

BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS:

a participatory and web-based documentary and exegesis

www.bigstories.com.au

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ABSTRACT

The central area of research for this thesis concerns the most effective techniques for practitioners developing and delivering facilitated participatory media projects for the internet within an institutional setting. Through the development and delivery of a web-based, participatory documentary *Big Stories, Small Towns*, this study explored the complexity of relationships that underlie media participation within public screen institutions such as national broadcasters and screen culture agencies. This involves key principles of trust, power, motivation, access and agency to assist practitioners in managing participatory processes in media practice.

This study was comprised of two parts – a creative component (The project) and a written exegesis. Fifty per cent of the submission for my PhD is comprised of the writing, direction, production and facilitation of *Big Stories, Small Towns*, which is a web-based participatory documentary, produced in partnership with two public screen institutions, Screen Australia and the Media Resource Centre. The project's main public presentation can be viewed online at www.bigstories.com.au. An archived version of the first site can be viewed at v1.bigstories.com.au.

My accompanying exegesis examines a tradition of documentary production underpinned by participatory practices. The exegesis examines methodologies informed by theories of critical practice to discuss the *Big Stories* project in the context of the wider literature drawn from media studies, communication for

development, visual anthropology and cultural studies. The study explores participatory media activity and identifies examples that have influenced the *Big Stories* project.

The outcomes of the study are substantial and diverse original contributions to research and practice including an original contribution to both web documentary and participatory media practice, re-imagining community-based documentary and oral history practice in a digital, collaborative environment, actively exploring mechanisms for addressing a multi-level digital divide for regional communities, delivering an original project drawing on partnerships with government, non-government and the private sector to create an innovative output, identified by peers as a form of best practice for web documentary, and bringing communication for development ideals to Australian public screen institutions and creating a large archive of this material.

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***Big Stories, Small Towns* (version 1)**

Big Stories: Port Augusta (<http://v1.bigstories.com.au/>)

***Big Stories, Small Towns* (version 2)**

Big Stories: Murray Bridge

(<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/murray-bridge>)

Big Stories: Raukkan (<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/raukkan>)

Big Stories: Banlung (<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/banlung>)

Additional Sites:

Big Stories: Strathewen

(<http://bigstories.com.au/#/town/strathewen>)

Blog: blog.bigstories.com.au

Facebook: facebook.com/bigstories

ABBREVIATIONS

ORGANISATIONS AND EVENTS

ABC: Australian Broadcasting Corporation

ACMI: Australian Centre for the Moving Image

AFA: Aboriginies Friends Association

AFC: Australian Film Commission

AFF: Adelaide Film Festival

AIDC: Australian International Documentary Conference

BBC: British Broadcasting Corporation

CASA: Country Arts South Australia

FOMBL: Friends of the Murray Bridge Library

FTI: Film and Television Institute, Western Australia

IDFA: International Festival of Documentary Amsterdam

MRC: Media Resource Centre, South Australia

NDP: National Documentary Program of Screen Australia

NFB: National Film Board of Canada

NGO: Non-Government Organisation

NIP: National Interest Program of Film Australia

NITV: National Indigenous TV network

NTFP: Non Timber Forest Products

Nunku: Nunkuwarrin Yunti

RCC: Raukkan Community Council

SAFC: South Australian Film Corporation

SBS: Special Broadcast Service

SDA: Screen Development Agencies

Wami Kata: Wami Kata Old Folks Home

UNESCO: United Nations Education Science Culture Organisation

OTHER ABBREVIATIONS

CMS: Content Management System

DVD: Digital Video Disc

LCP: Local Content Producers

HTML5: Hyper Text Mark-up Language version 5

PAR: Participatory Action Research

PV: Participatory Video

VAK: Visual Arts Knowing

v.1: Version 1

v.2: Version 2

Note on abbreviation of the case study *Big Stories, Small Towns*: The *Big Stories, Small Towns* project will be referred to by its full name of *Big Stories, Small Towns* at the outset of each chapter and subsequently as *Big Stories* or the project.

CANDIDATE’S DECLARATION

Exegesis Title: Big Stories, Small Towns; a participatory and web-based documentary.

Candidate’s Name: Martin George Potter

I certify that this exegesis and web-based documentary does not incorporate without acknowledgment any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university; and that to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. G. Potter', with a small horizontal line under the first part of the signature.

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And to Mina – thank you. Thanks for reading, and listening, and waiting.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

*Every community has a living memory, an awareness of a collective identity
woven of a thousand stories.*

Joe Lambert, Centre for Digital Storytelling¹

1.1 AN OVERVIEW

In 2007, I was immersed in the possibilities of community and digital media. It sometimes seemed that a new media-verse had come into being in which everyone could play a part as they chose. From this digitopian vision emerged a project that I hoped could engage with some of Australia's most digitally disconnected at that time - residents of remote and regional towns across the country. This study represents reflections on the experience and ideas that emerged over the course of that hopeful project, *Big Stories, Small Towns* (hereafter *Big Stories* or the project). It is underpinned by two assumptions that I held when I commenced this study, and still hold:

- 1) humans cast their identity in some narrative form in all cultures and thus storytelling is a key part of describing both individual and collective experience,
- 2) participatory media have the potential to create a more nuanced, ethical, diverse and democratic media culture.

¹ Lambert, J. (2005), Center for Digital Storytelling website (comment now offline), Accessed; October , 2008, www.storycenter.org

The creative component of the study (the project) is mostly based in the development, delivery and diffusion of the second iteration of the *Big Stories* participatory and web documentary project that commenced in 2009. This iteration spans the research and development process, production residencies in the towns of Murray Bridge, Raukkan in Australia and Banlung in Cambodia and the post-production period including development of the website and supporting Content Management System (CMS). The main artefact of the project is a web documentary centred on the media outputs of filmmakers in residence living in a small town. The project's public face is found in a website – www.bigstories.com.au - incorporating linear documentaries, photo essays and text created by these filmmakers in residence, as well as community-generated content such as digital stories, oral histories, photo series and archival material sourced from national, state and local archives. Stories from the first iteration have been incorporated into the current project.

1.2 THE RESEARCH QUESTION

What are the most effective techniques for practitioners developing and delivering facilitated participatory media projects for the web within an institutional setting?

As a practitioner an initial question I confronted in this type of work was: how can professional media makers, working through institutional mechanisms, best facilitate the production of stories with non-professionals with a view to supporting their participation with media? Stoney, in Sturken (1984), notes that in

contrast to most models of media production, inclusion and process rather than product is viewed as the key output of facilitated participatory media practice.²

My aims as a practitioner involved in this type of work were to:

- (i) investigate past practices in the field,
- (ii) reflect on the motivations and influences that are invoked to justify the work,
- (iii) set out my own model of practice and its rationale, with the intention of addressing the research question.

The research question has been designed, not to provide a ‘one size fits all’ solution, but to interrogate current practice and theory and to reflect on whether there are effective ways to manage issues of participation in a setting with which I am most familiar as a practitioner. Thus, this exegesis pays particular attention to participatory media projects taking place within public screen culture institutions such as public broadcasters or national film bodies. I identify a principled approach to production as important in this practice. The principles of the project frame the relationship that practitioners seek to construct with participants over the entire span of the interaction, from planning and research through to use of the content. To that end, the principles and their development and use are key, in order to reflect on effective techniques or approaches in the development, delivery and use of this form of media. These principles are outlined in a funding proposal

² George Stoney in *Sturken, M., 1984*, “An Interview With George Stoney”, originally in *Afterimage*, Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY (1984). Accessed May, 2009:
<http://www.experimentaltvcenter.org/interview-george-stoney>.

Similar sentiments from practitioners in various practices of participatory media can be found in; Snowden (1984), Williamson (1989), Lambert (2002, 2005), Meadows (2003) and Lunch (2006) and Cizek (2007).

to Screen Australia (Appendix 1: *Big Stories Production Proposal*) and will be explored in Chapter 4.

1.2.1 Key Theorists

Exploring other media makers' praxis in relation to participatory documentary illuminates the paradigm from which *Big Stories* takes its cues. I acknowledge the influence of other areas that intersect with documentary practice - specifically visual anthropology and communication for development, particularly the work of Jean Rouch. An overview of this practice will be presented in Chapter 2. Specific practices of participatory documentary that have influenced my work will also be explored in more depth in this chapter with a focus on the participatory media work of the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), notably the *Fogo Process*.

In developing the project, key influences include Freire's (1970) understanding of dialogical practice and the necessary values of love, hope, humility, faith in others' capability, trust and critical thinking from which this practice might arise, as outlined in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. Also, the concept of Positive Deviance, after Unger's (1987) *Negative Capability*, which allows for human agency within the formative contexts of institutional and ideological structures, has been influential. Key foundational thinkers who have shaped my understanding of participation in media are Illich (1979) and his vision of the shift from a technocratic elite towards "convivial tools" developed and maintained by a community of users;³ Mouffe (2000) and her concept of agonistic pluralism, challenging Habermas' (1962, 1991) ideal of a consensual public sphere; and the

³ Illich, I. (1979) *Tools for Conviviality*, 2nd edn. London: Fontana. P. 6

importance of mass media in the collective imagining of community described by Anderson (1983) in *Imagined Communities*. Additional texts including Marcuse (1972) on institutional reconstruction and counter-institutions, Enzensberger (1970) on emancipation, Cooke and Kothari (eds. 2001) on participation, Ruby (1991) on visual anthropology and the ‘third voice’ and Hargittai (2002) on a multi-level digital divide have provided arguments and concepts that aided in developing a response to the research question and will be addressed in Chapter 2.

Projects, models and literature reviewed and used within the project have been the most helpful candidates in shaping my screen practice. However, at the end of this process, there is no complete model for all circumstances. If no ideal model is possible, or even necessary, there are still some common values of participatory media that I would like to see more often in projects and initiatives that lay claim to participatory components. The intent of my work is to enable other media practitioners to undertake participatory processes, as well as for institutions seeking to engage or expand their participatory media programs to be able to build capacity to deliver diverse, sustainable participatory media projects.

1.3 THE CREATIVE COMPONENT OF THE STUDY (THE PROJECT)

The creative component of the study, represented by both artefact and process of the project, reflects indirectly on the research question. *Big Stories* has been developed as a work alongside the exegesis and not as a model to verify research.

The complexity of facilitated participatory media resists reduction to a single

problem and its solution. While a range of artefacts has been produced in the project (e.g. video documentaries, websites, exhibitions etc.) their novelty, shared interest and usefulness may not be easily demonstrated. Alongside these artefacts is the process – the ‘know-how’ – that Scrivener (2000) articulates as “exemplified in the artefacts” of creative projects.⁴ The project is thus an object of experience and process. Describing issues, concerns and interests stimulating the work is an illustration of a self-conscious and reflective creative practice.

Thus the exegesis seeks to consider the experience of a practitioner working in a complex medium and engaged in a multiplicity of reflections; these reflections are both internal (self-reflection on the project), and external. The reflections occur as a component of praxis, a process of simultaneous action/ reflection and reflection occurring on the consequences of action.⁵ From this experience the project provides examples, images, understandings that others may adopt for, or adapt to, their own purposes. Underpinning *Big Stories* has been a determined openness to the details of production process, outcomes and a commitment to adaptation based on a dialogical practice defined by particular values. The exegesis will illustrate my role in creating this collaborative work and will illuminate contexts and concerns from which the work emerged.

⁴ Scrivener, S. (2000) “Reflection in and on action and practice in creative-production doctoral projects in art and design.” *Working Papers in Art and Design*. Accessed online, 1 November 2011, from: http://sitem.herts.ac.uk/artdes_research/papers/wpades/vol1/scrivener2.html)

⁵ My understanding of praxis as a creative and pedagogical act is inspired by: Freire, P. *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970), New York: Continuum.

1.4 THE EXEGESIS: STRUCTURE

The exegesis tells the stories behind the story of *Big Stories* and explores the practices of others working in collaborative documentary practice. It is divided into two main sections.

Chapter 2 constitutes this first section of the exegesis and deals with the methodological and interpretative paradigm, literature and history relevant to my practice of collaborative documentary practices. I reflect on theoretical positions to frame and justify my practice. I briefly review a number of facilitated participatory media projects, exploring the project aims, the processes by which the product is made, the role of media professionals within the project and the problems that have to be solved in their interaction with the participants.

Intermediary roles or facilitator roles that influence the process of production, such as social animators and Local Content Producers, are investigated, as are the roles of the participants. Given the range of practices classed as participatory media, I focus very specifically on projects that resonate with my own perspective as a media practitioner working collaboratively with diverse partners, practitioners and participants to create media in an institutional setting for multi-platform distribution.

The second section, comprising of Chapters 3 to 6, focuses on the creative component of the work, the *Big Stories* project. Through case study, I reflect on the formative contexts and relationships that have directly shaped the process, artefacts and outcomes of the project.

Chapter 3 explores the foundations of *Big Stories*. This chapter reflects on previous experiences of delivering participatory media projects, influences and context at the time of the development of the first *Big Stories* project in 2008 - 2009. The intent is to establish the diverse dynamics that exist between practitioners and participants interacting with community and institutions.

Chapter 4 explores the development of the second *Big Stories* project. The chapter uses the development of a production proposal to the National Documentary Program at Screen Australia to explore the emergence of overarching principles and ideas of the project, and reflects on theory and previous practice that informed the work. This chapter highlights my role as producer and creative director of the project.

Chapter 5 explores the delivery of the project across two South Australian towns, Murray Bridge and Raukkan, and the immediate outcomes for practitioners and participants. Chapter 6 focuses on the delivery and immediate outcomes of *Big Stories* in Cambodia in the town of Banlung, in Ratanakiri province. This chapter reflects on key issues raised in the practice and literature of the fields of visual anthropology and communication for development. Chapters 5 and 6 highlight my role as facilitator and filmmaker.

The final chapter, Chapter 7, presents the summary of research findings as highlighted from the preceding chapters.

1.5 RESEARCH BACKGROUND

At the start of 2009 when I commenced post-graduate studies, the first *Big Stories* website had just been completed (archived at: <http://v1.bigstories.com.au/>) and launched at the 2009 Adelaide Film Festival and Australian International Documentary Conference. This first version of the project was produced through the Media Resource Centre in South Australia with the financial support of Film Australia's National Interest Program and additional financial support from the South Australian Film Corporation, Country Arts South Australia and Port Augusta City Council. The institutional partnerships are important as they establish a framework from which the project emerged; they create a link between my motivations and institutional motivations. A central concern of the project has been reconciling the often-conflicting priorities of institutional partners, facilitators and subsequently the participants and communities.

1.5.1 Personal Role and Motivation

My motivation in developing *Big Stories* was to create a project that would address a multi-level digital divide that exists between regional and urban Australia and is compounded by income disparity.⁶ This was to be achieved through creating an ongoing project to support regionally based training, network building, individual and organisational development. The project would offer high

⁶ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2007) *Patterns of Internet Access in Australia, 2006*. Accessed 14 May, 2007:

<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Latestproducts/E251AE2BCA9FDC1DCA2573A10019ED9F?opendocument>

Curtin, J. (2001) *A Digital Divide in Rural and Regional Australia?* In *Current Issues Brief, No. 1 2001-2002, Information and Research Services Publications*, 7 August 2001. Accessed 14 May, 2007:

http://www.aph.gov.au/About_Parliament/Parliamentary_Departments/Parliamentary_Library/Publications_Archive/CIB/cib0102/02CIB01

quality and innovative processes for the creation and distribution of regional screen stories.

Big Stories was a collaborative documentary work that moved across a range of disciplines and levels of participation. The roles of producer, filmmaker in residence and online producer were the core professional roles of the project and constituted the core team. The producers described the broad framework and resourced the project. Filmmakers were contracted to be in residence in a town and worked according to a set of values, which defined the approach to documentary making and training. A web production company provided built the bigstories.com.au web platform working to the framework described by the producers.

Over time, my role has also evolved. In the first *Big Stories* I was producer and facilitator. In this role I initiated, developed, resourced and managed the project. I conceived of the project, researched story possibilities, oversaw community and stakeholder management and also managed the production and the professional team of filmmakers and web developers. I oversaw and delivered community programs from workshops to exhibitions and collaborated closely with the filmmakers in residence and web designers in production and post-production.

In the second iteration of the project, I was creative director, a filmmaker in residence and co-producer. As creative director I was responsible for the overarching principles that guided the project, ethics and process of production and the stories produced. I also oversaw the look and feel of the web platform and

the core requirements for the CMS. As co-producer I worked with fellow producer Anna Grieve to resource, manage and sustain the project. As one of a number of filmmakers in residence, I directed and facilitated stories in different towns in collaboration with other filmmakers and community members.

My work in making this project in current focus spanned research, funding and partnerships, community workshops, training, collaboration, filming, post-production and offline and online distribution. These are diverse activities underpinned by particular overarching ideals. In acknowledging the complexity of the field and practice, I have sought to describe my experience as a professional media maker of delivering a suite of participatory media processes and products, offering one perspective on this process.

1.6 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY:

Regional opportunities for participation in Australia

Big Stories emerged as a response to gaps in Australian regional and remote communities' participation in screen culture. These concerns remain, despite a number of positive developments beyond our project. With the current rollout of regional infrastructure such as the National Broadband Network and emergence of institutional models of participatory platforms like the Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *ABC Open*, there is an attempt to address ongoing inequity. Increasing regional digital skills through ensuring quality of access, autonomy of use (through location, encouraging experimentation and freedom of use) and

support networks as well as providing this diversity of support over time, will begin to bridge this divide.

Independent practitioners are also engaging in this space, and their work, often structured along non-profit or social business models, offers the flexibility and nimbleness that Chambers (2007) believes is central in manifesting a responsive participatory process. However, this independent engagement often results in no sustainable relationships or networks, shorter term commitments, lower levels of accountability and a shift to fee-for-service project-based activity that may, as Illich (1982) described, result in the enclosure of the space as “a productive resource”⁷ and a forced dependency on external facilitators in order to ensure sustainable practice. McChesney (2004) describes a critical juncture⁸ as new media technologies emerge, and simultaneous possibilities for reconstruction are offered. In this case the juncture is a convergence of pre-existing contexts (such as institutional or ideological contexts), the emergence of new media and technology and individual and communal self-expression. At this critical juncture we may see existing contexts and practices that flow from those contexts diminish the possibility for reconstruction. However, Marcuse (1979), in his utopian vision of social and cultural reconstruction envisioned the possibility of a transformative juncture:

A juncture of technique and the arts in the total reconstruction of the environment... the union of art, technique and the new sensibility in a

⁷Illich, I. (1982) “Silence is a Commons” speech presented at *Asahi Symposium Science and Man - The Computer-managed Society*, Tokyo, Japan. Accessed online, 24 March, 2010: <http://www.preservenet.com/theory/Illich/Silence.html>

⁸ McChesney, R. (2004) *The Problem of the Media: US Communication Politics in the 21st Century*, Monthly Review Press, New York. P.24

*process of cultural transformation and social reconstruction can provide the preconditions for a free society.*⁹

The aim of the project is, at this critical juncture, to directly engage with the possibility for reconstruction in both institutional and community settings with a hope to create a fairer society by actively contributing to a nuanced, ethical, diverse and democratic media culture.

1.7 DOCUMENTARY PROCESS

Big Stories draws on a number of traditions in documentary film, art and photography as a way of recording everyday life through story, and as a reflexive interplay between subjects and documentary makers. The project shows local stories in a range of settings from TV to art galleries and in a global forum via the bigstories.com.au website.

Key to this is an understanding of the project both as process and product(s). The idea of process was at the core of funding proposals for the project. According to Anna Grieve, Executive Producer at Film Australia at the time (and current co-producer) this was the first time that “a process, not a story”¹⁰ had been commissioned by the agency. As a process-driven multi-platform documentary, *Big Stories* incorporated participatory and collaborative production strategies in producing stories and images. The process centred on documentary filmmakers

⁹ Marcuse, H. (1979) from lecture notes found in his personal collection, marked “Irvine March 5, 1979” in *Art and Liberation: Collected Papers of Herbert Marcuse: Volume 4*, edited by Kellner D. (2007), Routledge, London. P. 147

¹⁰ Email from Anna Grieve to the Author, May 2008.

who lived in a small town for a period of time and undertook facilitated filmmaking and community media interventions, which aimed to:

- engage community members in telling their stories;
- introduce specific community members to techniques and practice for creating their own high quality media content;
- deliver workshops using participatory media models such as digital storytelling;¹¹
- screen back content produced in the town in various settings to get feedback from the community, and
- engage and inspire the community with their own stories.

This was not simply a ‘shoot and run’ production methodology but a deeper, longer-term engagement over the life span of an evolving project. The orientation of this kind of documentary making is towards flexibility and responsiveness. Although aspects of the process of community engagement are described prior to production, the stories that emerged are not. Thus, varied techniques were employed in different settings over time. This multiplicity of engagement symbolises the diversity of representations, requirements and participation of the people involved.

