

Place Management and Social Capital what we are learning in Brisbane.

Pam Bourke
Manager Social Policy
Brisbane City Council
GPO Box 1434
BRISBANE QLD 4000
61 7 3403 6465
msp@brisbane.qld.gov.au

Introduction

Today I have been asked to discuss the role of the Brisbane Place projects in building social capital in 3 targeted communities.

I will start by giving brief history of the place projects in Brisbane then briefly discuss the concept of social capital and the focus on social capital in the place projects.

Finally I will discuss what we have achieved and what challenges we still face if this work is to be of value in building sustainable communities in the long term in Brisbane.

Background

Local government in Australia has a long history of trying to progress integrated local planning. That history has been well documented elsewhere and doesn't need repeating today. However the interest of central governments in coordinated approaches to local planning and implementation have waxed and waned probably becoming unpopular because they challenge the fundamentals of the low tax small government thinking which has been prevalent in Australia for some time.

In Brisbane we have also been on a journey to try to deliver integrated local planning and services for over a decade. The latest approach built around the concepts of place management came out of frustration with the failure of our local area planning to deliver on social and economic outcomes in the city. There were 2 reasons for looking for a new model

- The limits of our current planning legislation which is ambiguous on the social aspects of land use planning and appears to provide very few powers to enable Councils to require social impact assessment and social infrastructure planning and contributions. To address social issues we needed to look more to corporate and program planning and budgeting and temporarily away from land use planning
- The inability to engage state agencies in local planning without clear and agreed criteria as to why the state should engage in one area rather

than another. This resulted in limited implementation of social planning priorities in Local Area plans.

So in 1999 Council started a dialogue with the state government about the possibility of taking a place management approach to addressing locational disadvantage in Brisbane.

Goals of the Brisbane places for people project

1. Measurable and sustainable improvement in quality of life for most disadvantaged residents in 3 target communities
2. Improve coordination and collaboration between and within governments, business and community at local and agency levels
3. Build on community strengths and increase capacity of community to identify and respond to their own problems and meet aspirations
4. Develop innovative solutions to entrenched locational disadvantage by linking economic, social and environmental issues and responses

The Place projects were located in 3 very different areas

1. Inner Suburbs community
2. South West Corridor
3. 2 Northern Middle Ring suburbs
(attachment 1 map of 3 locations)

These suburbs were chosen after analysing demographic and other data including child protection and juvenile justice statistics to identify areas of multiple disadvantage in the city(attachment 2)

Who is involved?

BCC (local government for metro Brisbane), 13 state agencies, hundreds of community organisations and businesses (many of whom have no idea what a place project is or that it has contributed to their outcomes) and 1000's of residents.

The project is a partnership project with the above stakeholders with the Queensland Department of Premier and Cabinet having a lead role in coordinating the state agencies. The Community Renewal Program (Queensland Department of Housing) has a lead role in the South West corridor suburb of Inala.

The goals of the place project were ambitious.

What were the challenges at the beginning of the journey in 1999?

- There were no agreed shared priorities for planning and delivery between BCC and the state in the area of responding to disadvantage.

- There was limited cross program and cross agency funding of initiatives in social development.
- There was no capital cities policy
- BCC was not a member of the RMF
- There was no state dept responsible for coordinating place based initiatives across government outside community renewal areas and no framework or mechanisms to ensure programs were responsive at the local level. So in a very real sense the Brisbane place projects have tried to be a catalyst for change at the state level.
- There were no structures or forums where government , business and the community could sit down together to discuss how to respond to social and economic issues and could implement new initiatives
- Some of the communities we targeted had no services, facilities, or local community infrastructure at all while others had a lot of services, many of which were uncoordinated.
- There was a general lack of trust between government and the community services sector
- There were growing problems with drug use, homelessness, and young people at risk in parts of the city

What did we have in our favour?

