as a subset of social policy (despite the concerted efforts of many to have it ‘upgraded’ to the economic level).

The Fourth Pillar presents the arguments in support of using ‘culture’ as the description of that aspect of analysis that focuses on the intentions and purposes that inform our behaviour.

In moving beyond a focus on professional arts production, this view allows the cultural perspective to facilitate the democratic generation and expression of society’s values and aspirations through creative participation.

LENS THREE: the creation, distribution and maintenance of POWER – the STRUCTURE: this is the Social Perspective

These days ‘social’ appears to be almost exclusively about the welfare of the disadvantaged, about the provision of services to those who cannot afford to pay for them themselves: public housing, public health, unemployment benefits, aged care ... (that is, the stuff that present day economists can no longer be bothered with, or which they have been unable to find a way of privatising).

This is a terrible travesty of the concept of ‘social’. A social perspective should focus on the organisational **structures** we have developed and the level of access to them, their capacity to deliver and the processes through which they are controlled and operated.

That is, the distribution of **power**; the processes of **governance**.

A social perspective should allow us to recognise that social organisation needs to be flexible and responsive, inclusive and engaging, open and transparent; that established structures and systems are neither 'natural' phenomena nor innately 'good' – they are the constructs of fallible humans with, inevitably, particular, often unacknowledged, interests. Constant vigilance is necessary, if we are to develop ways of organising ourselves that effectively fulfil our democratic aspirations. This should be the function and purpose of a social perspective.

In taking on a focus aimed at the efficient delivery of services (which should really be an economic matter), social policy makers have been denied their right to concern themselves with the democratic management of society.

LENS FOUR: the creation, distribution and maintenance of WEALTH – the PRODUCTION: this is the Economic Perspective

The economic domain has become exclusively about the efficient accumulation of material wealth. Again, this is a travesty of what was once a way of analysing public activity that concerned itself with a much wider concept of wealth than merely the fiscal and that focused as much on matters of equitable **distribution** as on modes of production. Not all that long ago economic policy was as much about fairness as it was about efficiency.

For the four perspectives to work effectively, this one needs to remember itself. In other words, to take back its distributive oversight.

In focusing on fiscal management and 'wealth creation', economic policy makers have renounced their responsibility to overseeing the equitable distribution of wealth – of furthering commonwealth.

The two critical matters arising out of this analysis are the pressing need for economic thinking to re-embrace issues of fairness, equity and distribution AND for social thinking to, once more, address issues of social structure and organisation.

With this template, governance becomes the essential element of the social perspective.

In this context it is reasonable to see the Four Perspectives as a contribution to the theory of public administration; as another model designed to improve the facilitation of public services.

But while it certainly is that, it is also much more. To my mind, it is also an important contribution to the project that has engrossed humankind for at least the last three hundred

years - what might be called the Democracy Project: the probably endless challenge to find a way of governing ourselves that empowers and engages the entire body politic. It is in this context that issues of governance and engagement become paramount.

Which is why the concept of community is so important. For me, community is based on the experience of being an empowered participant in the negotiation of common goals and of engaging in social action with one's peers towards those goals. That is, community does not describe an object; it describes a sensation - the sensation of sharing, of belonging, of connectedness, of common cause.

There are obviously significant parallels between culture and community. But a third idea has to be brought into play before they can intersect.

And that is, governance. Governance brings these interpretations of culture and community into direct impact with the real world. In this context, the foundation, and essential purpose, of governance is the democratisation and enlivening of the ways in which a society develops a sense of itself and applies that sense to its daily life.

To recap:

Culture is the process of making meaning and values;

Communities are built on negotiating shared values and the growth of group identity; and

Governance enlivens and democratises these processes.

Culture, community and governance then, are in an endless dance; to omit culture (the making of meaning) from this movement is to have rhythm but no lyric. And without the lyric it is easy to forget what the point of the dance really is.

And even if that point can't ever be completely expressed, we do know what it's about, Why else is the rhetoric of public life so increasingly spiced with notions of energy – participation, engagement, vitality, vibrancy, activity, innovation and creativity.

It is very tempting to be cynical: to believe that all this talk of voluntarism, of social capital, of community capacity is merely a plot to reduce government expenditure, to turn public service into private profit. That potential certainly exists, and there are definitely influential individuals and interests that have exactly that goal.

Despite this dark underbelly, I have to believe that we can seize the initiative; that, as the paucity, unfairness and destructiveness of economic rationalism becomes increasingly obvious, we can turn the rhetoric of community building to democratic advantage.

But the citizenry will not re-engage with the business of governance, with politics, unless they believe that this engagement will have an effect; that their contribution will be meaningful.

That is, until they feel empowered.

Which is why the notion of rights is so important. I am not naïve enough to believe that saying it makes it real, but I do believe that saying it gives one something to strive for, something to which actions can be called to account, something around which people can gather.

At the very least, if there were to be a formal declaration of cultural rights, we would be able to argue forcefully for an engaged cultural practice at the community level.

We need a formal statement of cultural rights:

- as an expression of the fundamental role that culture plays in the existence and maintenance of human society and the right of every human to contribute to and engage with that role;
- as a confirmation of culture's unique and essential function in helping us to understand and describe human behaviour, experience and aspirations;
- as an underpinning of the cultural perspective;
- as the validation of cultural impact to at least an equivalent level of importance as environmental, social and economic impacts; and as,
- the basis for accepting the exercise of creativity as a basic aspect of human life above and beyond its instrumental value in achieving secondary objectives.

In 1996, UNESCO declared six rights. These are the right:

- to cultural identity and heritage;
- to identify with a cultural community;
- to participate in cultural life;
- to education and training;
- to information; and,

- to participate in cultural policies.