The role of documentary maker was both to create stories and to generate participatory approaches in which community members had varying levels of control over content. There was a shift towards a process of proliferation in the

¹¹ The term digital storytelling as used in this study relates to the specific conception by the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) model developed by Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert and Nina Mullen in California in the early 1990s.

media produced and a decentring of the authorial voice of the filmmaker within the project. At the same time the role of filmmaker was re-imagined as facilitator, curator, collaborator, participant and author across process, content and community. As Rose (2011) points out, the documentary maker becomes a context provider, but only sometimes content provider.¹²

Participatory and online creation and distribution that incorporates video, text, audio and images is a complex system, engaging in a multiplicity of actions and reflections. Krauss (1999) declares these systems cannot be reduced to “a single instance that would provide a formal unity for the whole.”¹³ The artefacts of production were conceived as participatory in their creation and are thus “relational.”¹⁴ They cannot be studied as something fixed, but need to be addressed through the complex series of relations that form them and are formed by them. It is a subjective and inflected process of arbitrating and communicating meaning, both in making and viewing. Relationships are formed and insight is gathered in the making of stories, viewings and discussions.

One of the properties of *Big Stories* was this relational quality, in particular the capacity for multi-vocality and the importance of social relations to the project. From the outset, the project sought to describe a multi-layered community and explore complex relations between people, social backgrounds, technology and place. The project emerged from an understanding of the intrinsic value of telling

¹² Rose, M. (2011), Collab Docs Blog, self published,

<http://collabdocs.wordpress.com/2011/11/30/four-categories-of-collaborative-documentary/>

¹³ Krauss, R. (1999) *A Voyage on The North Sea: Art in the Age of a Post-Medium Condition*, London: Thames and Hudson. P.31

¹⁴ Bourriaud, N. (2002), *Relational Aesthetics*, (trans. Simon Pleasance and Fronza Woods), Dijon: Les Presses du Réel. P. 14

and documenting stories about the lives of people in community with the active involvement of the local community at every stage of production. While the range of media produced over the course of *Big Stories* may reveal some meaning and intent of the storytellers, I am more interested in looking at the project as a system and not to the stories as representational texts to be read.

This is a practice-led, exploratory methodology that attempts to reconcile practice and operation throughout the project when knowledge and theory are not proscribed. Therefore, methods used draw on a multiplicity of dialogues, contexts and practices to manifest creative production. Sullivan (2005) terms this approach “visual arts knowing”¹⁵ and uses it to differentiate inter-disciplinary creative research processes from those of both logical positivism and qualitative research. Implicit in my understanding is that in presenting my work, not only can it not be replicated, there is no need for replication. The project can offer guidance to future projects, but with the understanding that each event, although historically informed, will be unique. My contribution to knowledge lies in the presentation of, and critical reflections on, this work.

I present this as a form of research, arguing as Sullivan does, that “human understanding arises from a process of inquiry that involves creative action and critical reflection,”¹⁶ recalling Freire’s (1970) understanding of praxis in which “discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be

¹⁵Sullivan, G. (2005) *Art Practice as Research: Inquiry in the Visual Arts*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications. P.114

¹⁶ *ibid.*

limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection.”¹⁷ These are reflections on a practice that moves attention from the rhetoric of texts to practices of community organisation and the technological and embodied material relations, which aspire to produce a collectively enacted sense of place. Thus, I have focussed on explanation and analysis of context, process, form, and my experience of particular relationships that emerged from the production process and are intertwined within the project.

¹⁷ Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, p.21

CHAPTER 2: METHODOLOGY, REVIEW OF LITERATURE AND PRACTICE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

My project is about participatory media with communities that have had limited access to digital media and that might also be/have been marginalised politically. The purpose of the project is to engage with these communities in order to tell and show positive, not deficit, stories about their shared lives within the community and to a wide audience. My contribution through the exegesis is to elaborate a series of principles that will serve as a (necessarily flexible) methodological guide that can be adapted to assist other practitioners working in similar contexts. In order to arrive at these principles several fundamental practices and concepts need to be interrogated for the way they inform my analysis.

The purpose of this chapter is to consider these practices and concepts in detail and to outline the theoretical and critical literatures that elaborate them. There are two main parts of the chapter. The first part consists of a review of practices of participatory documentary to which the project owes a direct debt. The second part catalogues key concepts of: participation and its conceptual limits, emancipatory pedagogy, community as imagined and sustained through storytelling and understanding formative contexts in relation to structures and individual agency.

2.2 PARTICIPATORY PRECEDENTS

Many of the participatory practices that have influenced *Big Stories* pre-date the internet and digital technology. The distribution and creative opportunities presented by the internet have been a catalyst for a massive increase in the form of participatory media described in this study. My practice evolved from opportunities presented by the appearance of Web 2.0 and broadband internet. As new technologies and forms of communication emerge, contemporary documentary makers are engaging in a process of actively re-thinking the documentary project. *Big Stories* is part of the emerging body of online documentaries.¹ These projects are often consciously positioned as documentary remediated for an online age.² However, this study reflects on a long tradition of participatory practice in documentary and community development that has also incorporated new technologies.

Historically, the participatory approach to documentary filmmaking is not a stylistic or technological engagement, but an ethical engagement with the processes of representation (Nichols, 2001). This historical perspective seeks to move my practice beyond a technologically deterministic approach and situate it within this participatory, collaborative tradition. Within the documentary

¹ Also referred to by a variety of other names Including: web documentaries, webdocs, internet documentaries, i-docs, transmedia documentaries or interactive documentaries

² This observation was noted in Potter M. (2008) *Interview with Katerina Cizek*, Australian International Documentary Conference, Perth.

Kate Nash makes a similar observation following an assessment of *Journey to the End of Coal* in Nash, Kate (2011b) *Modes of Interactivity: Analysing the Webdoc*. Accessed January, 2012: http://utas.academia.edu/KateNash/Papers/1205100/Rhetoric_of_interactivity_Media_Culture_and_Society_forthcoming. p.1.

tradition, Nichols (2001) traces a lineage of “participatory documentary”³ back more than fifty years. The Cinema Verité of the 1960s (or “participatory documentary” for Nichols, 2001) and subsequent modes of “reflexive documentaries”⁴ and “performative documentaries”⁵ critique objectivity and are interested in “what it is like for the filmmaker to be in a given situation and how the situation alters as a result.”⁶ The line of practice-based historical focus I will take reflects the interests of my practice, which is characterized predominantly by an exploration of documentary techniques that use a variety of first person observational approaches for the recording of reality. Additionally, my practice seeks to interrogate issues around representation of individuals striving to create social change of some form.

As a cultural form documentary has a unique relationship to the public sphere (Grierson in Hardy, ed. 1979; Dahlgren, 1995; Chanan, 2000). While practitioners such as Vertov and Flaherty from the 1920s, Jennings and Grierson from the 1930s and Rouch from the 1950s, to the NFB’s *Challenge for Change* program of the 1960s and 70s, have been identified as forerunners of professional media makers undertaking forms of participatory media interventions,⁷ these have been the exception to the way that media professionals engage with communities, subjects, audiences and other groupings.

³ Nichols, B. (2001), *Introduction to Documentary*. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

⁴ *ibid.* p. 125

⁵ *ibid.* p. 130

⁶ *ibid.* p. 116

⁷ Chalfen, Richard (1989) *Native participation in visual studies: From pine springs to Philadelphia*, *Visual Studies*, 4: 2, pp. 71 — 72. And Prins, H, (1998) *Transcription of Interview with Edmund Carpenter: New York City 12-7-98*, from DVD extras “Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me”

2.3 VISUAL ANTHROPOLOGY

There is a parallel and long tradition of participatory media practice and theory that exists in visual anthropology. This is dominated primarily by an interest in pictorial media as a means of communicating anthropological knowledge, that is, ethnographic films and photographs and, secondarily, the study of pictorial manifestations of culture.⁸ Worth (1980) and Ruby (1990, 2000) saw a unique potential for video's reflexivity⁹ in creating not just an objective "copy of the world out there, but someone's statement about the world."¹⁰ Visual anthropology has long aspired to collaborative and reflexive forms where multiple authors can shape narrative from a series of different perspectives regardless of their positions within the production chain. In this respect, practices in this field bear striking similarities to practices in the emerging field of online documentary.

Early visual anthropology is also closely linked with the emergence of both cinema and documentary practice. Ruby (1996) recalls that Felix-Louis Regnault (perhaps the first anthropologist to produce researchable footage) argued for all museums to collect "moving artefacts" of human behaviour for study and exhibit.¹¹ Comprehensive surveys of visual anthropology abound (for example in Collier and Collier, 1990; MacDougall, 1998; Ruby, 2000; Pink, 2006) and offer more insight than possible here.

⁸Ruby, J. (1996) "Visual Anthropology" in *Encyclopedia of Cultural Anthropology*, David Levinson and Melvin Ember, editors. New York: Henry Holt and Company, vol. 4:1345-1351.

⁹ Ruby, J (2000) *Picturing Culture: Essays on Film and Anthropology*. University of Chicago Press, Chicago

¹⁰ Worth, S. (1980) "Margaret Mead and the Shift from "Visual Anthropology" to the "Anthropology of Visual Communication" in *Studies in Visual Communication* 6(1): pp.185-199. Accessed online at: <http://astro.temple.edu/~ruby/wava/worth/seight.html> p.196

¹¹Ruby, J. (1996) op.cit.

Notable practitioners of visual anthropology include Bateson and Mead from the 1930s, Gardner and Asch from the 1940s, Marshall and Carpenter from the 1950s and Worth and Adair from the mid-1960s.¹² In the Australian context the Australian Commonwealth Film Unit and later Film Australia enabled Ian Dunlop to undertake long term filming projects, such as his *Peoples of the Western Australian Desert* series (1965-67). Roger Sandall produced a number of films on the ceremonial life of various Aboriginal peoples, including *The Mulga Seed Ceremony* (1969). Ruby (1990) identifies Eric Michaels as a key figure of visual anthropology and participatory media in Indigenous and remote settings in the 1980s.¹³ David and Judith MacDougall served as resident filmmakers at the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies during the 1980s producing works described by Nichols (2001) as both participatory, such as *Takeover* (2001), and reflexive, such as the film trilogy, *Turkana Conversations*, including *Lorang's Way* (1979) and *The Wedding Camels* (1981).

¹² Bateson and Mead's contentious (Freeman, 1983, 1999) and somewhat redeemed (Orans, 1996; Shankman 1996, 2009; Leacock, 1988; Paxman, 1988) practice has been well reviewed, notably in Orans, M. (1996) *Not Even Wrong: Margaret Mead, Derek Freeman, and the Samoans*. Novato, California; Chandler & Sharp.

Edmund Carpenter was making work that challenged traditional formulations of auteur-director in the 1950s in Papua New Guinea. Carpenter was an early critic of media participation as outlined in *Oh, What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me* (1972).

Contemporaneously to the Fogo Process, Worth and Adair undertook the *Through Navajo Eyes* project, (film 1966, book 1972, Worth, 1974). Their project is indicative of a more general movement in the 1960s and 1970s toward the expansion of production to people who were traditionally the subject of films.

¹³ Ruby, J. (1990) "The Belly of the Beast: Eric Michaels and the Anthropology of Visual Communication." in *Communication - Tradition: Essays After Eric Michaels*, ed. Tom O'Regan. Continuum, (3) 2: 53-98. Michaels' work was as both televisual facilitator and anthropologist working in remote and Indigenous communities in Australia. Michaels' 1986 book *The Aboriginal Invention of Television Central Australia 1982-1985* is an introduction to his approach to TV production.

However, as a practitioner, I have been most influenced by the work of Jean Rouch, who pioneered an ethics-based structure around anthropological documentary in Africa from the late 1940s. Rouch's impact extends beyond the field of anthropology, with both Chris Marker and Jean-Luc Godard acknowledging his influence. *Chronique d'un été* (1961) Rouch's collaboration with sociologist Edgar Morin, in which the ideas of Flaherty are combined with those of Vertov, is generally seen as the model for cinema vérité film (Rouch, 1974; Ruby, 1996).

In his essay "On the Vicissitudes of the Self," Rouch (1978, 2003) examines how, as a filmmaker, he functioned as a catalyst. "It is a strange kind of choreography, which, if inspired, makes the cameraman and soundman no longer invisible but participants in the ongoing event."¹⁴ He aspired to use media to create "a shared anthropology,"¹⁵ in which collaboration and feedback were central. Rouch defined shared anthropology as a mutual reflection and exchange in which both filmmaker and filmed took an authorial role of some form in the creation of the content.

"This type of participatory research, as idealistic as it may seem, appears to me to be the only morally and scientifically feasible anthropological attitude today."¹⁶

The filmmaking process was often a part of the film with filmmakers and equipment present in the frame. Subjects in the film became co-creators, even to the extent of participating in discussions of the footage, which were in turn

¹⁴ Rouch, J. (1978, 2003) "On the Vicissitudes of the Self: The Possessed Dancer, the Magician, the Sorcerer, the Filmmaker, and the Ethnographer" in Feld, S. (2003) *Cine-Ethnography: Jean Rouch*. trans. and ed. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press. p. 99

¹⁵ Rouch (1978, 2003) writes of *L'anthropologie partagée* (shared anthropology) in "The Camera and Man" in Feld, S. ed. (2003) op.cit. p.45

¹⁶ Rouch (1978, 2003) in Feld, (2003) op.cit.p.44

incorporated into the final version of the film. Prylcuk (1976) quotes Rouch as saying “the great lesson of Flaherty and *Nanook* is always show your films to the people who were in it.”¹⁷

In later films such as *Jaguar* (1965) and *Petit a Petit* (1968), Rouch trained and collaborated with filmmakers across Africa including Damoure Zika and Oumarou Ganda. Rouch said, "One solution I propose ... is to train the people with whom you work to be filmmakers. I don't think it's a complete answer, but it has merits in that it leaves the people with something rather than just taking from them."¹⁸ As Piault observes of Rouch¹⁹ in the ambiguity of an unequal north–south relation, the notion of “collective authorship” is always looked on as a slight fiction. Co-authors rapidly become characters and the director remains the director. This is a relation of degree rather than a statement of absolutes. A truly shared anthropology, which would consecrate equality between all participants, is probably impossible in its very principle. That said Rouch was one of the few who had even tried to share.

Rouch pioneered a number of other influential terms and techniques but it is his collaborative approach, the notions of shared anthropology and the “participating camera,”²⁰ and the technique of "audiovisual reciprocity"²¹ which involved both training of, and screening back to, participants in his films that inspired other

¹⁷ Pryluck, C. (1976) p. 27.

¹⁸ *ibid.* p.221

¹⁹ Piault, M (1997) Preface in “Les Hommes et Les Dieux du Fleuve” *Essai ethnographique sur les Populations Songhay du Moyen Niger (1941– 1943)*. Jean Rouch, author. Paris: Artcom.

²⁰ Rouch, J. (1974), *The Camera and Man*. <http://der.org/jean-rouch/content/index.php> (accessed 4th July 2011). p. 11-12

²¹ *ibid.*

practitioners and resonates with my own practice. Rouch's work was a forerunner to the National Film Board of Canada's (NFB) Fogo Process, and established an ethics-based approach that still has relevance today for filmmakers seeking to work in a community development setting.

2.4 THE FOGO PROCESS

"The films and tapes were not important in themselves.

It was the process and the ideas."

George Stoney Director, Challenge for Change²²

The *Fogo Process* was a ground breaking participatory communications initiative aimed at empowering people through the use of film. The creators of the *Fogo Process* first articulated the ideology of process over product in the context of producing media. More than 40 years after it created a stir as an innovative participatory tool, the Process may be more iconic than understood, but not because it is no longer relevant. Participatory media programs, built on the legacy of the *Fogo Process*, underpin many current initiatives, especially in international and community development settings.²³ The development of the *Fogo Process* has

²²Sturken, M., (1984), op.cit.

²³ Williamson, T. (1989) "The Fogo Process: development support communications in Canada and the developing world," *AMIC-NCDC-BHU Seminar on Media and the Environment*. Singapore: Asian Mass Communication Research and Information Centre, (downloaded from <http://hdl.handle.net/10220/895>, April 2010); Crocker, S. (2008), "Filmmaking and the Politics of Remoteness: The Genesis of the Fogo Process on Fogo Island, Newfoundland," in *Shima: The International Journal of Research into Island Cultures*, 2:1, pp 70 - 71.

been outlined in a number of reports by the creators of the project²⁴ and in articles and interviews, notably Jones (1981), Quarry (1984, 1994), Williamson (1989), Evans (1991), Hutchison (1996), Baker and Meir (2002) and Crocker (2003, 2008). However, Newhook's (2009) excellent interrogation of the duelling back-stories of the Process and subsequent mythologising of outcomes is the most robust exploration to date.²⁵

With this broader body of analysis in mind, I will detail specific aspects of the *Fogo Process* that influenced the development of *Big Stories*. This influence is felt in a number of ways. There is the work of reconciling the aims of institutions, community, participants and filmmakers. There is the historically important reconceptualisation of how documentary and media can be used for community benefit both within the *Fogo Process* and the wider *Challenge for Change* program. There is the community engagement, specifically in the creation of particular community roles such as the social animator, and there are numerous stylistic approaches that have been influential. There are director Colin Low's reflections on the Process as a whole (Low and Nemtin, 1968; Low, 1972, 1984) and the subsequent influence of the Process on other documentary practices and in other disciplines.

The NFB produced the *Fogo Process* in 1967 under an emerging program called

²⁴ These reports include: Nemtin and Low (1968), Memorial University of Newfoundland Extension Service (1972), Low (1972) and Snowden (1984).

²⁵ Newhook S., (2009) The Godfathers of Fogo: Donald Snowden, Fred Earle and the Roots of the Fogo Island Films 1964 – 67 in *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 24, 2, pp. 171 – 197. Newhook notes that in histories of the NFB (Jones (1981), James (1977) and Evans (1991)) the Fogo Process is remembered as the brainchild of director Colin Low. Jones, for example, does not mention MUN at all. Communication for Development practitioners such as Williamson (1989), Quarry (1984) and Lunch (2006) credit Don Snowden as instigator of the Process.

Challenge for Change.

'Challenge for Change' is an experiment in the role of communications in social change. As part of this experiment we filmed local people, talking about the problems of a changing community and played back these films in that community.

(Opening Narration, *Introduction to Fogo Island*, Dir: Colin Low, 1967)

Challenge for Change producer Stoney (in Cizek, 2008) says the original NFB's purpose under the directorship of Grierson in 1940 was to make Canadians united for the Second World War,²⁶ with a mandate "to make Canada better known to Canadians and the World."²⁷ Post-war, the NFB prided itself on its activist agenda. Technological and cultural developments of the 1960s inspired the development of the *Challenge for Change* program, with a vision that the process of filmmaking not only document social issues, but play an active role in them as well.²⁸ This was a process that Grierson (Sussex and Grierson, 1972) observes as the shift from films made about people to films made with people.²⁹

The first film produced under *Challenge for Change* had resulted in the family at the centre of the film being publically ridiculed.³⁰ Filmmakers at the NFB

²⁶ Stoney, G. in *NFB Pioneers: Challenge for Change*, Documentary. National Film Board of Canada, 2007. From the Filmmaker in Residence DVD 7 *Interventions of the Filmmaker in Residence*.

²⁷ From: Druick, Z. (1998), "Ambiguous Identities' and the Representation of Everyday Life: Notes Towards a New History of Production Policies at the N.F.B. of Canada," in *Canadian Issues*, 10. P.10).

²⁸ Jones, D.B. *Movies and Memorandum* (1981) *An Interpretative History of the National Film Board of Canada*, Toronto: National Film Institute, p.159.

²⁹ Sussex, E. and Grierson, J. (1972) "Grierson on Documentary: The Last Interview" in *Film Quarterly*, 26: 1, 24-30. (downloaded from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1211408>, August 2010). P.

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³⁰ *The Things I Cannot Change* (Ballantyne, 1966) was about a family living in poverty. When the

concluded that the power relationship between filmmaker and subject should not be taken for granted, but should be negotiated at every stage. This established protocols of process and feedback for the next *Challenge for Change* project on Fogo Island.³¹

The purpose of the work on Fogo was to facilitate community agency and improve communication between the community on these remote islands in Newfoundland and the Canadian government. The Process was arrived at through cross-sectoral collaboration with filmmakers, community development workers, academics, community members and government officials contributing to the project. The Process designed unique feedback processes to facilitate a dialogic model of production. This involved extensive local screenings and facilitated discussions of the films, local approval for the use of films outside the community, and the establishment of communication loops between community and government via film.