- Some communities had the advantage of having very experienced and competent community organisations who knew their communities and were good at engaging them and government;
- Council had considerable experience in working at the local level and engaging communities in ways that the other spheres of Govt could not.
- some very good relationships existed across, and within the various government silos
- The effects of disadvantage were becoming more visible and requiring obvious responses from government.
- The notion of cross government local responses was starting to gain support (3rd way etc) and government was receptive to the idea of having another go at integrated responses.

In summary there were some helping and hindering factors. A number of the stakeholders decided that to go forward and try something new was better than staying the way we were. This includes not just the initiators in government but also business and community stakeholders who saw the project as another chance to try to respond to the critical issues facing their communities and clients.

So the goals were about responding to the issues and strengths of communities and about changing the way we all worked together at the local, citywide and state levels.

Social capital

This is where the issue of social capital becomes really important, because *social capital is both the ends and the means in a place based approach*. The supporting of and enhancing of social capital is fundamental achieving anything in these projects and in having robust communities after intensive government intervention is over.

Some Definitions

There are a number of definitions of social capital:

- “the norms and networks that enable people to share resources and work together” (M Woolcock 2003)
- “social capital is about the quality of social relations- how well people get on together, understand each other, trust and help each other, deal with differences, and are connected to each other”(Suzie Lodder 2002)

Given these definitions you can see how important the development of social capital is to the success of a place project like this. The whole premise of place is based on the notion not just of changes in governance structures but of relationships where people can support each other, resolve conflicts and learn to do things differently. This is true of local relationships in communities and between communities and government and within and between government.

The additional definitions of **bonding** (feeling part of a group eg church scouts, P&C) **bridging** (linking diverse groups and networks to each other and thereby increasing access to diverse resources and ideas) **linking** (linking these networks into and finding ways to influence power structures and authority). (M.Woolcock 2003) These additional definitions are important particularly in disadvantaged communities or communities struggling to cope with rapid change. Bonding social capital is important in communities where few local networks exist and few opportunities exist for participation in community life. However these networks alone will not enable a community to challenge the pace of development or include people from different cultures or socio-economic back grounds or assist families to cope with drug use. What is required here is not just local support and relationships but also the ability to influence developers and politicians, the ability to show tolerance to homeless people living in your local park, and the ability to communicate with neighbours from different cultural backgrounds.

So if social capital is so important how effective have we been at supporting and enhancing it and where did we make mistakes?

Where have the Brisbane place projects been successful in enhancing social capital?

What have the place projects done to contribute to social capital in communities with both high needs and rich in social and cultural assets?

- **Take an assets based approach ie build on the strengths of the community not just focussed on problems**

While the 3place projects have focussed on issues of concern to government and community stakeholders we have also asked residents what they valued about living in their communities and what they would like more of at the local level. All the communities we are working in have great strengths including cultural diversity, a history of community development and community leadership, effective organisations, cooperative relationships between organisations and businesses and creative people and entrepreneurial skills. We have tried to build on these attributes wherever possible and to avoid damaging the strengths by unnecessary intervention.

Case Study

In Zillmere the place project supported the production of a CD by a local school group where a very high proportion of the children had never been to the city and where a high proportion of the children come to school without breakfast. The CD won awards and was played on national radio and has helped to encourage a sense of achievement from both the children and the school community as a whole.

In another community where there were no facilities or community organisations the community decided they wanted to develop a community garden and the young people were supported to develop a youth activities program after school and on holidays.

In another instance the community were already running a politics in the pub series and were training local residents to understand and respond to land-use planning decisions. They were struggling to keep up the resources and reach the incoming population. The place project was able to fund them to allow the work to continue and reach more residents. The latest Politics in the Pub on homelessness and place attracted 70 people.

The primary outcome is to value and add to the strengths and unique character of local places and local people. This encourages people to feel good about where they live and to want to contribute to local activities and protect local character and diversity. We have taken the work management out of the title of the projects and in our external communications we have tried not to talk about deficits but about opportunities and strengths. The feedback about this activity from the communities has been very positive.