Donald Horne has got it down to three, and has spent years talking them up. The rights he identifies are:

- to engage with human cultural heritage;
- to take part in new intellectual and artistic production; and,
- to find one's own forms of expression.

I've reduced it to one. The right:

- to actively participate in the social production of the values and aspirations that inform one's society.

The genuine acceptance and application of this right within the structures of governance, and by those in positions that allow them to influence the methodologies of these structures, would be a positive move towards a democracy that embraces and engages its citizens, their children and those who have come to our land in search of a better life.

(I did not deliver the rest of the paper but instead spoke extemporaneously along the following lines:)

I remarked upon my disquiet about some of the language used in some of the speeches made earlier in the seminar; eg, references to customers, clients, 'e-business', culture's contribution to financial prosperity generation, etc. I mentioned Don Watson's book 'Death Sentence' and claimed that librarians, possibly more than any other public servants, had a responsibility to maintain the clarity and honesty of our language. I noted the pressure on those having to deal with government to speak their language. I noted that while in the short term this might be seen as essential (how else to get access to the funds one needs), but that in the long term, it was destructive (a death sentence indeed). I used as an example the acceptance of 'arts industry' as an identity by the arts community in order to curry favour with the economic rationalists. And how what began as a fund-raising scam (one that failed), ended up as an horrific alteration of consciousness about the function of art in society.

I then talked of some of my recent experience in dealing with government:

- **Risk assesment:** that in my latest application, I'd been obliged to create one of these plans. How I'd nominated as our primary risk: becoming so bogged down in the business of dealing with funding authorities that we'd forget what our real mission was.

- **Marketing plans:** how I had declared that we didn't have one. How that, as I undertood such things, a marketing plan was a device for maximising the sale of commodities to consumers and that we had nothing to sell, we didn't produce commodities and we were, if anything, anti-consumption. We did however have a dissemination plan.
- **The role of government officials:** how, when I was quizzed by government officers, about my submission, they strongly advised that, although they were in complete sympathy with the position I was taking, I should frame my submissions in the language government wanted to hear. I responded that as decent human beings who had decided to accept the queen's shilling, it was their responsibility to mediate between our organisation and government. That to demand of us that we succumb to the 'death sentence' was immoral.

And on this point, I ended my presentation.

(This final section of the paper was not delivered)

Creative participation is the key to cultural vitality and the key to universal creative participation is access. I don't mean access to products and services (what could be called passive access) but access to the tools of production and the levers of power (that is, active access).

What are these tools?

In order for communities to achieve maximum engagement in creative participation, they need widespread and easy access to:

- **Time:** there are many options; for example – a shorter working week, mandatory arts elements in educational programs, paid time for cultural activities as a part of enterprise agreements;
- **Networks:** of common interest and experience, of support and sharing – networks that facilitate discovery, dissemination and promotion;
- **Information:** examples and models, guidelines to best practice, contact details;
- **Equipment:** the tangible materials and tools with which to make stuff;
- **Sites:** in which to work, to practice, to play, to experiment, to make and to show;
- **Facilitation:** people who are really good at liberating the creativity of others;
- **Skill development:** decentralised and local ownership of an ongoing skill-base;

- **Continuity:** ‘access to continuity’ may sound strange, but it is meaningful; communities need to be able to experience ongoing cultural engagement – stop-start projects can be counter-productive; and, finally,
- **Money:** although, if all of the foregoing resources were available to communities at a minimal cost to them, then perhaps money wouldn’t be an issue at all.

Most communities could not hope to accumulate resources like this on their own: interventions are clearly needed.

The challenge for agents of governance is to ensure that the distribution of these resources is achieved in ways that make them accessible, productively used and, as far as possible, locally owned and sustainable.

If the tools of cultural production were to become universally accessible, the results would not simply be the universal and democratic exercise of cultural rights, but also a massive outburst of creativity.

And no matter how much of these flowerings might be regarded as aesthetically repugnant by the mandarins, the fact is that we can’t live without them.

Why? Because collaborative creativity is at the foundation of forging identity and purpose. And without these, everything else is spin.

The source of this creativity is in the most abundant and fruitful resource that we have. It is a resource that isn’t simply renewable – it’s infinite.

It’s our imaginations. And we all have imaginations and the right and responsibility to exercise them. Economic rationalism cannot guarantee a sustainable and healthy world, but we can imagine such a world and our combined creativities will help us to find our way there.

An acceptance that the notion of culture encompasses the breadth of meaning that I have described in this presentation has inevitable consequences. These ideas have repercussions in the real world; accepting them will mean:

- abandoning a command culture;
- applying a cultural perspective to all policy;
- declaring and exercising cultural rights;
- recognising that creativity is both a universal right and a universal resource; and,

- ensuring that culture is not subsumed under other strategic imperatives.

The conditions in which these necessities can become reality lie in the mind and in the will.

Unless attitudes change, nothing else will. Unless the agents of governance are able to:

- trust in the creative capacity of communities;
- tangibly commit to democracy;
- be prepared to devolve control, and
- go beyond a service delivery model,

we will continue to spin in unproductive, and ultimately unsustainable, circles.

I'd like to conclude with some thoughts about how these ideas might be utilised within the library culture.

I think the primary value might be to be able to envisage libraries as being as much sites of making culture as of receiving culture. Libraries as 'writing' sites as much as 'reading' sites.

Secondly, to envisage ways of cultural development occurring publically rather than privately, that is socially rather than in individual isolation. Libraries as sites of public debate, discussion, story-telling, public readings.

And finally, to envisage ways of libraries facilitating the documentation of contemporary and local experience and wisdom.

None of these are new ideas, but a cultural perspective may offer you a tool with which you can lever yourselves into a position where these functions are respected and valued.

Thankyou for listening.

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