In 1967 Don Snowden, Director of the Memorial University of Newfoundland (MUN) Extension Department and Colin Low from the National Film Board of Canada (NFB), initiated the *Fogo Process*³² with different settlements around Fogo Island in Newfoundland. From the outset, this was to be, a project of shared

film was broadcast, the family became the subject of ridicule in their own neighbourhood. In a NFB newsletter the observation was made that, "it was an unmitigated disaster for the Bailey family." National Film Board of Canada (1971-72), *Newsletter: Challenge for Change*. No. 7, Winter 1971-72 quoted from Worth, S. (1974) "A Review of You Are On Indian Land." In *American Anthropologist*, 4: 1029-1031. Accessed 12, May, 2009: www.fao.org/waicent/faoinfo/sustdev/cddirect/cdre0038.htm, p.1030.

³¹Newhook, op.cit.p.175.

³²Also known as the *Fogo Islands Communications Experiment* or *The Newfoundland Project*.

institutional authority.³³ Snowden subsequently met with producer John Kemeny who introduced Low to MUN extension worker and Fogo resident Fred Earle.³⁴ It fell to Earle, who Low termed the ‘social animator’ to negotiate the mechanisms of participation with the community. Earle’s knowledge of the people and their problems, a result of his work and his being a native of Fogo, was indispensable to Low.³⁵ Earle was instrumental in facilitating agreement between the film crew and the community.³⁶ He identified local experts who could address particular problems as interview subjects. In most cases, Earle and Low conducted interviews in tandem. Low observed in 1968, “Fred Earle did a great deal of the interviewing ... I supplemented his work when I felt it was necessary to have a slightly different style, or questions that were more external to the situation. People would answer me as an outsider with a kind of detail that indicated an awareness of my lack of background.”³⁷ For the Islanders, Low indicates outside interest in their existence and Earle brings an insider’s awareness of issues and the language.

Low (1972) observed that the evolution of the feedback process emerged at this time, driven by the Islanders’ reticence to be involved in the film project:

³³Newhook, op.cit. p.172

³⁴ Quarry, W. (1994) *The Fogo Process: An Experiment in Participatory Communication*, PhD thesis, University of Guelph. pp. 8- 9

³⁵Nemtin B., and Low C., (1968) *Fogo Island Film and Community Development Project*, Report submitted to the National Film Board of Canada. Accessed :<http://onf-nfb.gc.ca/medias/download/documents/pdf/1968-Fogo-Island-Project-Low-Nemtin.pdf>, September 2010. p. 3.

³⁶Low. C. (1972) *The Fogo Island Communication Experiment*, Report to National Film Board of Canada. Accessed September, 2010: <http://onf-nfb.gc.ca/medias/download/documents/pdf/1972-Fogo-Island-Communication-Experiment.pdf>. p. 2

and Nemtin and Low (1968), p. 2

³⁷Nemtin and Low (1968) op. cit., p.6

*We began promising individuals that if they allowed us to film them, we would play the film back to them before anyone else saw it. This established confidence more than anything else and given that assurance, people were not afraid to speak. We also began promising the separate villages that if there was not village approval of film made in the village, we would destroy the film. We had begun to commit ourselves to a rather extensive task.*³⁸

Once Low had made specific undertakings to the community regarding their participation and permission, the small NFB crew, supplemented by MUN students began shooting over a five-week period. The films were shot in “a rational unemotional way; high emotion and conflict look interesting on national television, but he believed those two elements hindered the communication process (and would) exacerbate, not lessen, tensions.”³⁹ Low chose to shoot *vertical films* which he defined in opposition to a more traditional horizontal structure and consisting of a single interview or occasion that was representative of more widely shared positions in the community.⁴⁰ Horizontal films are syntagmatic. One thing leads to the next. Low’s vertical films are more paradigmatic. One thing stands for the larger whole. There was little or no cross cutting or montage. “I found that people were much freer when I made short vertical films: each one the record of a single interview, or a single occasion.”⁴¹ In the vertical films, Low focused on personalities discussing a variety of issues,

³⁸ Low, C. (1972), op. cit., p. 2

³⁹ Evans, G. (1991) *In the National Interest: A Chronicle of the National Film Board of Canada from 1949–1989*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. p.164

⁴⁰ Gwyn, S (1972) *Film, videotape and social change: A report of on the seminar organized by the extension service*, St. John’s: Memorial University, p.5

⁴¹ *ibid.*

rather than an issue incorporating a variety of personalities. Low believed the effects of this would be to avoid the obvious editorializing that occurs when an editor juxtaposes personalities. A second effect Low identifies is key in illuminating one of the underlying assumptions of the filmmaker of the power of film. Low states “it was as valuable to highlight personalities as it was to present issues, since action would require leaders and community support for them.”⁴² The stylistic and conceptual approach of the vertical film (and its limitations) has become increasingly important in *Big Stories* and will be explored in detail in Chapter 6.

Newhook (2009) observes that the thesis of the Fogo films is driven by expert insiders working to a pre-existing ideology articulated up to two years before, but lacking an effective tool for communication between the Islanders at large and external partners. One example is the proposed development of a fishing co-operative. At least nine of the twenty-seven films directly address issues around a co-op.⁴³ No criticisms are offered of the co-op idea. Past failings are addressed and solutions are offered to progress the idea. It is here that we see an issue of participatory media processes. Low has effectively chosen sides and mounts a

⁴²Nemtin and Low (1968) op.cit., p. 8

⁴³ These are:

- *Citizen Discussions*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Fisherman's Meeting* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Fogo Island Improvement Committee*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Founding of the Co-operative*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *The Merchant and the Teacher* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Some Problems of Fogo*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Thoughts on Fogo and Norway* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Tom Best on Co-operatives* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *William Wells Talks About the Island* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada

singular argument in support of his side, ignoring conflicting opinions.⁴⁴ Nemtin and Low's 1968 report reflects on this: "perhaps our films could have catered to the defining of conflicting opinion, more than they did."⁴⁵ Aside from a single film (*Billy Crane Moves Away*, 1967), dissenting voices were excluded. Nemtin and Low (1968) note that the NFB team considered this the "most successful"⁴⁶ film as it triggered most discussion during the screenings.

Low and exhibition staff of the NFB returned in December 1967 to receive community feedback and initiate discussion. Thirty-five separate screenings across the island reached, by Williamson's (1989) estimate, 75% to 100% of the population.⁴⁷ The local screening process lasted over two months. Earle continued his role as social animator and facilitated discussions. The function of screenings was not only to provide feedback but also to build a sense of community and shared identity.⁴⁸ People realized many other villages on the island were experiencing similar problems and this prompted greater inter-community organisation. The Process established communication loops between the community and government via film. Government representatives viewed the Fogo films, and responded to the community and explained their perspective via film, which was then screened back on the Island.⁴⁹

⁴⁴Almost all of the principal players in the production process were members of the Improvement Committee or supporters of the co-operative idea. Newhook, (2009), op.cit.

⁴⁵Nemtin and Low, (1968) op.cit. p.30

⁴⁶ ibid. p.31

⁴⁷Williamson, T. (1989). P.1

⁴⁸ Ibid. p. 2

⁴⁹Minister of Fisheries, Aiden Maloney, responded on film - the 28th film produced as part of the *Fogo Process*.

Snowden and Low both observed personal transformations of those featured in the films.⁵⁰ The community found leaders amongst the cast of the films and there was a noted increase in self-confidence of subjects. The sense of community built through the screenings played a part in creating localized action. Through story and reflection, the Process supported a collective imagining of community, both on the Island and by external parties, such as government agencies, engaged in the Process. The fishing co-operative was established within 6 months (and continues today) and there was increased use of the Longliner fishing vessels, as advocated for in a number of the films including *Jim Dekker Builds A Longliner*. There was also construction of a new high school incorporating all Island communities and all religions. Newhook (2009) outlines additional outcomes including reduction in unemployment and a shift in government assistance following these local innovations. This is clearly related to the film process, but there was years of groundwork by the Fogo Improvement Committee, MUN and Fred Earle in order to support these outcomes. Newhook (2009) also disproves claims that the government had a plan for resettlement of the Island.⁵¹ Misrepresentations of the achievements of one of the most influential participatory media projects have created unrealistic expectations of the possible outcomes that can be achieved within a single, discrete development process.

Establishing clearly what the achievements of the Process is important in terms of establishing a realistic framework for what participatory media projects can do.

⁵⁰ Snowden in Snowden, 1984; DeWitt, 1969 and Quarry, 1984. Low in Nemtin and Low, 1968; Low, 1972; Baker and Meir, 2002.

⁵¹ Made in Cizek, 2007; Lunch, 2006 and by Low in the documentary "NFB Pioneers: Challenge for Change" in *Filmmaker in Residence DVD Box Set @ 9m30*.

What the Process did achieve reflects a series of ideal social change outcomes – personal, local and systemic - that are an aspiration of many projects influenced by the *Fogo Process*.

The *Process* had significant influence on my practice and thinking in the development of *Big Stories*. I endeavoured to replicate the deep engagement with local residents who are both expert and facilitator – a social animator. *Big Stories* has used an identical process of individual, family then community screenings and approvals, prior to any broader public release. The idea of vertical films was more deeply integrated into films produced in the second *Big Stories* and will be detailed in Chapter 6. I also conceived of the Process as a tool for consensus building, or as an expression of collective unity. There was a clear necessity for the documentary makers to be self-reflexive in their approach and to be aware of the impact of both their presence, and the stories. The consideration of conflicting ideas is necessary as a reflection of the tensions that exist within the community. These conclusions relating to community identification and action, self-reflexivity and pluralism of representation have been central in shaping my theoretical reflections on participatory documentary practice. The reports by Low (1972) and Low and Nemtin (1968) on the Process have also provided an historical insight from key creatives into a ground breaking participatory project. These reflections outlined the possibility for achieving transformative outcomes for participants, community and beyond, through the use of story to enable collective identification and reflection.

2.4.1 Broader Influence of the *Fogo Process*.

In subsequent participatory media projects undertaken by Snowden in international developing settings (and outlined in Snowden, 1984 and Williamson, 1989) the Process was refined as a model of Communication for Development (C4D) practice. *The Fogo Process* is often referred to as the origination of participatory film and video in development (for example in Media Development, 1989; Riano, 1994; Huber, 1999; Crocker, 2003 and Lie and Mandler, 2009). The rhetoric around current participatory video projects often shows clear resemblance to the visions and goals of the *Fogo Process*. In 1996 the United Nations defined C4D as a process that,

*stresses the need to support two-way communication systems that enable dialogue and that allow communities to speak out, express their aspirations and concerns and participate in the decisions that relate to their development.*⁵²

An emphasis on dialogue, community expression and participation was similarly foregrounded in the *Fogo Process*. The World Congress on Communication for Development (2006) notes this definition shifts the alignment of the term communication with concepts such as dissemination, information, messages, media and persuasion to embrace a broader vision in which people most affected by development change are active participants in a social process, not only receivers of messages.⁵³

⁵² United Nations General Assembly Resolution: Article 6, General Assembly Resolution 51/172. Accessed: <http://daccess-dds-ny.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/N97/765/67/PDF/N9776567.pdf?OpenElement>.

⁵³ *World Congress on Communication for Development: Lessons, Challenges and the Way Forward*, World Bank, Washington DC, 2007.

Thus the Process represented the beginning of a fundamental shift in the way film and videos are seen as potential creative and participatory catalysts for change or development in a variety of settings. The use of video in this manner has also been a key component of the development of participatory development approaches outside of the areas of media, technology and communication and will be explored in the following theoretical exploration of the concept of participation in different settings.

The Fogo Process was also instrumental in ongoing institutional engagement with participatory media. The work on Fogo enabled Snowden and others at MUN Extension to establish a film unit that was operational until the 2000s. The NFB supported Indigenous media groups such as the Aboriginal People's Television Network who went on to produce the acclaimed feature *Atanarjurt (The Fast Runner)* in 2002. *Fogo Process* Producer George Stoney founded the Alternate Media Centre in 1971, a forerunner of Australia's Video Access Centres and the originator of public access cable television.⁵⁴ The program provided a framework for US-based indigenous media organisations such as Appalshop. Within the media sector it highlighted ways that activity in this space can have substantial influence by introducing practitioners to the possibilities of re-conceptualising how their work can engage with peers, audiences, participants, communities, institutions and society.

The Process continues to create ripples of influence for documentary practitioners today, recently seen in the NFB's revisioning of this work in Katerina Cizek's

⁵⁴Tisch School of the Arts Website (author uncredited). *The History of the Interactive Television Program (ITP)*. Accessed Online, May 2010: http://www.tisch.nyu.edu/object/itp_history.html

(2007) cross-platform documentary project *Filmmaker in Residence*. Cizek spent more than 2 years in residence at St. Michael's Hospital in Toronto, creating documentaries in a variety of forms using a variety of methods. On the *Filmmaker in Residence* website which is the main public face of the project, the "genesis of the Filmmaker in Residence" is identified as *Challenge for Change*.⁵⁵ As on Fogo, process and social actions generated as an outcome of the media, are described as the most important aspects of *Filmmaker in Residence*.⁵⁶ Like Low, Cizek (2007) highlights the importance of the feedback and distribution process, writing "spend 10% of your time making it, 90% of your time getting it out to the world."⁵⁷ New technologies opened up opportunities for Cizek to undertake a more diffused process of local feedback loops, external dialogic models and broader diffusion. Cizek could undertake almost immediate feedback within a small group based on the photos, digital stories, blogs or other digital media. Editorial requirements from participants could be addressed instantly. Cizek's project was to provide an important touchstone for *Big Stories*, supporting the development of a partnership with Film Australia in 2008 and offering an institutional context for contemporary engagement with participatory documentary using online platforms both for creative engagement and distribution as outlined in subsequent chapters.

Rouch, Low and Cizek share an understanding of the importance of facilitating feedback to create a more meaningful dialogue between filmmaker and

⁵⁵Cizek, K. et. al. (2007) *Filmmaker in Residence* website, nfb.ca/filmmakerinresidence, National Film Board of Canada, in Story Menu.

⁵⁶*Filmmaker in Residence website:filmmakerinresidence.nfb.ca/* (2005 – 2007). Cross-platform and Online Documentary. Director: Katerina Cizek. Producer Gerry Flahive for National Film Board of Canada.

⁵⁷Cizek, K. (2007) "Filmmaker in Residence Manifesto" p. 30 in *FIRoverviewFEB18.ppt*, Powerpoint presentation. Accessed via email from Cizek to the author: February 19, 2008.

participant. Through a sustained process of reflection they attempt to address issues that have troubled many visual anthropologists using media and working with communities, relating to the power imbalance that exists between an outsider working with a community using tools and skills in which the community is not proficient, with the goal of representing that community in their own voice.

Although the process of making and using the media and technology may be collaborative and consultative, the filmmaker often authors the context of participation. A mix of imaginative, institutional or technological contexts shapes this authorial drive and participants' narratives may be subsumed within these contexts. Resolving the contradiction between a professional media makers' authority and the subjects' desire to speak for themselves is an ongoing task for any participatory media program. However, the near-mythic narrative around community outcomes on Fogo Island is precisely what has given the Process its longevity and influence.⁵⁸ The story of community development driven by the power of the process is what endures, rather than the films, individual stories or experiences embodied within the films

In the following section, I'll look at theories of participation in media before exploring theories of participation in areas related to video for development practices. This will illuminate the complexity of relationships underpinning participatory media programs underpinned by a desire to facilitate community development.

⁵⁸Newhook, S. (2009).op.cit.

2.6 PARTICIPATION AND ITS CONCEPTUAL LIMITS

“The word ‘participation’ is kaleidoscopic; it changes its colour and shape at the will of the hands in which [it] is held.”⁵⁹

Participation has become something of a “container concept”⁶⁰ covering a multitude of approaches and techniques across disciplines. I will outline some of the arguments relating to participation in various disciplines that influenced the project starting with media and cultural theory then focusing on literature from the fields of politics, international and community development.

Jenkins (1992, 2006) is often credited with coining the term participatory culture and observes that participatory media are a key element of participatory culture.⁶¹ Participatory media are associated with a shift to bottom-up and lateral flows of networked communication and information as distinct from traditional top-down models of broadcast media.⁶² Participatory media fundamentally challenges strict divisions between producers and consumers of media and is a dialogue-based model, in which dialogue can happen at any point with a changing community of participants. However Fuchs (2011) sees Jenkins’ use of participation as narrow,⁶³ reducing it to a cultural dimension and ignoring the broad notion of participatory democracy and its implications for the Internet. Fuchs seeks to relate the term to participatory democracy theory, popularized by Pateman (1970). In addition to the

⁵⁹ White, Shirley. A. (1994) “The concept of participation: transforming rhetoric to reality” in *Participatory Communication: working for change and development*, SAGE Publications.

⁶⁰ Musch, A. (1998) ‘Participation as a policy instrument’, paper presented at symposium on Participation: The New Tyranny?, IDPM, University of Manchester, 3 November. P.16

⁶¹ Jenkins, H. (2006) *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide*. New York: New York University Press. P.257

⁶² *ibid.*

⁶³ Fuchs, C. (2011) *Against Henry Jenkins. Remarks on Henry Jenkins’ ICA Talk “Spreadable Media”*, May 30, 2011. Accessed Online, June 21, 2013 <http://fuchs.uti.at/570/>

use of the term in political theory, international and community development theorists have also embraced ideas of participation, as identified in the previous review of the *Fogo Process*.

For *Big Stories*, as an online documentary incorporating participatory processes, there is a clear resonance with the observations of cultural theorists looking at online practices including Jenkins et. al. (2009). As a community development project, practices that international development theorists such as Chambers (1983) describe as participatory have been a key point of reference, as have critical responses to these practices. Development theorists such as Rogers (1976) and Chambers (1983, 1997) described community development as a participatory process of social change intended to bring social and material advancement. Communication was no longer focused on persuasion (transmission of information between individuals and groups), but was understood as a “process by which participants create and share information with one another in order to reach a mutual understanding” (Rogers, 1976). Coming from Rogers, a formative figure in the critique of one-way, top-down tradition of media diffusion (Rogers, 1962, 1965) this affirmation of the dialogic and participatory in the field of development was highly significant.

Chambers, a development theorist and practitioner, is a leading figure in the participatory tradition and a pioneer of the methodologies known as Participatory Rural Appraisal and Participatory Action Research (PAR). Participatory Action Research (PAR) is a concept of research involving all relevant parties in actively examining current action (which they experience as problematic) in order to

change and improve it. They do this by critically reflecting on the historical, political, cultural, economic, geographic and other contexts that make sense of it. PAR aims to be active co-research,⁶⁴ recalling Spurgeon et. al's. (2009) concept of co-creative media. Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is a methodology of appraisal incorporating participatory approaches to rural activities, "enabling rural poor to influence the research agenda, thus leading to an increased capacity to act in their own interest."⁶⁵

Despite their use in non-media settings, PAR and PRA methodologies now increasingly incorporate participatory media and communication activities as part of research, reflection, training and advocacy. Specific media creation models that have emerged from this practice include Participatory Video (Lunch, 2006) and Photovoice (Wang and Burris, 1994). The main analytical thrust of participatory communication and its use in development studies have been summarized elsewhere (including White, 1994; Jacobson & Servaes, 1999; Waisbord, 2000; Lunch, 2006).

Standard accounts agree that participatory ideas have gradually moved into the mainstream of development studies and the system of international development (Blanchet, 2001; Robb, 2002). Chambers (2007) notes leading development agencies "are becoming more participatory."⁶⁶ However, this is an incremental

⁶⁴ Wadsworth, Y. (1998) What is Participatory Action Research? in *Action Research International, Paper 2*. Accessed April, 2009 :<http://www.scu.edu.au/schools/gcm/ar/ari/p-ywadsworth98.html>. N.B. 'Participatory Action Research' and 'Participatory Research' are used interchangeably by most practitioners.

⁶⁵ Koning, Korrie de (1995) *Participatory appraisal and education for empowerment*, PLA Notes, Issue 24 pp. 34-37, IIED London. Accessed March 11, 2008: <http://pubs.iied.org/pdfs/G01595.pdf>

⁶⁶ Chambers, R. (2007) "Participation and poverty" in *Development*, 50 (2), 20-25.

increase, as participatory communication and similar approaches premised on the notion that “communities need to be the protagonists of development and social change are still rare (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001).”⁶⁷ Despite its rarity, participation in this context is subject to criticisms similar to those levelled at participatory media programs including the National Film Board of Canada’s (NFB) *Challenge for Change* program. In *Participation: The New Tyranny* (Cooke & Kothari eds., 2001) practitioners observe that the mechanisms of participation are used to support the illusion of collaboration.⁶⁸ The participation in use often mirrors highly paternalistic structures of previous development paradigms with a more sophisticated interplay of coercion mixed with the illusion of choice or collaboration.

In the case of many participatory processes, the rhetoric of participation is so strongly employed that it often obscures the fact that the central issues integral to communities or participants are not included in the participatory process.⁶⁹ In the context of community and international development, Lunch (2006) refers to this process as “being PRA’d.”⁷⁰ Within participatory media processes this can often take the form of the facilitator leading discussion or framing a project so that all

doi:10.1057/palgrave.development.1100382

⁶⁷ Waisbord, S. (2008), The institutional challenges of participatory communication in international aid, *Social Identities* Vol. 14, No. 4, July 2008, 505_522. P. 506

⁶⁸ Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. eds. (2001) *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, London: Zed Books.