- **Create places and programs for participation in community life.**

This is probably an area where the place projects have had a degree of recognised success. A conscious effort has been made to increase opportunities for participation in community life by a diverse range of residents. Community development programs have been funded, parks upgraded, community tree planting initiated, improvements implemented to lighting and local shopping centres, films have been made, facilities have been provided for the first time or upgraded. Festivals and events for young people and the broader community have been planned and delivered with and by the community. Several 1000 people have been involved over the life of the projects.

Case Study

In Zillmere a film has been made about what local residents value about their community and what they would like to change. Over 500 people attended the first screening of the project which has also show-cased the role of cultural development in building social capital in communities. A local Indigenous youth festival has been organised by the Indigenous community in Inala with the support of Council and has attracted hundreds of young people. Indigenous young people are starting to be trained in event management so they can run the festival without the support of Council staff.

However like most systems approaches improving local amenity can have unexpected consequences. Zillmere is now becoming attractive to investors.

- **Create effective processes and structures for community participation in decision making at the local, central and regional levels and make decision making as transparent accountable and flexible as possible:**

I think the place projects have struggled to achieve effective participation for community stakeholders. While governance arrangements including steering committees and working groups have been established and

action plans developed with budgets allocated for priorities on the whole the stakeholders would say they aren't satisfied with the efforts in this area. More needs to be done.

Case Study

In Zillmere the community participants insisted on a joint community sector/ government chair for the steering committee and on 50% / 50% government and community representation on the steering committee. In the City centre project the working groups are currently reviewing the structures to determine how to strengthen local arrangements and rationalise the number of new place structures. In addition the Urban Renewal Task Force which has been quite separate from the place project is now being brought into more formal alignment.

However government decisions about budgets, programs and policies are still mostly made in the silos to be approved by senior managers and elected members. Some people are not at the table, and there are no effective governance arrangements at the WOG level that allow place decisions to be implemented in a timely manner.

The Place evaluation indicated that while most participants believe a lot more should be done most would also agree that quite a lot has been achieved. One community member recently said to me that the place project has given legitimacy to many of the things they had been trying to do for years. It added resources, and visibility.

- **Provide resources to implement community priorities**

Council and some state agencies and businesses have allocated resources flexibly to community based priorities which wouldn't have happened in 99. BCC budget priorities in a range of programs are more aligned to community priorities as outlines in local action plans. At the time of the place evaluation a conservative estimate of dollars allocated for implementation was \$5 million. (Your place or mine? Evaluation of the Brisbane Place project, UQ 2003 p107). Council's budget for the work including staff is about \$2.5 million per annum.

Case Study

BCC and Queensland Health have jointly funded the delivery of a mobile needle exchange and referral service in the Valley for drug users The Dept of Families, BCC and the Department of Housing have jointly funded Outreach and Brokerage services to homeless people in the Valley and CBD. These are just a few examples of where the linking social capital is developing between agencies and spheres of government who

haven't traditionally worked together or shared resources to deliver a coordinated response to a complex community problem.

A lot of resources have been allocated which is very surprising given that no central pool of funding actually exists.

On the whole the big ticket items have not been addressed eg the absence of effective and accessible drug treatment services. Increasing the long-term availability of flexible funding to local organisations is still a problem and is a crucial ingredient for sustainability.

- **Build the capacity of all sectors to work together, show leadership, resolve differences**

There is no doubt there are new relationships. This is evidenced by collaborative partnerships where resources and information is shared and where people who once would not have worked outside their agency boundaries are now able to solve problems with a diverse range of stakeholders. The bridging social capital has been increased.

We have seen business, government and community working together to manage public space issues, business contributing to homelessness infrastructure, and community organisations applying for joint funding. Council has jointly funded a number of new initiatives with state and commonwealth agencies.

Case Study

Community leadership courses have been developed to provide people with the skills to know how to participate in their local community and how to lead a local group.

A number of controversial issues between business, community groups, homeless people and residents are being managed through dialogue and compromise and building win/win solutions eg a public space worker has been employed by BCC to work with homeless people in parks and public spaces to find solutions that recognise the rights of homeless people and the need for safety for customers and the business community. We have a policy of not moving people on and we have to work hard with all parties to manage these difficult problems.