⁶⁹ See: Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. eds. (2001) *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, London: Zed Books;

Carpenter, E. (1976) *O What A Blow That Phantom Gave Me*. Paladin Books, St Albans and;

Marchessault, J. (1995) “Reflections on the Dispossessed: Video and the Challenge for Change Experiment”, in *Screen* 36: 2, 131-146.

⁷⁰ Referring to Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in Lunch, N. & C. (2006) *Insights into Participatory Video: A Handbook for the field*. Oxford: Insight, (downloaded from <http://www.ids.ac.uk/ids/particip/dbdocs/PVhandbook.pdf> , 31 March 2009).p. 36

participants, whatever their contribution, are strongly editorialised within the overarching participatory structures that remain outside of their control.

Similar criticisms of participatory media programs in institutional settings are found in Carpentier (2008) and Thumim (2009) exploring institutional framing of participant narratives, diminishing the authorial control and individuation apparently promised to participants. In the context of the online space Massumi (2011) echoes Cooke et. al. (2001) when describing a “tyranny to interaction.”⁷¹ Mouffe and Miessen (2007) reflect on an urgent need to undo the seeming innocence of participation, with Miessen proposing a notion of the “violence of participation”⁷² to reflect the capacity for serious abuse using an apparently benign mechanism. Mouffe (in Miessen and Mouffe, 2007) observes that any form of participation is already a form of conflict and states, “I am very suspicious of this notion of participation. As if participation by itself was going to bring about real democracy.”⁷³

Pateman (1988) characterizes participation in such a way, describing participation as developing and fostering its own betterment.⁷⁴ Once the participatory system is built, it becomes self-sustaining as the very qualities required of participants are precisely those that the process of participation develops and fosters. Meadows

⁷¹Massumi, B. (2011) *Semblance and Event, Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*, The MIT Press Cambridge, Massachusetts. P. 47

⁷²Miessen M. in Miessen M. and Mouffe C., (2007) *Articulated Power Relations - Markus Miessen in conversation with Chantal Mouffe*, Markus Miessen, 2007-02-01 Accessed 27 January 2011: <http://roundtable.kein.org/node/545>, p. 9

⁷³Mouffe, C. quoted in *ibid.* p. 9

⁷⁴Pateman, C. (1970) *Participation and Democratic Theory*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge. p. 43

(1997) describes this idealised positive feedback loop as a virtuous circle,⁷⁵ but notes that positive feedback loops may also be vicious. Mouffe (2007) observes that “particular practices have hijacked the notion of participation as an unquestionably positive, user-driven means of engagement.”⁷⁶ Participation may mean participating in some form of consensual view in which nobody is really able to disturb the consensus and in which some form of agreement is pre-supposed. Participation is then people exploiting themselves. They are not just going to accept things the way they are, but they are going to actively contribute to this consensus and to accept it.

While it may be too simplistic to celebrate participation as a cure-all for social ills and the project of democracy, it may be similarly dangerous to dismiss it simply as tyranny. If it is true that we can no longer rely on this dichotomy, then we need a different basis from which to evaluate instances of participation (or non-participation).

Often, there is a simplistic dichotomy of approaches, with ‘full’ participation valorised and non-participation associated with objectifying already-disempowered groups. A linear, hierarchical model of participation, such as Arnstein’s (1969) ladder, fails to capture the dynamic, non-linear and evolutionary nature of participant involvement. Nor does it recognize the agency of participants who may seek different methods of involvement in relation to different issues and at different times. Similarly, Arnstein’s model does not acknowledge the fact that some may not wish to be involved. Selection is not the same as determination.

⁷⁵ibid. p. 25

⁷⁶Mouffe, C. quoted in Miessen M. and Mouffe C., (2007) op. cit.

The fact that some are excluded does not necessarily mean that others are therefore enforced.

Individuals do not necessarily define their roles in relation to their sense of power. Often, roles and responsibilities of individuals are based on the level of interest in the situation and disinterest does not always equate to disempowerment.

Participation is also asocial relationship that can be productive even when asymmetrical, and this relationship (and the asymmetry) may change over time.⁷⁷

An awareness of participatory imbalances are a component of the facilitators' responsibility in order to create a dynamic, evolving process that can contribute to a transformative, creative and reconstructive system. Terms of participation need to be clear and open to re-negotiation. They need to reflect on both individual agency and the complex web of social relations in which participation occurs.

In addition, participation must also be considered in broader communal and structural contexts, such as from community or institutional perspectives. As Mouffe (2007) says, "In this context, it could be useful to think through a concept of 'conflictual participation' as a productive form of interventional practice."⁷⁸ In order to participate (or develop participatory processes) in any environment or given situation, one needs to understand the forces of conflict that act upon that environment. Mouffe's notion of agonistic pluralism offers a theory to support this understanding of an environment of productive, conflictual participation.

⁷⁷ Rose, M. (2011) Four Categories of Collaborative Documentary, <http://collabdocs.wordpress.com/2011/11/30/four-categories-of-collaborative-documentary/>

⁷⁸ Mouffe, C. quoted in Miessen M. and Mouffe C., (2007) op. cit.

2.6.1 Mouffe's Notion of Agonistic Pluralism

Because of the complex tendencies of community representation and the potential multiplicity of representation and poly-vocality in the online space, I have been drawn to Mouffe's (2000) concept of agonistic pluralism. This is highly relevant to studies of participatory, online media in general (Carpentier, 2009; Rannikko, 2010) and offers a contrast to Habermas' (1962) rational, consensual approach to the public sphere invoked by many participatory media theorists (including Rheingold, 1993 and 2008; Dahlgren, 2001).

Habermas conceived of a consensus for the common good achieved through rational debate that tolerates pluralism of views as long as this is based on some kind of shared reason.⁷⁹ Mouffe draws attention to the three elements of power, passions and exclusion as undeniable characteristics of such debates (Rannikko, 2010). Rather than emptying the public sphere of emotion, as Habermas (1962) would suggest, Mouffe recognises its role in mediated democratic communication. Habermas also overlooks the possibility of multiple, overlapping public spheres and also collapses the public sphere into civil society.⁸⁰ Mouffe (1996b) proposes a project of "radical and plural democracy"⁸¹ that will recognise the plurality of worldviews operating in society.

⁷⁹Mouffe, C. (1996a). "Democracy, power, and the 'political'" in S. Benhabib (Ed.), *Democracy and difference* (pp. 245-256). Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press. p. 245

⁸⁰Bērziņš, I. (2007) Habermasian Online Debate of a Rational Critical Nature: Transforming Political Culture A case study of the "For Honesty in Politics!" message group Latvia, 2007 in *Transforming Culture In The Digital AGE* (pp. 155-160). Tartu: University of Tartu. Pp. 100-107 p.101

⁸¹Mouffe, C. (1996b) 'Radical Democracy or Liberal Democracy', in D. Trend (ed.), *Radical Democracy: Identity, Citizenship, and the State*, Routledge: New York, 19-26.

Antagonism, according to Mouffe, is struggle between enemies, while agonism is struggle between adversaries. An adversary is somebody whose ideas we combat but whose right to defend those ideas we do not put into question, as opposed to an enemy who is somebody who we seek to destroy. The us/them dichotomy is domesticated and opponents are not treated as enemies but adversaries, sharing a common, symbolic space.⁸² For agonistic pluralism, unlike deliberative democracy, the prime task of democratic politics is not to eliminate passions from the spheres of the public in order to render a rational consensus possible, but to mobilize those passions towards democratic designs. Passion and emotional attachment are vital to collective identity formation, as is evident in even cursory examinations of the online fora of shared communities. From the perspective of agonistic pluralism, transforming antagonism into agonism through the provision of channels through which “collective passions will be given ways to express themselves”⁸³ is the aim of democratic politics and the centre of what Mouffe describes as the site of hegemonic struggle.

In the *Fogo Process* Low and Nemtin (1968) reflect on the efficacy of the film *Billy Crane Moves Away* (Low, 1967) and the importance of dissenting voices in provoking discussion. They also consider the role of conflict arguing that if building community and creating consensus is the purpose of a project then the degree of “constructive” conflict will be less than with other projects.⁸⁴ A small community can be torn apart if its people and problems are left exposed and

⁸² Ibid. p. 15

⁸³ Mouffe C. (2000) *Deliberative Democracy or Agonistic Pluralism*, Reihe Politikwissenschaft / Political Science Series 72, Department of Political Science, Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS), Vienna p. 16

Accessed online, 14 September, 2011: http://www.ihs.ac.at/publications/pol/pw_72.pdf

⁸⁴ Low and Nemtin (1968), op.cit.p. 29.

unresolved. Nemtin and Low (1968) argue that a project that channels responses into direct action can handle more conflict. The motivation to reconcile problems is greater when direct action is being considered. However, they observe that the “position between definition and recognition, and division, is quite precarious”⁸⁵ concluding that the discussion leader (social animator) must influence this precarious balance, reinforcing the importance of this role in negotiating the complexity of community creation and action.

Couldry (2006) points out that Mouffe’s political theory works on an abstract level, and does not address how agonistic spaces come about, or how they may be sustained.⁸⁶ There is an apparent contradiction in the idea that empowerment comes through capability over the conditions of self-assertion through sustained communal exposure to moderated conflict. A task for my research, then, was to identify through practice, the factors that may affect the viability of the use of participatory media to imagine or reflect an agonistic space. A primary factor is to explore how individuals or small groups in a community might engage with institutions to create the conditions for such a space. This requires looking at how individuals or small groups might transcend external convention as well as their own expectations.

2.6.2 Anderson’s Understanding of Imagining Community

There are many traditions and analytic approaches in relation to how individuals or groups may enlarge the view of social reality and social possibility that have

⁸⁵Low and Nemtin (1968), op.cit.p. 29.

⁸⁶Couldry, N. (2006). *Listening beyond the echoes: Media, ethics, and agency in an uncertain world*. Boulder, CO: Paradigm Publishers. P. 65

informed my work peripherally. These range from Lefebvre's (1974) embrace of the revelatory possibilities of moments in everyday life in the *Production of Social Space*, Oldenburg's (1991) idealised communal third places in *The Great Good Place*, Putnam's (2000) correlation of reduced community engagement to diminished civic society and disconnection with democratic processes, Bhabha's (1994) concepts of hybridity and third spaces and Illich's (1982) description and defence of the Commons. However, I have found most relevant Anderson's (1983) work in relation to the importance of narrative in imagining and sustaining community.

Anderson's *Imagined Communities* (1983) describes how communities may manifest themselves through shared stories and media that give rise to shared memory and collective identity.⁸⁷ A shared (but remote) experience such as reading a national paper or seeing oneself on film is empowering because it creates an "imagined community," necessary for the formation of a sense of collectivity that exceeds one's immediate geographical location.⁸⁸ 60 years prior, Lippmann's *Public Opinion* (1922) and *The Phantom Public* (1925) described similar notions of nationality as socially constructed. Morris (1987), Evans (1991) and Druick (2000) argue that John Grierson's encounters with Lippmann had a formative influence on his vision of the role and purpose of documentary film and national film bodies. Despite the vastly different conclusions of Lippmann, Grierson and Anderson, central to their approaches are that a tapestry of stories defines both community and individual experience.

⁸⁷ Anderson, B. (1983) *Imagined Communities*. London: Verso.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

The standardization of communication in the media, described by Burgess (2006, 2007) as a shift to the vernacular, allowed for a common discourse to emerge between people who were separated by long distances and experienced no direct personal interactions. This enabled common identities to form and imagined communities to arise from a more bottom-up structure, as distinct from the predominantly top-down structures explored by Lippmann (1925) and Anderson (1983). The development of international networks concurrent with the rise of inexpensive yet sophisticated technologies has also allowed events of seemingly local significance to be scaled to global significance with fewer impediments.

What remains consistent across these arguments is that a community's living memory is its collective identity. This identity is embodied in acts of imagination such as images and stories, and shared through various media. This identity is in a state of perpetual flux as the community, like an individual, re-examines their stories and re-defines their identity. A participatory approach to this process of re-examination can build upon the significance attributed to self-representation, participation and media democracy where two-way communication, access and participation are considered to be crucial.⁸⁹ In addition, such an approach can fracture the singular narrative of a single imagined community, instead offering a vision of multiple and varied imaginings nested and intersected within a single space. This is a complex dialectical relationship focussed on the information

⁸⁹Berrigan, F. (1979) *Community Communications: The Role of Community Media in Development*. Paris: UNESCO.

flows between the social and the individual, representing a dynamic that facilitates the constant re-creation of society.⁹⁰

Implicit in this constant re-creation is encouragement of diversity, resulting in the diminishing of centralised authorial control. In terms of *Big Stories*, as the project developed and showed increasingly complex and dynamic organisational characteristics, a new authorial voice coalesced between the filmmakers' voice and that of participants. Stories became increasingly blended and it became harder to discern which voice was being heard. This coalescence, as the key example of self-organisation within the project, relates to the idea of a *Third Voice*.

2.6.3 Third Voices and the Challenges of a Multi-Level Digital Divide

Ruby (1991), quoting Myerhoff and citing Rouch's *Jaguar* (1965) as an example describes:

*a third voice - an amalgam of the maker's voice and the voice of the subject, blended in such a manner as to make it impossible to discern which voice dominates the work. In other words, films where outsider and insider visions coalesce into a new perspective.*⁹¹

This resonated with me as it idealises the form of expression that could occur in a shared community space in a more equal relationship between filmmaker and filmed (or facilitator and participant). This voice is implicitly participatory as it is conversational, collaborative and situated in a dialogic and communal space.

⁹⁰ Fuchs, C. (2002) 'Social Information and Self-Organisation', in Robert Trappl, ed., *Cybernetics and Systems 2002*, vol. 1, Vienna, pp. 225-230.

⁹¹ Ruby, J. (1991) "Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside: An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma" in *Visual Anthropology Review*, 7: 2, 50-67. P.62

Practices of facilitation that actively attempt to bridge the media participation gap and redress power imbalances between filmer and filmed are often organized around goals of “voice.” They share the ambition that voices of marginalized and disenfranchised people must first find some form of expression in order to enter into a dialogue with each other along with seeking to bridge what Jenkins et. al. (2009) describe as participation gaps.

The motivation by practitioners to facilitate voices from under-served communities and individuals is a characteristic of community and alternative media practices, as is a desire to transform society so that it becomes more fair, educated, tolerant and inclusive. Participatory media programs underpinned by this goal of ‘giving voice’ are often seen as a democratic shift in media.⁹² Being able to hear people tell their stories and to observe their lives instead of being told what they think and the meaning of their behaviour, clearly offers people a greater say in the construction of their own image. It represents a major shift in where one

⁹² The goal of giving voice to enhance democracy is found many in many texts including, but not limited to:

Berrigan, F. (1979) *Community Communications: The Role of Community Media in Development*. Paris: UNESCO. Braden, S. and T. T. T. Huong (1998) *Video for Development: A Casebook from Vietnam*. Oxfam Publishing: UK.

Enzensberger, H.M., (1970) “Constituents of a Theory of the Media” in *New Left Review*, no. 64, 1970.

Gumucio-Dagron, A. (2001) *Making Waves: Stories of Participatory Communication for Social Change*. New York: Rockefeller Foundation.

Jenkins, H. (2007) *From Participatory Culture to Participatory Democracy (Part Two) Confessions of an Aca-Fan: The Official Weblog of Henry Jenkins*. Web Blog. Accessed March 9, 2009: http://www.henryjenkins.org/2007/03/from_participatory_culture_t_1.html.

Lambert, J. (2007) *The Digital Storytelling Cookbook*. (2nd edn.). Berkeley, CA: Center for Digital Storytelling/Digital Diner Press.

Tacchi, J. (2009) Finding a voice: digital storytelling as participatory development in Southeast Asia. in: Hartley, John and McWilliam, Kelly, (eds.) *Story circle : digital storytelling around the world*. Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

looks for authority and authenticity. It recognizes that the opinions of experts and the vision of practitioners need to be tempered by the lived experience of participants and their view of themselves. It involves speaking with instead of speaking for.⁹³

However, participation through media is often elusive and perpetuates existing practice and hierarchies, albeit with new technologies. Voice, in the sense of verbal language, is something that virtually everyone acquires in infancy. This is obviously not the case with complex technologies such as those involved in media production. While new technology is by no means omnipresent, the skills required in manifesting characteristics of fluency and immediacy using this technology are often lacking. In the past 50 years the emergence of new technologies for recording stories has, at every stage of this technological evolution, been accompanied by a fanfare trumpeting the dissolution of the old way and an emergence of a newly democratized media. The introduction of smaller, portable cameras and more light sensitive film stocks, to radio microphones, to the emergence of television and portapak video cameras have been heralded in this way.

Yet participation gaps have remained and have, since the late 1990s, been framed as the 'digital divide',⁹⁴ a systemic barrier preventing participation due to lack of

⁹³Ruby, J. (1991), op.cit.

⁹⁴ The term 'digital divide' appears to have been brought into contemporary parlance by Gary Andrew Poole's New York Times article titled *A New Gulf in American Education, the Digital Divide*, Published: January 29, 1996: <http://www.nytimes.com/1996/01/29/business/a-new-gulf-in-american-education-the-digital-divide.html>.

Poole's article, in turn, was inspired by the July 1995 US Department of Commerce report *Falling Through The Net: A Survey of the "Have Nots" in Rural and Urban America*,

access to new technology. The reality of barriers to participation in the online world is more complex than just providing access to technology. Multiple levels of this divide exist. Research on the digital divide has moved beyond access to technology towards a multi-faceted concept of access that involve cognitive access, social access, and differentiated uses of the web (Hargittai, (2002); Warschauer, (2003); de Haan (2004); van Dijk, (2006); Correa (2008) and Jenkins (2009)).

Hargittai (2002) and Correa (2008), drawing on the scholarship of Tichenor et. al. (1970), articulate a more nuanced notion of a “second level digital divide,”⁹⁵ which emerges in a society where there has been an increase in the amount of information freely available (i.e. via the internet). This leads to greater “online skill”⁹⁶ among people from particular groups including people with higher socio-economic status, younger people compared to older people and people with prior experience of the technology.

In the Australian context this divide is also seen between urban and regional areas. DiMaggio et. al. (2001) and Hargittai (2002, 2003) observed the dimensions along which the divide may exist. These include:

<http://www.ntia.doc.gov/ntiahome/fallingthru.html>

⁹⁵Hargittai, E. (2002) “Second-Level Digital Divide: Differences in People's Online Skills” in *First Monday*, volume 7, number 4 (April 2002). Accessed 10 November, 2011: http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue7_4/hargittai/index.html

Correa, T. (2008) *Literature review: Understanding the “second level digital divide.”* Unpublished manuscript, School of Journalism, College of Communication, University of Texas at Austin. Accessed 10 November, 2011: <http://utexas.academia.edu/TeresaCorrea/Papers>

⁹⁶Hargittai, E. (2002), op.cit. p. 1.

Hargittai defines skill in this context, “as *the ability to efficiently and effectively find information on the Web.*”

the technical means - quality of software, hardware and connectivity.

- autonomy of use, for example the location of access or freedom to use the medium for one's preferred activities.
- social support networks that foster technical support, skills development, scale and are encouraging of use.
- experience, in terms of the number of years using the technology, types of technology and use patterns.⁹⁷

Warschauer (2003) argues that the term “digital divide” implies a dichotomy of digital haves and have-nots and a focus on digital solutions, without consideration of other factors into which the technology may be placed. Warschauer seeks to address the complexity around the interface of technology with access, participation and social and cultural capital. This shifts the discussion from gaps to be overcome through provision of technology, to social development challenges to be addressed through the effective integration of technology into communities, institutions, and societies.⁹⁸ Warschauer’s argument raises vital points in relation to the often technologically deterministic arguments of the digital divide.⁹⁹

⁹⁷DiMaggio, P., Hargittai, E., Neuman, W.R., Robinson, J. (2001). *The Social Implications of the Internet. Annual Review of Sociology*. 27:307-336. Reprinted in *The Academy and the Internet*. Edited by M. Price and H. Nissenbaum. New York: Peter Lang.

and

Hargittai, E. (2003). *The Digital Divide and What to Do About It*. New Economy Handbook, Ed. Jones, D., San Diego, Academic Press. Pp. 822-841. Accessed November, 2011
<http://webuse.org/p/c04>

⁹⁸Warschauer, M. (2003) *Technology and Social Inclusion: Rethinking the Digital Divide*, MIT Press Cambridge, MA, USA

⁹⁹ Warschauer has continued to use the term ‘digital divide’ and agrees with Hargittai (et. al.) in their articulation of a multi-level digital divide. I will continue to use the term ‘multi-level digital divide,’ bearing in mind Warschauer’s observations.

Warschauer's argument also speaks to a common assumption that voice (and participation) is equal to, or results in, empowerment or emancipation.