Involve the community at the earliest possible moment in the establishment of the project and the governance arrangements:

In some of the areas this was done and as a result there is a high degree of ownership of the projects. In other areas due to lack of resources and no guide- book it was slower and trust has been hard to build or never really established.

Case Study

In one community there was 2 years of community development work done prior to the place project starting and by the time we wanted to put

structures in place they refused to work with us until they were clear about the roles and responsibilities and the goals of the project. In other words we were put in our place by a community who felt they had a right to have say about how the project progressed.

Communities need to be engaged before any place project begins. From our experience I would say be ready to delay and to even withdraw until there is agreement about how the community wants to participate. In some places we have done this satisfactorily in others we went too far too fast.

- **Work at a range of levels simultaneously**

Social capital outcomes can not be achieved by local processes and problem solving alone. Communities need the support of governments at all levels to help them respond to the big challenges facing them (linking social capital). If the project can't bring together the people with decision making power and resources and the people struggling with the problems it will fail

Case Study

One of the big issues in the inner City place project has been affordable housing and homelessness. The place project has been able to give visibility to the issue through bringing key stakeholders together at the right time to find new responses to issues.

as a result a range of initiatives have been supported or developed that have accelerated our responses to this issue at the local and state levels. This has included the funding for Outreach and Brokerage services, the funding of the Brisbane Housing Company, the development of the BCC Homelessness Strategy, the development of an incentives package for affordable housing, a response with the state to boarding house closures and the provision of infrastructure in parks and public spaces.

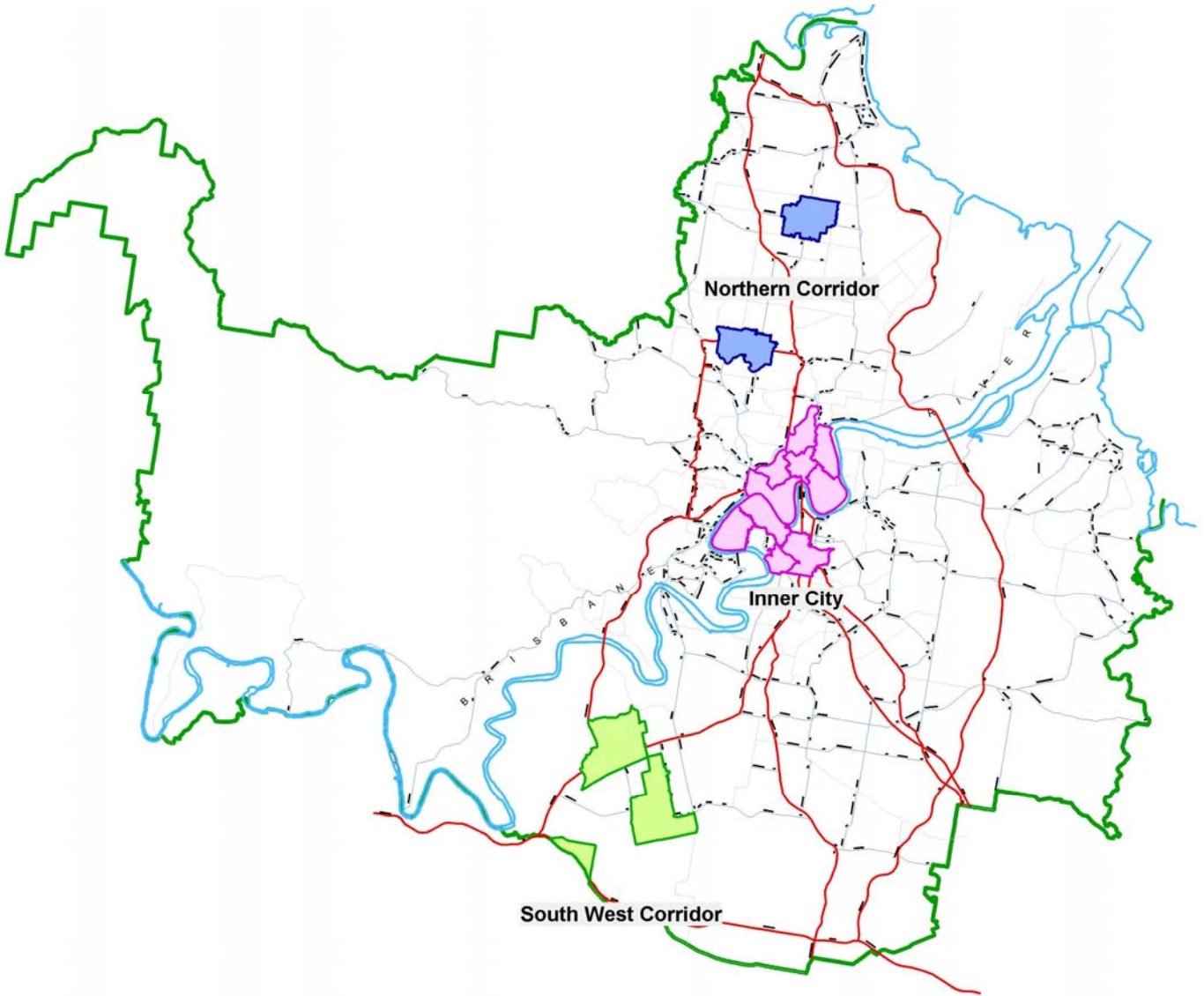
Where the problem was beyond the capacity of the local level to manage we have escalated it to the state level and beyond to where the decisions need to be made. This is linking social capital in action.