Empowerment, from this perspective begins with the presumption that something is missing, either in community or in people's lives. The intervention of video makers 'gifting' or amplifying voice for self-representation (and therefore empowerment) supposedly leads to shifts in identity and further claims of self-determination (Lunch, 2006; Tacchi, 2009). Voice, as with participation, stands in for all of the processes that supposedly lead to enhanced notions of community control of information and knowledge.

As Marchessault (1995) points out in relation to the *Challenge for Change*, access does not inevitably result in agency. Marchessault (1995) and Cooke and Kothari, eds. (2001), observe that pre-occupation with the contradictions implicit in the role of facilitator and their relationship with participants often comes at the expense of an analysis of, and challenge to, the power structures that suffuse both the local and wider context in which the participatory process occurs.

Empowerment, emancipation, participation and even the concept of social inclusion may translate as ever-more effective incorporation into agendas set elsewhere. "Projects designed to bring the excluded in, often result in forms of control that are more difficult to challenge as they reduce spaces of conflict and are relatively benign and liberal."¹⁰⁰ Marchessault (1995) says in relation to the *Fogo Process*, "the process of enabling a community to come to voice, the

¹⁰⁰ Kothari, U. 'Power, Knowledge and Social Control in Participatory Development', p. 143 in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. (eds), *Participation: The New Tyranny?* London/New York: Zed Books, 2001.

process of putting the media directly in the hands of the community - could not challenge an authority that it worked to obscure.”¹⁰¹ This reflects the technological determinism at the very heart of *Challenge for Change* - the conflation of new communication technologies with democratic participation.

2.6.4 Concepts of Emancipatory Media in the Online Environment

Benkler says the internet has, “fundamentally altered the capacity of individuals, acting alone or with others, to be active participants in the public sphere as opposed to its passive readers, listeners or viewers.”¹⁰² The resulting landscape of competing sets of meaning, symbols, icons, images and language, conceptualised by Appadurai (2000) as the mediascape, has collapsed old and new media, transforming the arena of public opinion and agency.¹⁰³

Whilst this transformation is true, resulting in the current situation of ‘mass’ participation, there are a number of problems that deny idealistic reconstructions. These problems limit both dialogue and the emancipatory potential this new participatory capacity may allow, even for those who have already bridged a multi-level digital divide.

Brecht (1927), Benjamin (1933, 1936) and Enzensburger (1970) all saw the emancipatory potential of media stemming from the processes of collective production but this approach points to participatory processes as the defining

¹⁰¹Marchessault, J. (1995) “Reflections on the Dispossessed: Video and the Challenge for Change Experiment”, in *Screen* 36: 2, 131-146. p.143

¹⁰²Benkler, Y. (2006) *Wealth of networks. How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press: New Haven, London. p. 212

¹⁰³Appadurai, A. (2000) *Modernity at Large. Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*. Minneapolis, London: University of Minnesota Press. P. 33

characteristic of this democratic potential. This has proven to be misleading. Voice alone cannot constitute a dialogue. Nor can individual or collective participation alone automatically create the conditions for emancipation. Central to this observation is the conflation of access to innovation with agency over that innovation as well as agency within institutional contexts. In overlooking ownership and increased enclosure in the online space, we may actively be participating in building the fences that will mark a radical change in social attitudes to online commons.

Massey (2005) argues that in every form of space there is always some configuration of power relations. Even with media supporting broad participation, public visibility is still stratified through power relations.¹⁰⁴ Idealism around the capacity of participation in the online sphere ignores the expression of conservative tendencies and questions about ownership of platforms, collective decision-making, profit and class. Fuchs (2011) offers a recent example; “cultural expressions of internet users are strongly mediated by corporate platforms owned by Facebook, Google and others... Social media culture is a culture industry.” Within the enclosed “walled gardens”¹⁰⁵ of these platforms, the community is not only dependent on commodities produced for them, they often become economic resources. As Lewis (2010) says, “if you’re not paying for it, you’re not the

¹⁰⁴ For example, Bhabha (1994) observes this in relation to race. Massey (1994) in relation to gender and Bourdieu (1986) in relation to class.

¹⁰⁵ Attwood, J. (2007) Avoiding Walled Gardens on the Internet on Coding Horror: programming and human factors. <http://www.codinghorror.com/blog/2007/06/avoiding-walled-gardens-on-the-internet.html>; and Heiferman, S. (2007) AOL 94 vs Facebook 07, Scott Heiferman’s Notes, <http://scott.heiferman.com/notes/2007/05/walled.html>

customer; you're the product being sold.”¹⁰⁶ This recalls arguments previously outlined by Mouffe (in Mouffe and Miessen, 2007) regarding participation as self-exploitation. Participation, as Cooke and Kotthari et. al. (2001) also observe, may be used for repressive as well as progressive ends.

Marcuse's (1965) concept of repressive tolerance is useful when reflecting on these arguments. Marcuse observes that tolerance becomes repressive when critical ideas are tolerated but subsumed under the ruling ideas due to the quantity of ideas available:

*Other ideas can be expressed, but, at the massive scale of the conservative majority (outside such enclaves as the intelligentsia), they are immediately 'evaluated' (i.e. automatically understood) in terms of the public language - a language which determines 'a priori' the direction in which the thought process moves... the antithesis is redefined in terms of the thesis.*¹⁰⁷

This is a continual cycle of the marginal defined according to the mainstream.

Both structure and agency need to be addressed in the fomentation of an emancipatory media that supports the emergence of a third voice and the breaking of the cycle of repressive tolerance. How we understand this domination is a complex area. In this following section I will outline a number of theories that address these issues and suggest a hopeful framework that sets the path for

¹⁰⁶ Lewis takes credit for this quote published on his Twitter feed on 13 September, 2010 here: <http://www.metafilter.com/user/15556>. Originally sourced at <http://www.metafilter.com/95152/Userdriven-discontent#3256046>, 2010.

¹⁰⁷ Marcuse H. (1965) "Repressive Tolerance" in Marcuse, H. Moore jnr., B., Wolff, R. (1969) *A Critique of Pure Tolerance*. Boston, Beacon Press. pp. 95-137. Accessed June, 2010: <http://www.marcuse.org/herbert/pubs/60spubs/65repressivetolerance.htm> P.96.

explicating the project as a body of work that embodies the re-imagination of our relationships with the structures of society.

2.7 THE PROJECT AS A SYSTEM

As I observed in the first chapter, I am interested in looking at the *Big Stories* project as a system and how this system exists within contexts and operates through processes. This is a reflection on what I perceive to be my work on the project, rather than on the work and stories of others. It shifts focus from looking at someone else's stories as data to be read, filtered and interpreted with an expectation of verisimilitude, to a focus that spans practices, process and artefacts within diverse contexts.

My key creative work is in the creation of context and the use of process. As a facilitator and creative collaborator with filmmakers, community members, graphic designers, editors and web developers I stand next to people with skills and knowledge that I lack – knowledge of a personal or community story or the skill of website coding. As a collaborator in this project, my work is deeply influenced by those around me, and I have, in turn influenced them.

In conceiving of *Big Stories* as a system I have drawn on Benkler's (2006, 2011) observations that practices of productive social co-operation enabled through new technologies are proof of the possibilities of human-centric systems. Benkler's hallmarks of these new systems are:

- (a) location of authority and practical capacity to act at the edges of the system, where potentialities for sensing the environment, identifying opportunities and challenges to action and acting upon them, are located;
- (b) an emphasis on the human: trust, respect, cooperation, judgment, dialogue and empathy;
- (c) communication over the lifetime of the interaction; and
- (d) loosely-coupled systems: systems in which the regularities and dependencies among objects and processes are less strictly associated with each other.¹⁰⁸

These hallmarks find resonance in the context of *Big Stories* in that the project:

- (a) began at a community and alternative media organization, was delivered in regional and remote settings, worked directly with groups which self-identified as marginalized, used emerging technologies and was outside of traditional settings and models for institutional production of documentary,
- (b) developed principles modelled on Freire's values of love, faith in others, humility, trust and critical thinking that reflected the emphasis of social relations in the work,
- (c) fostered ongoing relationships between facilitators and participants, often extending beyond the 'lifetime' of the interaction,
- (d) established mechanisms over time that allowed for flexibility and nimbleness in relation to dealing with changing individual, community and institutional expectations. Process and product were also loosely coupled.

¹⁰⁸Benkler, Y. (2011) "Complexity and Humanity" in *FreeSouls: Captured and Released*, ed. Ito, J. (2011), published online at freesouls.cc. (Accessed: <http://freesouls.cc/essays/06-yochai-benkler-complexity-and-humanity.html>, April, 2011). pp 112 – 113.

Process did not have to lead to production of a story for the website.

Conversely, products were created through a variety of means, and not necessarily defined by a process. Finally, as the project has evolved, and more collaborators are involved, components of the system require less knowledge and use of other components (i.e. work that happens in one town may have little relevance for work in other town).

These hallmarks, especially the loose coupling of the system, are by no means unique to the online environment, but they are significant. Waldrop (1992) observes, “real ecosystems are not totally connected” as in any ecosystem every individual species only “interacts with a subset of the total number of other species” and from these interactions a web-like structure can be said to develop.¹⁰⁹ The same can be said of the online environment, with multiple worlds and systems existing. In this “web,” shaped by multiplicity, interactions are unable to be contained by a universal understanding. This leads into a generally accepted principle of complexity theory that emerges from the study of self-organisation, the notion that information continues to increase, resulting in the system, or interrelated systems, driving toward greater and greater complexity.¹¹⁰

This raises some important points around designing systems in this environment that will be addressed throughout the exegesis. The first is the presence of many, often conflicting perspectives, which has been explored in light of Mouffe’s

¹⁰⁹Waldrop M. 1992. *Complexity: the Emerging Science at the Edge of Order and Chaos*. New York: Touchstone., p. 255.

¹¹⁰Lansing, J. (2003) “Complex Adaptive Systems” in the *Annual Review of Anthropology* 2003. 32: pp. 183–204

(2000) concept of agonistic pluralism. The second is the positive feedback loop of complexity driving increased complexity. This requires systems that are responsive to an increasingly complex and dynamic environment, and reflects Unger's (1987b) notion of plasticity, which will be explored in relation to the capacity for mutual reconstruction. Finally, in conceiving of a loosely coupled, agonistic system, I have looked to Unger (1987) for a framework for understanding and structuring social institutions and ideologies that allow for individual agency.

2.8 A THIRD WAY: UNGER'S ALTERNATIVE

My framework draws heavily on Roberto Unger's thinking on formative contexts, false necessity and negative capability as outlined in *Social Theory: Its Situation and Its Task* (1987) and *False Necessity* (2004). Benkler (2006) describes Unger's work as central to the emergence of a "third way" literature that explores alternative production processes that do not depend on the displacement of individual agency by hierarchical systems.¹¹¹

Unger (1987, 1998) emphasizes transformation rather than dissolution of ideas of community and objectivity. He relates this change in the content of basic social ideals to certain efforts at human empowerment where both the conception of human solidarity and the practice of ascribing normative force to views of personality or society are reassessed. These efforts are summarised as follows - We are not passive receivers of objective being. Whilst we may be conditioned by formative contexts of institutions and ideologies, they do not determine us and we

¹¹¹Benkler, Y. (2006) *Wealth of Networks: How social production transforms markets and freedom*. Yale University Press: New Haven, London. p. 138.

can rebel against this conditioning. Through dialogue we can imagine and re-imagine reality and work to progress and transform it. Reality is constructed and negotiated in collective action, rather than through an individual subject looking out at an objective world. Individual and collective emancipation and practical progress are both dependent on the transformation of access into agency. Practical progress adheres to Unger's (1998) definition as innovation or discovery resulting in the development of our power to "push back the constraints of scarcity, disease, weakness, and ignorance."¹¹² Therefore, both practical progress and emancipation depend upon the capacity to transform social effort into collective learning and to act upon the lessons learned, undeterred by the need to respect a pre-established plan of social division and hierarchy or a confining allocation of social roles.

Unger (1998) observes:

both practical experimentalism and individual emancipation require arrangements minimizing barriers to collective learning. This view is in turn connected with a thesis about our relation to the institutional and discursive structures we build and inhabit.

This is central to the study and the project – the minimisation of barriers to collective learning and an attempt to re-imagine our relations to formative contexts (and encourage that re-imagination for others). To achieve the ideal of emancipation, it is essential to engage with the task of embodying the assumption that real freedom is not an individualistic pursuit. Freedom is predicated on fostering a community where the ability of the mind to assess and act upon the reality of the world is a blessing rather than a source of repression.

¹¹² Unger, R. (1998) *Democracy Realized* Verso, London. p.6

Unger (1987) positions his work between deep structure social theory and what he describes as positive social science. He argues that deep structure social theories, such as classical Marxism, privilege institutional routine practices and contexts. This limits the possibilities of human social development through privileging structural and contextual frameworks. It is social science adhering to a large-scale script of history. Unger (1987) describes positive social science as a practice that sees society and history as an endless series of episodes of problem solving. Unger argues this leads to denying explanation in favour of simply detailing conflict and resolution. He concludes that both forms of social theory deny human ability to hope, resist and reshape social and conceptual worlds and are inherently dehumanized.

2.8.1 Negative Capability/ Positive Deviance

Unger (1987) described the concept of *negative capability*, appropriating it from Keats'¹¹³ use. Unger's conception of negative capability explains how human beings innovate and resist within confining social contexts. Unger (1987, 2004, 2007) summarises this as "our power to defy formula and to transcend constraint"¹¹⁴ and "not imprisoning insight in any particular structure of thought."¹¹⁵ It is a "denial of whatever in our contexts delivers us over to a fixed scheme of division and hierarchy and to an enforced choice between routine and rebellion."¹¹⁶ While recognising the constraints and influence of the formative

¹¹³ Keats' concept of negative capability describes the creative individuals' capacity for uncertainty, mystery, doubt, "without any irritable reaching after fact and reason." In Li, Ou (2009). *Keats and Negative Capability*. Continuum International Publishing Group. p.1 ch. 1.

¹¹⁴ Unger, R. (2007) *The Self Awakened: Pragmatism Unbound*, Harvard University Press. p. 104

¹¹⁵ Unger, R. (1987) op.cit. p.156

¹¹⁶ Unger, R. (2004) *False Necessity: Anti-Necessitarian Social Theory in the Service of Radical Democracy, Revised Edition*. London: Verso. pp. 279–280

contexts upon a person of social and institutional limitations, Unger finds that people (both individuals and groups) are able to resist, deny and transcend their context. The varieties of this resistance are negative capability.

Positive Deviance is a term used in sociological studies,¹¹⁷ and can be likened to Unger's concept of negative capability. Zeitlin (1991) describes a positive deviance approach as identifying successful behaviours or strategies that enable people to find better solutions to problems despite having no special resources or knowledge.

I have chosen to use positive deviance in the exegesis in place of negative capability despite the term lacking the depth of Unger's project. I used positive deviance from the outset of *Big Stories* and its use in this context accurately reflects the historical language of the project. Unlike other theories of structure and agency, it does not delimit individuals to either compliance or rebellion, but rather portrays them as able to participate in a variety of activities of self-empowerment.

Positive deviance (and by inference *negative capability*) described the approach to community in *Big Stories*. The project's focus was to produce success stories that

¹¹⁷"Positive Deviance" has appeared in sociological studies since the 1980s.

The term has been popularised by Marian Zeitlin et. al. with the publication of; Zeitlin, M., Ghassemi, H., Mansour, M. Levine, R. (1990) *Positive deviance in child nutrition: with emphasis on psychosocial and behavioural aspects and implications for development*. United Nations University Press, Japan. Accessed, March, 2008: <http://bvs.per.paho.org/texcom/nutricion/posdev.pdf>

And

Zeitlin, M. (1991) "Positive Deviance in Nutrition" in *Nutrition Review*, 1991 September. 49(9). Pp. 259-68. Review.

could work to enhance the image of communities in the eyes of both the advantaged and disadvantaged. This meant finding people or groups who had identified a problem, who had become concerned about it and who were actively looking for ways to change (or had already begun to change). It could be about the search for solutions, as well as the solutions themselves, so it can refer to intent as well as to outcomes. This reflected a process refined through earlier projects, which are reviewed in the following chapter.

Positive deviance addresses human agency in relation to structure and this issue recurs in many discussions of participatory media. Much of this chapter has focussed on issues of participatory or emancipatory practices, specifically within institutional contexts. The issues can be generalised as either conservative co-opting of process or ideas or unintentional consequences of well-intended actions. It is in relation to these issues I have found Unger's vision most helpful as a framework for praxis. In seeking to build a hopeful framework that works within the intersection of the three key conditions of individual expression, institutional and ideological contexts and practical progress, I have returned to key thinkers who initially defined the project. Dewey (1920, 1927) Buber (1937, 1951), Gramsci, (1927-35, 1988) Illich (1979, 1982, 1992) and Freire (1970) all fit within a radical pedagogical tradition. Each emphasised critical awareness, the importance of everyday life, re-imagining social relations and the institutions that are the artefacts of these relations.

2.9 MUTUAL RECONSTRUCTION

The structures of society are human artifacts, which we can reimagine and

*remake.*¹¹⁸

Buber (1937, quoted in Avnon, 1998) observed that community has to be nurtured. For it to take concrete form, Illich (1979) describes convivial institutions required to sustain and express its presence.¹¹⁹ Such institutions need to be dialogical, just and allow room for growth and exploration.¹²⁰ Freire (1970), points out that institutions can be a creative act: “it is as transforming and creative beings that humans, in their permanent relations with reality, produce not only material goods— tangible objects—but also social institutions, ideas, and concepts.”¹²¹ Working within these institutions can support development of individual and collective agency. This power can also be developed through revision of these structures, as well as resisting or transcending them. Unger (1987b) echoes this when he highlights the possibilities of incremental change within institutions as well as the importance of building “plasticity” into institutional infrastructure to enable the “ongoing destruction of all privileged claims on the resources - of capital, power and expertise - with which we make and remake society.”¹²² Marcuse (1972) articulates a similar vision of piecemeal, but cumulative change within existing institutions and also raises the possibility of building counter-institutions. This will be explored in more depth in Chapter 4.

¹¹⁸ Unger, R. (1987). *Op.cit.* p.105

¹¹⁹ Illich, I. (1979) *Tools for Conviviality*, 2nd edn. London: Fontana. p. 19

¹²⁰ Illich, I. (1979) *Tools for Conviviality*, 2nd edn. London: Fontana. p. 12, 24

and various texts on Buber notably:

Avnon, D. (1998) *Martin Buber. The hidden dialogue*, Lanham: Rowman and Littlefield.

Specifically Avnon's sixth chapter on Dialogical Community: The Third Way Between Individualism and Collectivism (pp.149 -178).

Freire, P. (1970) “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”,

¹²² Unger, R. (1987b). *Plasticity Into Power: comparative-historical studies of the institutional conditions of economic and military success*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. P.8

Through the application of new technologies, new ways of learning and new critical theories there is a utopian attempt to radicalize institutions and social practice, in order to enable space in everyday life for a community to articulate and reaffirm progressive tendencies. This process was conceptualized as “reconstruction” by progressive educators like Dewey (1920) and philosophers such as Gramsci (1929 – 1935, 1971) who noted that every critical juncture offers a possibility of re-imagining, in which “the normal functioning of the old economic, social, cultural order provides the opportunity to reorganize it in new ways.”¹²³

As much as we acknowledge the agency of an institution upon humans, we must also consider the possibility of human agency upon the institution. As part of the role of creative humans, old models can be reconstructed with new tools. In every case there is a formative context that can be transformed, and in every case there is a productive tension between realism and imagination. Unger (1987) states:

*we must be realists in order to become visionaries and we need an understanding of social life to criticize and enlarge our view of social reality and social possibility.*¹²⁴

Structuring new systems requires an understanding of existing systems otherwise systematic patterns will simply be repeated.¹²⁵ Benkler’s (2011) observation of loosely coupled systems in the online space indicates there is possibility for

¹²³ Hall, S., (1987) “Gramsci and Us” in *Marxism Today*. June, 1987. Accessed online: <http://www.hegemonics.co.uk/docs/Gramsci-and-us.pdf>.

¹²⁴ Unger, R. (1987), op. cit. p. 15.

¹²⁵ Meadows, Donella (1997) “Places to Intervene in a System” in *Whole Earth*, issue 2091, Winter 1997. Accessed May12, 2009: http://center.sustainability.duke.edu/sites/default/files/documents/system_intervention.pdf.

substantial, ongoing and meaningful reconstruction to occur within a system of this form. Unger (1987b) argues that contemporary institutions can only succeed if they are reconstructed with an understanding of the necessity of these participatory, decentralised, responsive, and transformative inputs. Unger (1987) observes “nothing succeeds like plasticity.”¹²⁶

Freire (1970) describes a dialogical practice as central to address limits around agency and directly addressing ideals of emancipation. Freire’s description of dialogical practice, recalls Chambers’ (2005) hope that participation will not be reduced to a suite of techniques:

We have to put aside the simplistic understanding of dialogue as a mere technique. Dialogue is a way of knowing and should never be viewed as a mere tactic to involve students in a particular task. I engage in dialogue because I recognize the social and not merely the individualistic character of the process of knowing. In this sense, dialogue presents itself as an indispensable component of the process of both learning and knowing.

Dialogue is the basis of ongoing renegotiation and feedback. Dialogue is also the basis of the cumulative wisdom and experience that informs process. As with a convivial institution, so a convivial process must be based in dialogue.¹²⁷ Freire (1970) outlines a system of values that form the pre-condition for ‘true’ dialogue as a series of layers – love, humility and faith in others are the foundations, at which point “dialogue becomes a horizontal relationship of which mutual trust

¹²⁶Unger (1987). P.198

¹²⁷Illich, I. (1979), op.cit. Chapter 4

between the dialoguers is the logical consequence.”¹²⁸ Trust flows naturally from this foundation. However, Freire has one last pre-condition:

*Finally, true dialogue cannot exist unless the dialoguers engage in critical thinking — thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits to no dichotomy between them — thinking which perceives reality as process, as transformation, rather than as a static entity — thinking which does not separate itself from action, but constantly immerses itself in temporality without fear of the risks involved.*¹²⁹

To summarise;

Institutions are essential in organising and supporting social relations and communities. Institutions are creative acts. Collective imagination and action is required to sustain these institutions. Collective imagination and action can also transform and remake institutions to make positive progress in society. This realisation (and action) of the transformative possibilities constitutes positive deviance, an expression of empowerment. There are diverse pull factors on whether transformation happens and the form it takes. For practical progress to emerge from transformation requires co-operation, which emerges through dialogue, shaping, and shaped within, institutional contexts. A convivial process is shaped and shapes convivial institutions. A dialogic practice reflects the communal intent (rather than individualistic intent) of this vision. This is the progressive and idealistic path that drove the project.

¹²⁸Freire, P. (1970) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum, p. 91

¹²⁹ *ibid*, p. 92

CHAPTER 3: *BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS* - DEVELOPMENT OF METHODOLOGY



Figure 1: First image, introduction to Big Stories, Small Towns website, version 1

*We are constantly re-storying our lives, making sense of the past and altering
our present and future stories of self, a process that only ends when we die.*

Marion Burns, Counsellor, NunkuwarrinYunti

3.1 INTRODUCTION

This is the first chapter of four addressing the project of *Big Stories, Small Towns*. I outline the development and delivery of the first iteration of the project, out of which emerged many of the assumptions, processes and artefacts that were formative for the second iteration. The structure of the next four chapters mirrors my own progress through the *Big Stories* project. The ‘what’ and ‘how’ are described in Chapters 4 through 6. This chapter is the ‘why’; Why did I initiate this project? Why were particular models and processes chosen? Exploring the first *Big Stories* and background to its development illuminates assumptions held, structural limitations and questions raised when we re-visited the project.

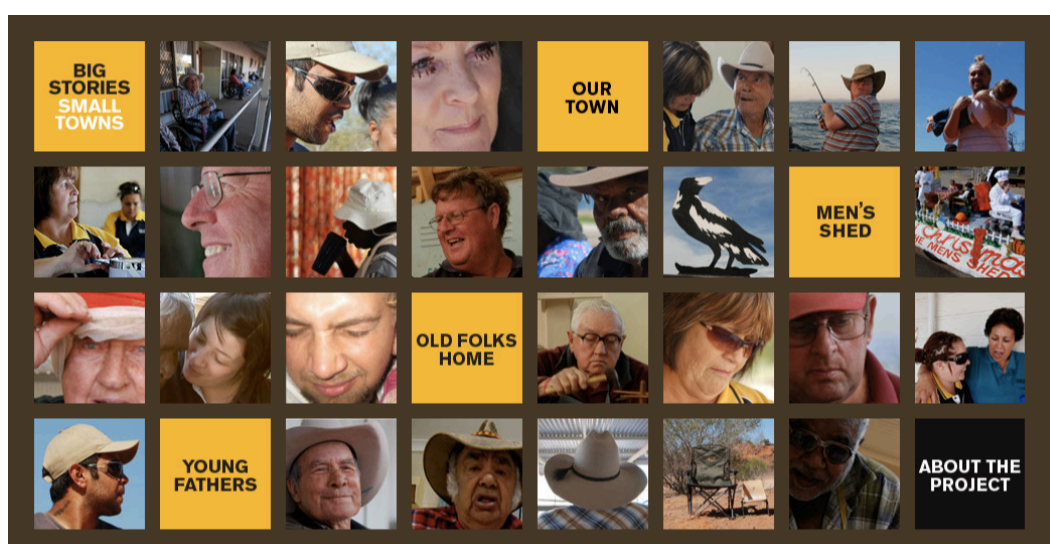


Figure 2: Screenshot, homepage *Big Stories* website, v.1

In this chapter, I summarize my background and the issues that initially drove my interest. I then describe the initial context for development of the first *Big Stories* and how this has shaped the current project. I outline the perceived need for the project and key decisions made in development and production that influenced the delivery.

3.2 DEVELOPMENT HISTORY

In 2007, there were few examples of Australian screen culture institutions supporting projects using emerging technologies that facilitated participatory processes for generating content and narrative. There was also a chronic disparity in Australia in access to a range of services outside of urban centres.¹ In part, *Big Stories* was developed to support increased institutional engagement in online and participatory projects, but the main focus was to support regional creative engagement with new technologies so communities could seek new paths of access.

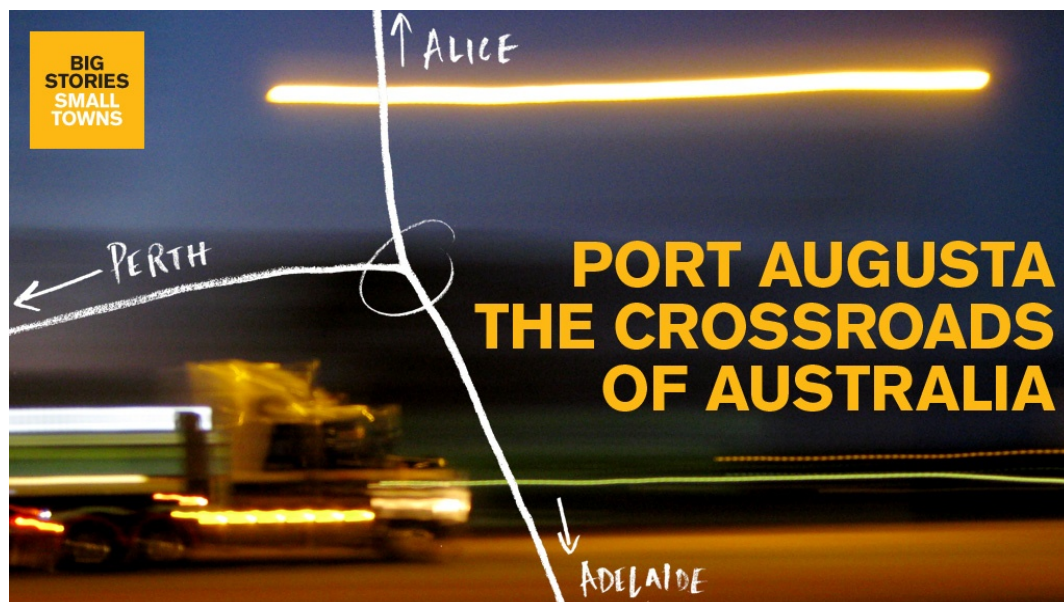


Figure 3: Second image, introduction to *Big Stories* website, v.1

I conceived of *Big Stories* while working at the Media Resource Centre (MRC), a non-government screen development organisation with a strategic interest in

¹ This is well documented across a range of sectors;

Baxter, J. Hayes, A. and Gray, M. (2011), *Families in Regional, Rural and Remote Australia*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, March 2011. Accessed:

<http://www.aifs.gov.au/institute/pubs/factsheets/2011/fs201103.html>. p.1

In their 2012 report *Poverty in Australia*, the Australian Council of Social Services observes the risk of poverty and unemployment is greater outside of capital cities, p. 30. Accessed:

[http://www.acoss.org.au/uploads/ACOSS%20Poverty%20Report%202012 Final.pdf](http://www.acoss.org.au/uploads/ACOSS%20Poverty%20Report%202012%20Final.pdf)

engaging in regional and digital programs. The MRC is a not-for-profit, membership organisation that evolved from community-based film and video-making initiatives, as detailed in Hughes (1974), Williams (1976) and Maksymyschyn and Cormack (2011) to a video access centre established in 1974 as part of a nationwide initiative of the Film, Radio and Television Board of the Australian Council for the Arts.

3.2.1 Positioning my Practice: Third Voices

Prior to working at the MRC, I ran a film and video company, producing a variety of media including broadcast documentary. In 2001 I worked on a documentary, *Indonesia: Art, Activism and Rock n Roll*,² exploring the work of the Indonesian art collective Taring Padi.³ Their mode of working, spanning many media and defined by a radical and collaborative approach to art making, was compelling. The community, collaborative and activist approach was formative for re-imagining creative practice.

After reading Studs Terkel's (1974) *Working* I subsequently produced and directed a documentary series called *Working Lives* for ABC's Australia Network. These were observational documentaries, with no guiding voiceover, following one person through a working day. Through Terkel's work and the many projects and people he inspired, I discovered a new field of radio documentaries and oral history. I subsequently learned that Terkel had also been an inspiration for the founders of the Centre for Digital Storytelling.

² Hill-Smith, C. (2002), *Indonesia: Art, Activism and Rock n Roll*, documentary, 26 minutes. Producer: Jamie Nicolai. Production Company: The House of Red Monkey.

³ The work of Taring Padi is explored by Heidi Arbuckle in a variety of essays from 2000 onwards. Arbuckle, H. (2000a, 2000b, 2006).

In 2005 I had my first experience producing and facilitating online, participatory projects as part of the South Australian Film Corporation's (SAFC) *Dococom.com* initiative (2005) and Australian Broadcasting Corporation's (ABC) *UsMob.com.au* (2005).⁴ The projects were a confluence of the community-centric, collaborative and activist approach of Taring Padi, and the first person narration seen in much of Terkel's work.⁵ *Usmob* and *Dococom* involved extensive work in regional communities in South Australia. The projects addressed social inequalities compounded by lack of services available for communities outside of capital cities. Some aspects of co-creative story making used in these projects presented an opportunity to address Ruby's call to "negotiate a new cultural identity."⁶ From the creative conversations between professional filmmaker and non-professional participant, there was potential for Ruby's (1991) notion of a *Third Voice* to emerge. Showcasing the work online enhanced this possibility, as it was an emerging space with less temporal and editorial restriction than other broadcast platforms. The web also had the capacity to archive stories in a publically accessible form and to be a dialogic platform that could simultaneously feature diverse perspectives in a variety of formats.

There were a wide variety of methods employed in making work with participants, and the content spanned reportage, drama, music video, digital story,

⁴ In addition in 2005 I produced two series of participatory videos that involved regional youth based in Adelaide, with SHine SA with the Wiltja Unit at Woodville High School and SHine SA Youth Advisory Teams.

⁵ Notably Terkel (1974) as well as many radio documentaries archived at: <http://www.studsterkel.org>.

⁶ Ruby, J. (1991) "Speaking For, Speaking About, Speaking With, or Speaking Alongside: An Anthropological and Documentary Dilemma" in *Visual Anthropology Review*, 7: 2, 50-67. p. 50

documentary and animation. I observed an apparent correlation between quality of output (regardless of form) and quality of process. The method used appeared to be secondary to the facilitator/ participant relationship and this reflects Freire's (1970) argument that good relationships underpin dialogical practices.

Importantly, the collaborative approach to story making yielded a variety of outcomes. It seemed to enhance local authorial capacity and improve cross-sectoral and intra-community networks through the process of both making and screening the stories. These programs were a way for participants to put forward their own media version of self and community identity into a variety of forums. I observed an increase in participants' self-confidence and awareness and enhanced social connections with those directly connected to the program.

Although these interventions were expensive,⁷ facilitator-led and not sustained beyond a single project, the individual and community outcomes offered validation of the work. The only way to sustain outcomes was to continue to deliver projects, build partnerships and grow structures to support these activities. Continued project delivery, partnerships and structural developments would see programs strengthen as they scaled and repeated. With experience, there could be regulation of issues such as high costs and problematic aspects of the facilitator role.

⁷ The Dococom.com project was funded through the SAFC and budget was \$15,000 with a further \$10,000 of in-kind support.

The UsMob Whyalla workshop (1 week) was funded through Australia Council and budget was \$30,000 with substantial, unmeasured in-kind support.

3.2.2 Media Resource Centre

Soon after I commenced work at the MRC, I began to focus on sustained regional delivery of community media work. I developed and delivered a regional tour of the South Australian Screen Awards (SASA) in 2006 in order to explore opportunities for regional media programs. I also wanted to grow the MRC's digital capacity, outreach services and regional partnership networks. Regional representatives of partner organisations involved in SASA talked of their frustration at missing out on mechanisms to create and distribute their own media.⁸ There was a growing sense of being on the wrong side of a digital divide that was more complex than simply a deficit of technology, and also involved lack of agency, education and representation.⁹

With advice from regional communities, an early version of what would become *Big Stories, Small Towns* (Appendix 2: *Remote Transmissions*) was designed to expand technological and creative capacity of young people in formal and non-formal education settings. To bridge the multi-level digital divide, the project needed to encourage what Burgess terms “vernacular creativity,”¹⁰ address diverse uses of technologies, consolidate networks of support and increase media literacy. The project would build on a foundation of regional programs, supported through

⁸ Informal interviews, emails and discussions by the author with Rodney Mitchell, Country Arts SA Roxby Downs, 2007, 2008; Sue Tucker and Danielle Bradford, Lower North Health, 2007; Cindi Drennan, Country Arts, Port Augusta, 2008; Kirsty Lee-Rogers, Co-ordinator Young Mums Program, Edward John Eyre High School, Whyalla, 2005, 2006.

⁹ Informal interviews by the author with Sue Tucker, Lower North Health, 2007, and Kirsty Lee-Rogers, Co-ordinator Young Mums Program, Edward John Eyre High School, Whyalla, 2006.

¹⁰ Burgess (2006, 2007) sees vernacular creativity as “describing the everyday practice of material and symbolic creativity such as storytelling and photography, that both pre-date digital culture and are re-mediated by it in particular ways.” in Burgess, J.(2007) p. iii

a variety of partners from diverse sectors. project design was shaped in consultation with regional communities, arts workers and by the experience of two MRC community media programs that shaped aspirations around partnerships, processes and outcomes for *Big Stories*.

3.2.3 Eat My Shorts

The first MRC program was a 2007 project called *Eat My Shorts*, run in partnership with Lower North Health (LNH), a government-supported organisation operating under Country Health SA. The project partnered the MRC, LNH, independent media trainers and six regional high schools. It provided media production training for teachers, delivered workshops in schools and provided ongoing mentoring and support for the teachers as they facilitated health-focussed films with students. These films were then screened as the centrepiece of a film festival. Key stakeholders described the project as successful and it continued running until 2012.¹¹

From this project emerged a number of key realisations and outcomes. Cross-sectoral partnerships in regional communities could be complex but external agents could transcend community politics and bring activity together.¹² A range of participatory approaches were required to engage different groups and to generate a diversity of content, as a ‘one size fits all’ training program generated limited outcomes and was not sustainable. Local partners described having a

¹¹ Perception of success described in emails and interviews with Lower North Health project manager Sue Tucker, project assistant Danielle Bradford, feedback from teachers who participated in trainings and events and the MRC 2007 Annual Report.

¹² Edward Schein describes the presumed ignorance of the outsider to foster relationships that can transcend shared assumptions and ideologies in the community in Schein, E. H. (1992).

‘voice’ as one of the most important factors in health and wellbeing. Identifying and engaging with local knowledge and capacity to collaborate on work that amplified local stories was highly valued and uncommon. The content produced and the staging of an event, attracted local media and generated additional activity.¹³

3.2.4 Journey from Heartache to Hope and Digital Storytelling

The second MRC project was a digital storytelling project called *Journeys From Heartache to Hope* with Nunkuwarrin Yunti’s Indigenous Women’s Healing Group. As footnoted in Chapter 1, the term digital storytelling as used in this study relates to the specific conception by the Centre for Digital Storytelling (CDS) model developed by Dana Atchley, Joe Lambert and Nina Mullen in California in the early 1990s. The principles of digital storytelling, potential participant outcomes and diverse uses of both process and product have also inspired the *Big Stories* approach. Hartley & McWilliam (2009) as well as Lundby (2008) offer comprehensive surveys of the wider literature relating to digital storytelling. The founders of digital storytelling articulate the principles and method in two key publications, the *Digital Storytelling Cookbook* (2002) and *Digital Storytelling: Capturing Lives, Creating Community* (2006) both by Joe Lambert. The form of the stories is short (generally 2 – 4 minutes) autobiographical videos, combining first person narration and personal images of a single storyteller. The stories are often created during 3 or 4 day workshops. This process is outlined in Appendix 3: *Digital Storytelling Overview* and was used to brief participants in *Big Stories* digital storytelling workshops. Digital

¹³Eat My Shorts Film Festival, Blyth Cinema, South Australia.

storytelling has subsequently been used as an introductory program for *Big Stories* residencies in Port Augusta and Murray Bridge.¹⁴

Journeys From Heartache to Hope was delivered in 2007 and 2008, initiated by Marion Burns, a Counsellor at Nunkuwarrin Yunti (Nunku) who facilitated the Women's Healing Group. This group's purpose is to provide a safe place for Aboriginal women to connect with each other, to strengthen cultural identity and overcome some of the effects of racism in their lives. Underpinning the work in this group are the practices and philosophies of narrative therapy that aim to highlight the hidden stories of resilience, survival and competence in people's lives. Burns (2009) observed that:

*Digital storytelling... enables women to present a narrative of their life in a way that honours their knowledge and achievements and as such offers a method of healing from past injustices. Its format is practically manageable, artistically compelling and metaphorically it speaks on many levels.*¹⁵

Researchers such as Landsbaum (2005), Kidd (2006), Burgess (2006) and Lundby (2008) have described positive benefits experienced by digital storytelling participants.¹⁶ Landsbaum (2005) observed five ways in which the digital

¹⁴ Examples of these stories in Port Augusta are: Ralph's Story - <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/our-stories/film/ralphs-story> and Bronwyn's Story - <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/our-stories/film/bronwyns-story>. All the Port Augusta digital stories are archived here: <http://v1.bigstories.com.au/#OL>
Examples of these stories in Murray Bridge are: Pat's Story - <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/pats> and Shaun's story - <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/shaun>

¹⁵ Potter, M. (2009) *Interview with Marion Burns, 20 October, 2009.*

¹⁶ Landsbaum, H. (2005) *Digital Storytelling with Survivors and Witnesses of Violence: Exploring Participants' Experiences*, San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California, May, 2005 (Abstract)

storytelling workshop manifested individual and group therapeutic value. There are opportunities for self-expression, re-authoring traumatic experiences, pride in the completed story and connection and validation in the group process. Sharing the story led to a sense of social agency whereby participants believed their digital stories impacted or had the potential to impact others.¹⁷ These observations informed our understanding of potential participant and group outcomes.

Recurring problems in the practice of digital storytelling have been well theorised as being too facilitator dependent, caught up in institutional structures, contingent on funding of workshops and dissemination of a substantial amount of technical expertise (Hartley and McWilliams eds, 2009; Carpentier, 2009; Thumim, 2009). Even allowing for these limitations, digital storytelling can still be highly effective, therapeutic and potentially transformative in a variety of contexts for participants. These problems also informed our approach.

Burns had attended an MRC digital storytelling workshop in early 2007. She felt that the workshop's connection with models of narrative therapy already in use in the group¹⁸ made it an appropriate form to extend the group's story- based

Kidd, J. (2006) *Digital Storytelling at the BBC: the reality of innovative audience participation*. RIPE @2006 conference papers, Accessed 9 February, 2010:

<http://www.yle.fi/ripe/Papers/Kidd.pdf>. pp.10 – 12;

Burgess, J. (2006) "Re-mediating Vernacular Creativity: Digital Storytelling." Paper Presented at *First Person: International Digital Storytelling Conference*, Australian Centre for the Moving Image, Melbourne, Australia, February 2006;

Lundby, K. (2008) "Editorial: mediatized stories: mediation perspectives on digital storytelling" in *New Media Society* 10, 363–373. Accessed March 30, 2009: <http://nms.sagepub.com>. p. 363

¹⁷ Landsbaum, H. (2005) *Digital Storytelling with Survivors and Witnesses of Violence: Exploring Participants' Experiences*, *San Francisco State University, San Francisco, California, May, 2005 (Abstract)*

¹⁸ The model of narrative therapy in question has been defined by White, M., & Epston, D.

programs. The design of the *Journeys* project was underpinned by positive deviance and narrative therapy approaches to storytelling. Women were invited to identify untold stories of resilience and capacity. In developing the *Journeys* project, major arguments to partners and funders related to the need to deal with the effects on women of past injustices, of removal from family and country, and of the resulting mental health issues that arise from these experiences such as inter-generational trauma, grief, depression, addiction to drugs and alcohol. The workshop featured notable variations from the standard model of digital storytelling. Developing stories took place in a group setting during weekly meetings over a period of 2 months. Burns led the meetings with support of filmmaker Sonja Vivienne. No digital technology was used in these sessions. Through a longitudinal focus on the storytelling process the model of an intensive workshop was broken and the experience was more akin to a documentary production. Stronger relationships developed over a longer time, which ultimately allowed the women to take greater ownership of process and product, as well as constructing and sustaining a group identity. Technical facilitators only participated during a 2 day retreat to complete the digital component of the stories.