It is essential to keep the community in the partnership as the issues progresses.

We are at an interesting cross roads with the place work in Brisbane. We are being requested by an inner city community facing very significant change to intervene with a new place project that combines both land use planning and place management. As a result of our experiences to date there are a few things that are essential before any decision is made to go forward. These include:

- 1. A clear mandate and agreed participation from the Premier and Cabinet and the LM and E&C and clear reporting procedures.**
- 2. A clear set of agreed criteria for choosing to intervene**
- 3. A transparent and adequate budget from state and local government including staff and flexible funding for local implementation**
- 4. Cross department and program mechanisms to enable local recommendations to be progressed effectively in both Council and state program and budget decisions**
- 5. Agreed structures and processes for participation and community support for such structures**
- 6. A clear and shared framework to guide the place project between state and local government and other participants.**
- 7. Senior state and local government representation on any local structures**
- 8. Skilled staff to implement the project including community engagement and integrated social, economic and environmental skills**
- 9. Resources for evaluation and data collection .**
- 10. A clear communication strategy for residents and stakeholders**

APPENDIX 1



APPENDIX 2

Place area	Distinguishing issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Northern Corridor Zillmere/Stafford	High rates of public housing. Poor Community Confidence score. Rated in lowest 20 SEIFA scores – Brisbane. Poorly serviced by Community Facilities.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Inner City	High rates of homelessness, contested public space, substance abuse etc. Poorly serviced by Community Facilities in turn impacted by locality redevelopment.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• South West Corridor Inala, Darra, Carole Park	Poor Community Confidence score. High rates of public housing. Large emerging communities with English as 2 nd language. Rated in lowest 20 SEIFA scores – Brisbane. Poorly serviced by Community Facilities.

SEIFA index identifies factors such as high employment, low educational and low income – average 1000.

Index for Brisbane 1034.4

Community Confidence index research by A C Nielsen 2001-03

Bibliography

Lodder. S, Capacity Building: Conceptual Frameworks, Principles and Practice, Presentation to the National Skills Development Strategy Implementation Working Group, Brisbane, November 2002.

University of Queensland, Brisbane City Council, Department of Premier and Cabinet, Your Place or Mine? Evaluation of the Brisbane Place Project, 2003.

**Woolcock. M, Social Capital in new Communities, 2nd International
InsideOut Conference on Higher Education and Community
Engagement, University of Queensland, July, 2003.**