After the screenings, Burns interviewed the women involved, and I interviewed Burns. These semi-structured interviews served both as a form of evaluation of the project and a means of deepening the experience through reflection. Participants related an increased connection with personal histories and culture, increased pride in their Aboriginality and greater inter-generational

understanding, especially of the younger generation's experience of domestic violence. The women identified greater appreciation of the courage required to leave a violent relationship, an understanding of the need to heal from grief in one's own way and at one's own pace; an opportunity to declare love and commitment to family and an increased understanding of the racism of past policies and practices on the lives of Aboriginal people. These experiences of personal transformation and collective identification reflect similar outcomes identified by Landsbaum's (2005) assessment and by researchers including Kidd (2006), Pierotti (2006), Fyfe (2007), Burgess (2007), Poletti (2011) and Vivienne (2013) in which the therapeutic benefits of digital storytelling are observed.

The success of the *Journeys* project can be attributed in a large part to the work of Marion Burns as social animator. Burns was a mix of counsellor, advocate, script editor, producer and distributor. This role was instrumental in enabling participants to tell their stories and to have ongoing support throughout this process. She also supported appropriate distribution of the final products and was a highly effective bridge linking the women's group, institutional partners and wider audiences.

The *Journeys* project sought to use the story-making process as a community-building process as well as individual therapy. The community building process needed time in order to build and consolidate relationships within the group, something that is difficult within the confines of 4 day workshop. Reconciling institutional goals to those of the project was a key consideration. There was organizational benefit in the story-based programs, an important part of the work

of Nunku since it was established in 1971. On their website, Nunku describes storytelling as “a big part of our culture” and “how we learn, grow and connect.”¹⁹ As with the *Fogo Process*, the process and products created an external concept of community that could act as a reference point for participants, partner institutions and for outsiders.

3.2.5 Remote Transmissions: the start of *Big Stories*

The arguments, practices, partnerships and outcomes of both projects were revisited as justifications for program design and delivery for *Big Stories*. The use of digital storytelling as a tool for community and participant engagement, the building of collective identity through media making and local screenings and the dissemination and reflection processes strongly influenced the project design. The time, resources and local partnerships required to ensure meaningful outcomes for participants and the community, led to project design focused on a single small town community. Cross-sector partnerships spanning education, culture, media, community, technology and health are an important feature of *Big Stories* and these models of partnership emerged from both projects.

Remote Transmissions (Appendix 2), the first proposal for *Big Stories* was initially youth-focussed and partners in the LNH project shaped this approach. Collaborative project design, fusing models of practice such as digital storytelling with desired organisational or community outcomes were maintained. We opted for diversity and flexibility of production models as seen in the LNH project, as opposed to the single model of the digital storytelling used in *Journeys*, because

¹⁹From Nunkuwarrin Yunti's 'Rewrite Your Story' anti-smoking campaign. Accessed online: <http://www.rewriteyourstory.com.au/about-us/the-campaign/>

the project was intended to engage more people in the creative process. Where *Journeys* directly engaged 25 women in the production process over two years, the LNH project engaged over 400 people in the first year.

The partnership with Nunku was re-visited as a model of organizational partnership in Murray Bridge. Organizations such as Nunku often have workers with a deep understanding of listening and ways to deliver feedback. Thus, I sought to further investigate the role of social animator in the second *Big Stories* project through working with individuals, who had personal engagement with the different communities and local organizations and an ability to shape the process to this context. Finally the immersive and sustained residency aspect of the project emerged early in the development of *Remote Transmissions*, as a response to comments from regional arts workers.²⁰

²⁰ Rodney King, Country Arts South Australia in an email response to the author's first draft proposal to *Remote Transmissions* proposal, February 2007 said;

By providing filmmaker in residence you are providing these young people with a role model and potential mentor that could open up new fields of interest. If they work, at their own pace, and allow young people to share in the experience we could see an improvement in all sorts of indicators of wellbeing. We may experience a drop in anti-social behaviour. We may see better lines of communication developing between young people and their busy families. We may see a culture of volunteering develop further as we engage young people in meaningful activity that may reveal something of their issues and aspirations. We may see an increased capacity in young people to work well in teams. We may also be able to use the residency to build bridges into the school here and from that we may see more families deciding to send their young people to the local Area School rather than expensive and often alienating boarding schools in the south.



Figure 4: Stills from story threads, digital stories, photo essays and archival films from *Big Stories* website, v.1

3.3 PRODUCTION OF *BIG STORIES 1*

The first *Big Stories* residency took place in Port Augusta. Over the course of other MRC projects I had developed a network in the town. With substantial arts and culture programs already in place, including the designation of Port Augusta as the Regional Centre for Culture in 2008, there was a strong local foundation on which to build. Over the course of two research trips for *Big Stories* I consolidated or developed key community relationships with council and local organizations such as Umeewarra Media, an Indigenous media organization that ran various media activities including a community radio station. I met with contacts including Country Arts SA (CASA) workers Cindi Drennan and Samantha Yates and directors of the Yarnballa Festival, as well as potential participants for workshops and discussed story possibilities and participatory production models with these community partners.

Based on local partner feedback, a youth-focused project would exclude the most technologically and creatively marginalized communities in Port Augusta, identified as aged and Indigenous people. The project focus shifted to direct engagement with these groups. By offering digital storytelling workshops prior to the commencement of the residency we would achieve a rapid engagement with participants. By starting with this process, a tone of collaboration and feedback would be set for the rest of the residency. A community-based workshop program of some form has subsequently become a part of the project's introduction to all towns.

The research trips yielded nine story possibilities that formed part of a Brief that I wrote for potential filmmakers in residence (Appendix 4: *Big Stories Brief, June 2008*). Two of these story possibilities would become key story threads – Wami Kata Old Folks Home (Wami Kata) and the Men's Shed. The Brief also referenced previous collaborative and community-engaged projects including the NFB's *Filmmaker in Residence* program and the BBC's *Capture Wales*.²¹ The Brief indicates assumptions made following consultation with the community

²¹ The BBC's *Capture Wales* digital storytelling project was one of five projects included as a "template for inspiration" in the Brief sent to prospective filmmakers for the first *Big Stories* (Appendix 4: *Big Stories Brief, June 2008*). *Capture Wales* was a digital storytelling series commissioned by BBC Wales, which ran from 2001 – 2007 under the creative direction of Daniel Meadows. This was the first time a digital storytelling series had been commissioned for broadcast television. The project used the digital storytelling model developed by the Centre for Digital Storytelling as the basis for multi-platform, community produced stories transmitted across BBC Wales television, online and radio. A variety of researchers have described the project in detail including Meadows (2003), Kidd (2006), Pierotti (2006), Burgess (2007), Meadows & Kidd (2009) and Thumim (2009). Meadows (2003) contextualises the *Capture Wales* project within a long tradition of BBC community engagement from the 1930s radio of Olive Shapley, the post war Radio Ballads of Charles Parker, Ray Gosling's documentaries of the ordinary in the 1950s, through to *Video Diaries* (subsequently *Video Nation*) in the 1990s and *The Century Speaks: A Millennium Oral History Project* (2000) in partnership with the British Library.

over a six month period of research, relationship development and related projects such as community workshops. A similar process of research was undertaken prior to all other residencies in order that filmmakers have a solid foundation of stories, community contacts and structure from which to work.

3.4 FILMMAKERS IN RESIDENCE

Filmmakers in residence working with communities are a key component of the *Big Stories* process. The collaborative, service-driven approach, underpinned by the notion of positive deviance, is a key framework for production inspired by previous MRC projects. The role of the filmmakers in residence would encompass many functions: teaching, activism and community engagement, as well as multi-skilling on various production and post-production tasks, including filming, recording sound, taking photos and editing. Based on responses to the brief, I selected filmmakers Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchawala as they had experience working in a variety of roles in broadcast documentary, community media and experience in regional settings and online production. Jeni and Sieh would also be filmmakers in residence in Murray Bridge and Raukkan for the second iteration.



Figure 5: Third image, introduction to Big Stories website, v.1

The filmmakers lived in Port Augusta for three months from July 2008 and I was a weekly guest. We ran digital storytelling workshops and a filmmaker ‘bootcamp’ for young people. We provided training on equipment supplied by the MRC and technical skills to community partners. Although we held a shared interest in collaborative and participatory media, we were also interested in making films, and the designation as ‘filmmaker in residence’ legitimised this interest. The roles we played and the relationships we formed with communities and participants were varied and changed over time. Making our production process as accessible as possible built relationships and supported access for groups that were seeking opportunities to engage with media, such as Umeewarra Media.²²

Central to all roles of the filmmaker is to bring a toolkit of aesthetic, narrative and technical languages that are available for participants in service to the creation of their story. This professionalism is an expectation of both participants and audiences. Balancing professional perspectives with the possibility of re-positioning the filmmaker as benevolent dictator or colonizing participants’ stories thus becomes a central issue in the critical relationship between filmmaker and participant.

Carpentier (2009) shows that participants and viewers perceive a strong need for media to use aesthetic, narrative and technical languages that are perceived as high quality, and to narrate stories which are socially relevant. Participatory and

²² Umeewarra Media is an Indigenous run radio station in Port Augusta.

alternative media, according to Fuchs (2011) may otherwise fall into the trap of privileging the private and the personal without transcending it:

*There is the danger that small-scale local alternative projects will develop into psychological self-help initiatives without political relevance that are more bourgeois individualist self-expressions than political change projects.*²³

Just showing everyday life or organizing participation is not enough. The images people want to see have to be deeply engaging as well, or “enchanted” as Carpentier (2009) describes it.²⁴ For stories produced to connect with people inside the town and beyond, it is necessary to ensure films are engaging in their form and content.

While the roles of facilitator and filmmaker were central in this experience, the resulting media attempted to de-centre the authorial voice of the filmmaker. Despite the notions of facilitating (or giving) voice in media, often the experience of creating a collaborative or de-centred voice is counter-balanced by the role of the facilitator as a leader, or change agent bringing others to voice. While the authorial role of facilitator was apparently dispersed, it became interlaced within context and re-inscribed the importance of the facilitator’s role. This contradiction created a tension reflected in many facilitator-led projects as observed by Ruby (1990, 1991), Kidd (2006), Hartley and McWilliams (2009). Our attempt to address this contradiction was firstly to acknowledge the filmmakers’ role in the

²³ Fuchs, C. (2011) *Against Henry Jenkins. Remarks on Henry Jenkins’ ICA Talk “Spreadable Media”*, May 30, 2011. Accessed Online, June 21, 2013 <http://fuchs.uti.at/570/>

²⁴ Carpentier, N. (2009), “Participation Is Not Enough: The Conditions of Possibility of Mediated Participatory Practices,” *European Journal of Communication*, 2009, 24: 407
Downloaded from ejc.sagepub.com at Flinders University on August 22, 2011

introduction and to make clear that the filmmakers made decisions about the community. Acknowledging the problem does not resolve it; however exposing the contradiction is a part of both a self-reflexive practice and a dialogic practice. As filmmakers we have to reflect on this contradiction and seek solutions, rather than ignore the contradiction. Seeking potential solutions requires dialogue with participants and other groups engaged in the project. Dialogue is ongoing and assists in defining the problem, identifying local needs, developing shared goals and points of commonality. Dialogue also requires compromise. From this dialogue a variety of actions emerge, and these actions require mechanisms for reflection and re-negotiation. Continuous dialogue and re-assessment became a core part of the work of production and relationship development. I'll outline the methods of dialogic practice that we developed. This covers overarching ideals and mechanisms for ongoing, diverse participation and consultation.

3.5 STORY THREADS

Following initial workshops and network building, Jeni, Sieh and I began to explore a range of stories that had become visible through the research process and workshops. We were drawn to themes around social and emotional wellbeing, filtered through a positive deviance lens. The essence of this approach and the affirmation that the filmmakers are making decisions about the community is described on the first Big Stories website as follows: "We decided to shine a light on locals who cared for the people around them."



Figure 6: Images 5 and 6, introduction to Big Stories website, v.1

The resulting stories are told through a range of media – photos, video, audio and text. This mix of media range reflects the multiple modes of engagement, allowing for the production of works from a wide range of perspectives. The overarching ideals of the project framed the selection of stories which:

- would have wider impact beyond the community,
- reflected an approach of positive deviance in relation to social issues, and
- emerged from community consultation, and with the acceptance and support of the community.

Jeni, Sieh and I chose to make multiple stories focused on a single group to reflect the diversity of the community and were made in light of the guidance from the community network. The limitation of resources, time and personnel imposed necessary limits on the project. The choice to focus on making observational documentaries (building on the filmmakers' expertise) made for further constraints around engaging widely with community. We made a decision, with guidance from Anna Grieve, to be narrow in our focus but deep in our engagement, as we believed the value of the project would come from a visual manifestation of the relationships that we had built. Nash (2011a) notes that trust is an important and under-theorised aspect of the filmmaker/ participant

relationship. As a result of this approach, only three story threads were made, each set within a single community. Building trust was a significant part of the process. The artefacts produced are the embodiment of both process and the relationship between filmmakers and participants. It is not only a documentary focused on observation of subjects, but also the embodied memory of the relationship between filmmakers and participants.

Delofski (2009) observes that the relationship between filmmaker and participant is multilayered, negotiated and a critical aspect of the documentary's authorship.²⁵ The truth of this form of documentary, Delofski argues, goes beyond its facts and claims; it is always a memory of the encounter between the subject and filmmaker.²⁶ Opening up the production process to ongoing negotiation, extending the relationship of filmer/ filmed to editor/ edited and distributor/ distributed does not address all power imbalances, but it does go some way to redress them. As Rouch (1974) observed, undertaking education, training and processes that facilitate critical reflection is a further attempt to address this imbalance between filmer and filmed. Although *Big Stories* shared a strategy of immersive production with the NFB's *Filmmaker in Residence*, the filmmakers were not the focus point. They were one of many creative roles embedded in the project. Individual participants including producers, online and graphic designers, Local Content Producers and participants would all have different and often profound influence on the project. Community and institutional imperatives would also shape both process and artefacts of the work.

²⁵ Delofski, M. (2009) "Dreaming a connection: Reflections on the documentary subject/filmmaker relationship," *SCAN Journal of Media Arts Culture*, 6 (3). Accessed online (June, 2010): http://scan.net.au/scan/journal/display.php?journal_id=143

²⁶ *ibid.*

An exclusive focus on the filmmaker's power over the participant obscures other equally complex power relationships central to documentary production. These include the makers' engagement with external partners or participants' relationships within the community, relationships between creative professionals working on the film and the important relationship of viewer with the film itself.

3.6 MULTIPLICITY OF ENGAGEMENT



Figure 7: Images, 'Dreams' photo series (L) Young Dad's group; (R) Men's Shed

Multiple modes of engagement, consultation and feedback were integrated into the main story threads. Participants in the threads contributed photo essays, self-portraits, digital stories and photos for the Dreams series.



Figure 8: Images, photo essays by participants.

(L-R) Brett (Young Dads), Dot (Wami Kata) and Ray (Men's Shed)

This multiplicity of engagement reflected the poly-vocality of the project and the replication of a multiplicity of actions and reflections, both on- and off-line.²⁷

Rushes and edits were screened back to participants and narrative directions were discussed. Participants in story threads would often contact the filmmakers if they were doing something they felt needed to be filmed. Observational documentary filmmakers, Bob Connolly and Tom Zubrycki (in Nash, 2009), noted that subjects of their documentaries take on a creative or collaborative role in suggesting filming activities.²⁸ Nash (2011) observes that while the filmmaker has the camera and therefore retains this power, each subject asserts agency in attempting to negotiate a space with the filmmaker, “the documentary relationship is contested; the filmmaker and participant exercise power within the context of their relationship with a view to influencing the documentary.”²⁹ Stories produced are the embodied artefacts of relationships that have defined our experience of the town and the website attempts to represent this.

In *Big Stories*, participants not only created a space for their voice within the filmmaker-made documentaries, they created space within the online documentary through showing their own creative works. This occurred on a subject-by-subject basis and some of these negotiations will be outlined in relation to the second *Big Stories* project in later chapters.

However, it is unrealistic for facilitators to assume that coalescence of Ruby’s (1991) idea of the third voice that may occur within this space must be idyllic, or

²⁷ Krauss, R. (1999) *A Voyage on The North Sea: Art in the Age of a Post-Medium Condition*, London: Thames and Hudson. Chapter 2.

²⁸ Zubrycki in Nash, K. (2011a) p.30.

²⁹ *ibid*, p. 5

even consensual, uncontested and beyond power struggles. There must be allowances for divisive passions and acknowledgement of the impossibility of a fully inclusive and rational consensus within the coalesced voice, but also in the collective identification of community. The construction of a negotiated third voice required not simply awareness of managing the relations between facilitator and participants, but in navigating broader structures that impacted on this relationship. Thus, in each town, our effort to reconstitute production as a dialogical activity has changed in accordance with community requirements in terms of the focus of the stories and the forms of participation.

3.7 SCREENING BACK

As with the *Journeys* project, in *Big Stories* feedback by participants and community members involved with the project occurred throughout production. A key point of feedback occurred during public screenings and exhibitions three months prior to the launch of the final online documentary. After the films had been played back to individuals and organizations featured in the main story strands, stories were played to the wider community at a free event in the local cinema. We undertook extensive consultation with Wami Kata about production process, content produced and use of content with staff, clients, families and the Wami Kata Board. We consulted with the Yarnballa Arts Festival steering committee and Indigenous leaders and academics connected to the town. Feedback was sought through direct response (viewers talking to or calling filmmakers to discuss) and indirect response (surveys, written feedback and emails). The community identified errors of representation, factual errors and perceived issues of representation. Incorporating these changes into final films

enhanced the perception of control and ownership of the stories and feedback from a number of community members described the stories as a ‘truthful’ representation.³⁰

The positive representation of the films and our consultative approach resulted in strong community support for the project when the website was launched. The community continued to support distribution of the project by using films to advocate for policy change (in the case of Wami Kata), for increased funding and recognition (both Young Dads and Men’s Shed) and for all groups to increase their standing in the broader community and to create a stronger sense of collective identity.

Blum-Ross et. al. (2011) argue that a position of positive deviance results in participants engaging more positively and less critically with content produced. This lack of critique has resulted in videos described as “slightly superficial, and accepting of official discourse.”³¹ Mouffe notes (in Miessen and Mouffe, 2007) if participation provokes confrontation between different views, this might have the potential to be a productive intervention. If facilitators can strike a balance between positivity with additional mechanisms for critical analysis this can be both an agonistic and dialogic model of communication. This model of community-driven critique can be seen in some of the experiences that emerged

³⁰ Feedback from first Big Stories project including: Interviews with Neil ‘Noogar’ Edwards and Bronwyn Filsell (Men’s Shed), Brett Champion and Robert ‘Nyimi’ Taylor (Young Dads), Sara Press (Wami Kata), Vince Coulthard and Gayle Mather (Umeewarra), Sam Yates and CindiDrennan (Country Arts SA).

³¹ Blum-Ross, A., Frohlich, D., Mills, J. Egglestone, P. (2011) “Participatory video and design: examples from the Bespoke project,” in *Participatory Innovation Conference 2011*, Sønderborg, Denmark. Accessed online, 24 August, 2011: www.spirewire.sdu.dk/pinc/

from Banlung in Cambodia, which addressed issues of how members are seeking to sustain their community. Similarly, a level of self-criticism and reflection can be seen as a result of some Fogo Island films. Nemtin and Low (1968) noted that presenting an opinion in conflict with the majority triggered stronger discussion and more open reflection.³² In Port Augusta community members³³ wanted to see positive representations in order to dilute previous negative representations. In this context, a positive deviance model, along with the collaborative and consultative approach, resulted in stories aligned to both community and filmmakers' goals.

3.8 THE FIRST WEBSITE

The project, from its earliest conception, was envisaged as web-based, extending on projects such as dococom.com. The core delivery output of the Film Australia National Interest Program (NIP) commission was to produce a web documentary, with no other broadcast outputs required. The website needed to reflect the NIP's mandate more than any other component of the production, as it was this deliverable by which Film Australia would measure the project. The institutional expectations will be explored in the following chapter. This section of the chapter is limited to discussion of the website interface of the first version and identifying elements that influenced the second version.

³²Nemtin B., and Low C., (1968) *Fogo Island Film and Community Development Project*, Report submitted to the National Film Board of Canada, 1968. Accessed September 2010: <http://onf-nfb.gc.ca/medias/download/documents/pdf/1968-Fogo-Island-Project-Low-Nemtin.pdf>. p.30

³³ Opinions expressed in meetings with the author by Country Arts SA and Port Augusta Council representatives (Cindi Drennan, Samantha Yates) and Umeewarra Media (Vince Coulthard and Gayle Mather).

Three observational documentaries formed the backbone of the filmmakers' in residence contribution to the *Big Stories* website, but the website also gave the community an opportunity to speak through photo series and digital stories. It presented the history of Port Augusta through a handful of short films from the Film Australia archive.



Figure 9: Images, Story Threads.

(L-R): Young Dads, Wami Kata and Men's Shed

The first *Big Stories* website features 33 Filmmaker Films, 6 Archival films, 18 Digital Stories and 9 Photo Essays, three created by Port Augusta residents and the Dreams photo essay co-created with people in the town. The website is a producer-curated selection of filmmaker and community produced work. A number of community engagements are not featured on the website as work produced was either not released for public viewing or was so thematically or structurally disconnected that it proved too difficult to integrate. As noted in the first chapter, this curatorial impulse reflects Rose's (2011) observation of the online documentary maker as context provider, as well as content provider.

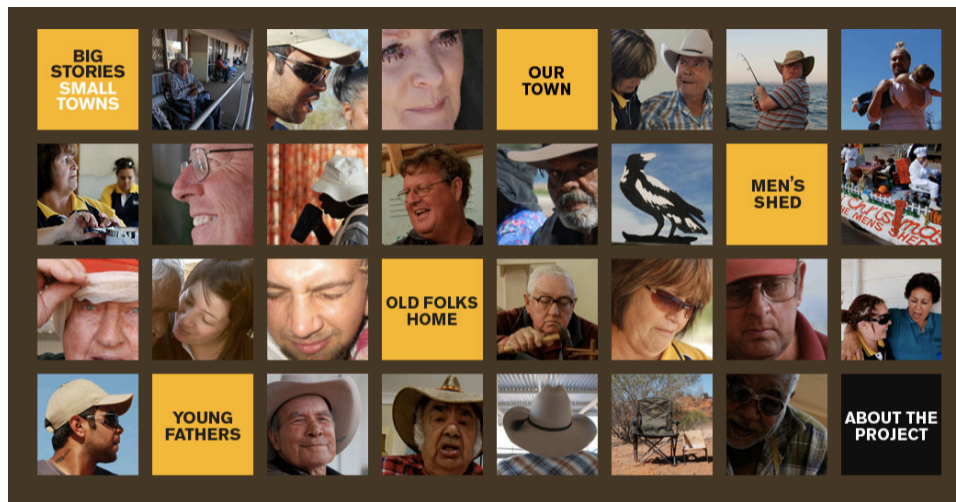


Figure 10: Screenshot, *Big Stories* website, v.1 - main page.

The main online interface (<http://v1.bigstories.com.au/>) was a Flash-based grid of 32 squares. The squares featured rollovers with handwritten text on the picture squares representing individual voices, and digital fonts on the text squares. Clicking on a picture square linked to a story from the person featured in the picture. Text squares linked to a curated area of content. The ‘Our Town’ text box featured community made and archival content, the three other text boxes were the story threads created by filmmakers.

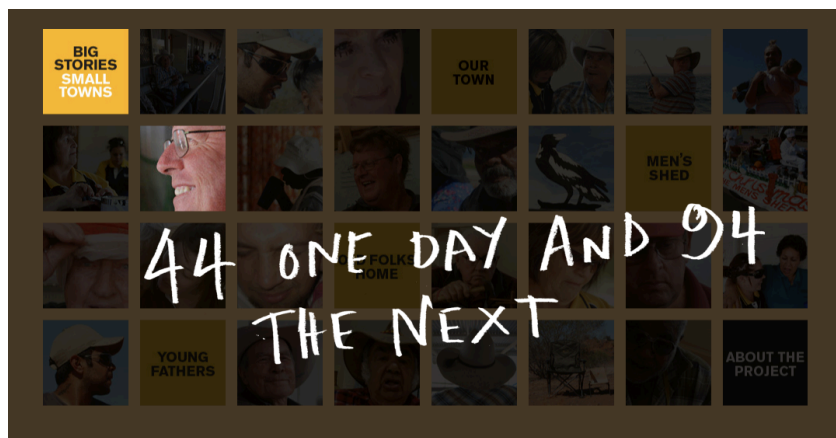


Figure 11: Screenshot, handwritten rollover text on *Big Stories* website, v.1

The three story threads featured a mix of photos, text, audio and video. Viewers could click through a timeline to sub-sections of the story thread. The timeline

removes the inexorable forward-moving trajectory of narrative cinema and allows viewers to move through the space of the collected stories. Once a story is selected, the experience reverts to a time-based experience as the viewer watches the film.



Figure 12: Screenshot, "Wami Kata" Story Thread introduction.

The bottom section of the interface is a stylized timeline enabling viewers to click through to different sections of the Thread.

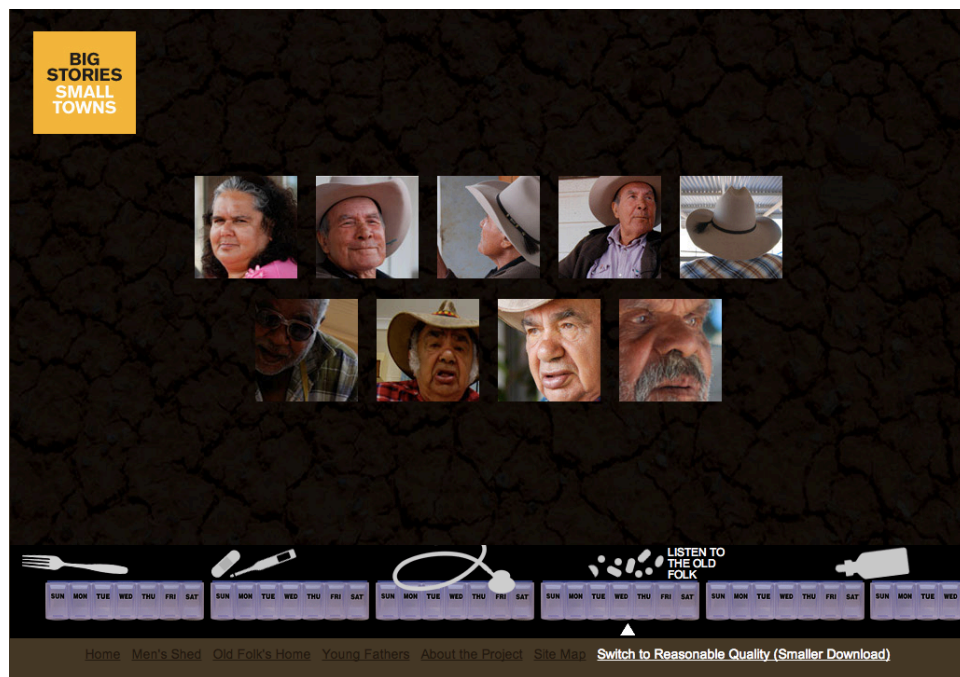


Figure 13: Screenshot, "Listen to the Old Folks" in "Wami Kata" Story Thread.

9 stories from residents are co-located in this one sub-section of the Thread.

With so many fragmented pieces of content produced in different ways from different voices, the grid presentation was a design solution to showcase all content in a relatively non-hierarchical fashion, whilst the story thread was an attempt to impose a clearer authorial point of view through constructing an aesthetic experience. Through the story threads, a structural principle that was a determinant of relation with audience had been formulated for the project. The re-design of the site that occurred in the second iteration, emerged from the grid and thread-based metaphors that permeated the first iteration.

In the next chapter I outline how we re-conceptualised modes of presentation in order to achieve a better integration of filmmaker and participant perspectives as part of our attempt to see a stronger coalescence of perspectives. Stories produced are the embodied artefacts of relationships that have defined our experience of the town and the website attempts to represent this. Refining this representation involved a complete re-build of the website and development of a content management system. This experience, the justification for it and the practices that flowed from it, will be explored in more depth in Chapter 4.

3.9 LEGACY OF THE FIRST BIG STORIES PROJECT

The first iteration shaped many of the assumptions of the second iteration and created a legacy that enabled the project to be re-visited. The project launched in February 2009 at the Australian International Documentary Conference and the Adelaide Film Festival. Over the next 9 months, momentum increased for the

project with films being used in diverse contexts.³⁴ The community experienced positive outcomes as a result of the project³⁵ and the online platform being featured at a number of prestigious international film and media festivals.³⁶ This led to the opportunity to produce the second iteration of *Big Stories*.

3.9.1 Reconstruction at the MRC and Beyond

The first *Big Stories* was formulated with the ongoing needs of the MRC in mind and resulted in substantial institutional development. The project represented a number of firsts for the MRC³⁷ and was the Centre's largest single project commission. The project was a model for new production partnerships with government. It was a substantial move into the online forum, an increased engagement with documentary practice, and a shift towards supporting established filmmakers as opposed to entry-level filmmakers. It was a return to the counter-institutional, community media paradigm out of which the MRC had originally emerged in 1973, defined by outreach, technological innovation, alternative modes of distribution and a community-based approach to production.³⁸

The project brought participatory practices and new conceptions of collaboration to local and national institutions, creating precedents for practice, funding, policy

³⁴ For example: the Wami Kata films were used by the Department of Health and Ageing's Indigenous Aged Care Taskforce review. (Email, 3 March 2009 from DHAI's Zoe Clews to MRC Director Gail Kovatseff).

³⁵ The Men's Shed submitted the films made about the Shed to SA Great as their entry for the 2009 Regional Award Winner Community Group and won.

³⁶ See: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/page/about-us> for details of awards and festival screenings

³⁷ The project was the MRC's first online documentary, first opportunity to access funding through the federal government film agency Film Australia and first time constructing a state and federal funding partnership on a single project.

³⁸ Zubrycki and Levy (1978) and Hughes (1974) describe this original intention and subsequent corrosion of the purpose of the Centres due to government intervention and funding.

and a vision of how new models of practice may exist within a participatory media context. It offered pathways for new ways of engaging in regional and remote areas using media. Future activities by the MRC, which have subsequently redefined the Centre's identity, indicate the level of influence the project had on longer-term institutional reconstruction.³⁹

3.9.2 Community Engagement and a Principled Approach

At a community level, the project built on a foundation of local programs, supported through partners across sectors. The project was conceived in conjunction with regional arts workers and regional community representatives. It was positioned as part of ongoing activities and made use of existing structures and programs to produce work that was relevant and sustainable. Community engagement and partnerships were fundamental to creation of processes and products that would be accepted locally. A process defined by principles echoing Cizek's (2007) *Filmmaker in Residence* and Freire's (1970) values was refined over the course of delivery and articulated to institutional and community partners during the development process of the second iteration. The overarching approach of positive deviance in seeking out people who sought or had found solutions to local problems was also well received by the community. As part of enabling an ongoing re-negotiation of relationships with participants throughout the program, the feedback process of consultations, screenings and exhibitions became important. We worked through a tiered structure of community approvals, from

³⁹ Projects influenced or initiated through the *Big Stories* project include the award winning *Seniors on Screen* program (and subsequent Aged Care, Digital Lifestyles and MindShare programs), ongoing regional digital storytelling and filmmaker bootcamps and the growth of the SA Screen Awards regional tour. These activities are detailed in MRC Annual Reports from 2008 until 2011 available at www.mrc.org.au.

individual participants to family or local community group to consulting groups to the wider Port Augusta community before broader public screenings and exhibitions beyond the town. An unintended outcome of this approach was that community members became advocates for the project and found their own uses for the stories produced. As observed in *The Fogo Process*, the process and ideas raised were a catalyst for community development in a variety of forms. This development and the community support of the project were a part of the legacy of the first project and an aspiration for the second project.

When the opportunity to re-visit the project was offered it was based on assumptions established during the first iteration. The project was to remain collaborative and process-driven, involving extensive community partnerships and sustained community engagement. Workshops, mentoring and training of local people and extensive feedback were a key component of the participatory approach. Both workshops and production by filmmakers would need to be re-structured in different settings to reflect the flexibility and responsiveness Chambers (2005) asserts is necessary to manifest a participatory approach. Different forms of facilitation and an acknowledgement of the unevenness of participation needed to be observed in order to offer opportunities for diversity of engagement and to create complex and multiple forms of representation for higher-level participators. There would be a deeper focus with fewer people to lead to stronger relationships and more nuanced, complex stories. However, participatory opportunities such as those found in the ‘Dreams’ photo series and local exhibition allowed for wider representation. This mix of approaches

addressed community imperatives for time-sensitive participation, as well as production of complex, intimate stories from the community.

The relationships between filmmakers, participants and other stakeholders were complex. Cooke and Kothari (2001) note that self-reflexivity is essential for facilitators, echoing Freire's (1970) argument that critical thinking is necessary in dialogical praxis. Manifesting a project defined by multiple processes of engagement and an aspiration towards shared voice was counter-balanced by the perceived role as a leader, bringing others to voice. Acknowledgement of community and institutional imperatives framing the filmer/ filmed relationship was important to acknowledge as part of this reflexive practice and to mitigate issues of institutional mediation of individual stories raised by Thumim (2009) and Carpentier (2008).

Finally, identifying a collaborative third voice locates the artefact of the relationship, as embodied by the story produced, between professional or non-professional endeavours. This third voice is also influenced by contexts and relationships beyond the filmer/ filmed relationship such as intra-community relationships, or institutional imperatives. It is necessary to think and operate at both systemic and personal levels to ensure community and institutional change that originally framed principles and inspired individual participation in the project are still directly addressed.

CHAPTER 4: *BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS* – FORMATIVE CONTEXTS

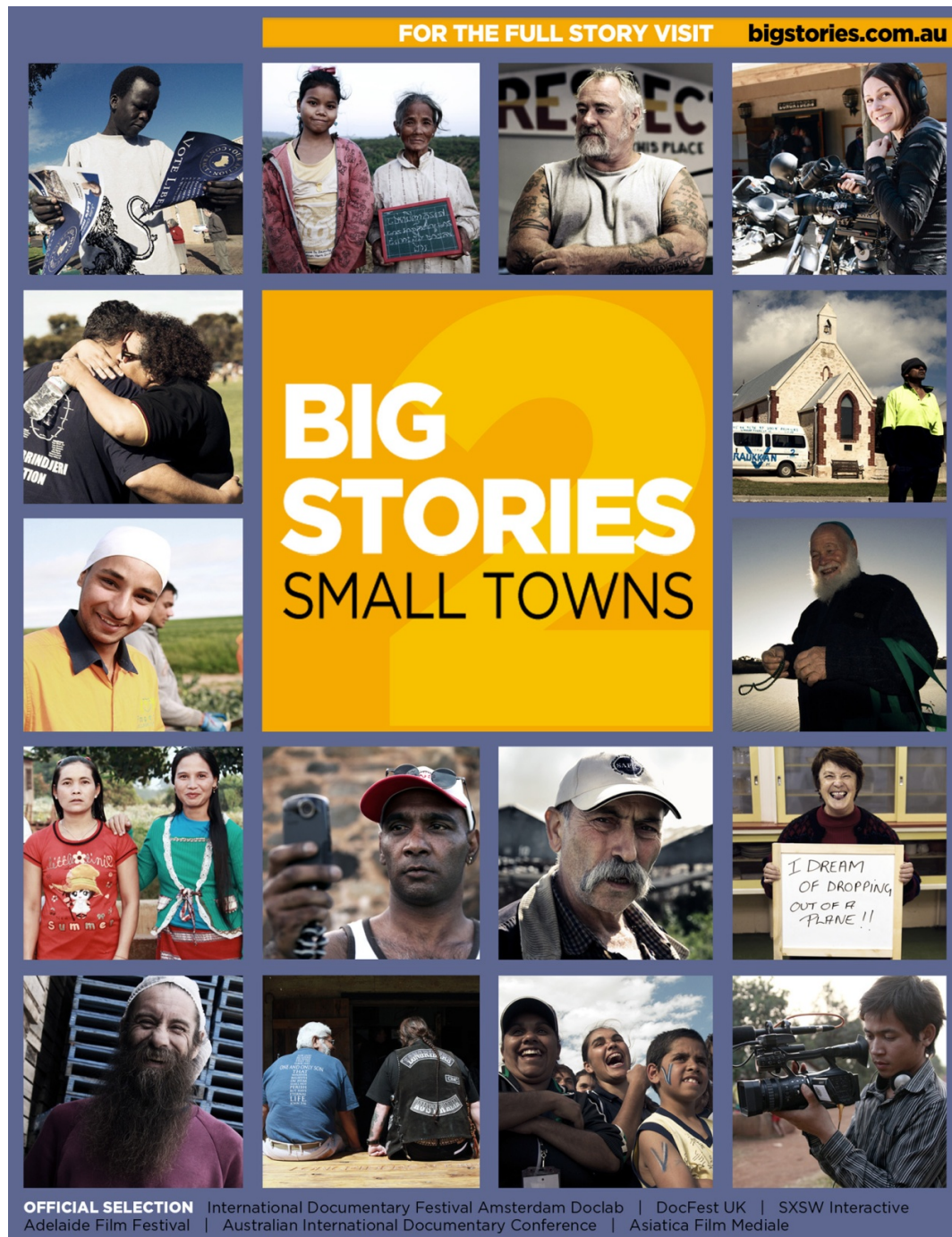


Figure 14: Image, front page of *Big Stories, Small Towns 2* press kit, 2011

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores the development of the second *Big Stories, Small Towns* (*Big Stories*). The scope of this chapter covers changing institutional contexts between the first and second iterations; development of a production proposal to the National Documentary Program (NDP) at Screen Australia (Appendix 1: *Production Proposal*) which outlined process, roles and principles of the project; and development of online elements that shaped production methods. The chapter also explores the funding history of the project to illustrate the institutional context and perceived expectations of funders. The previous chapter focused on development of methods, the following chapters focus on my work as facilitator and filmmaker. This chapter outlines my work as producer in developing and resourcing the project, as well as the structures of institutions and online tools that shaped the residency.

While the first *Big Stories* was conceived as a one-off project, the second iteration aimed to explore the project as an ongoing platform for regional creativity across multiple towns. I approached the second *Big Stories* as a system, a set of connected elements creating a complex whole. Changed institutional contexts contributed to this shift in perception. The focus was on sustainability of the project beyond a single intervention and to demonstrate the ways in which locally driven media and communication initiatives could be harnessed to bring about positive social change.¹ Undertaking residencies across multiple towns and

¹ Pettit, J., Salazar, J.F., and Dagron-Gumucio, A. (2009) 'Citizens' media and communication' in *Development in Practice*, 19: 4, 443 — 452. P. 452,

refining processes of production with the intent to enable future replication was key. I also sought to create a framework for an ongoing online platform. This chapter outlines the evolution of this system in light of considerations of funding, institutional partnerships, community and creative collaborations. While previous chapters have offered a conceptual and contextual framework of the project, it has been the practicalities of resourcing and making the work that are the focus of this chapter.

4.2 INSTITUTIONAL ENGAGEMENT

A key framework for *Big Stories* has been engaging with institutions at different levels of government and community. Within participatory discourses across disciplines, the concept of civic engagement emphasises involvement in the structures and institutions of society.² Discourses of access and participation often work to conceal the institutional conditions of access and political limits of coming to voice.³ In relation to the National Film Board of Canada's (NFB) early foray into participatory media, Marchessault (1995) observed, "one of the main criticisms of Challenge for Change has been that it worked to defuse direct action, to contain and stabilize, as television can do, the potentially explosive effects of difference."⁴ Zubrycki and Levy (1978), reflecting on the Video Access Centres in Australia, echo this when they ask, "given state based funding models, could an

² This appears across a spectrum of theory:

In Political Theory: Pateman (1970), Mouffe (2001), Marcuse (1972).

In Education and Technology: Freire (1973), Illich (1979).

In Cultural Theory: Rheingold (2008), Jenkins (2006).

³ Marchessault, J. (1995) "Reflections on the Dispossessed: Video and the Challenge for Change Experiment", in *Screen* 36: 2, 131-146. p.143

⁴ *ibid.*

interventionist practice really be developed?”⁵ Institutional analysis is important because organizations are agents in their own right, with purposes that may differ from those of communities and individual participants or facilitators.

While facilitators generally acknowledge participant and community benefit as their primary goals, ongoing institutional engagement is important to address, especially in relation to expectations around funding and delivering projects of any significant scale. Resourcing a project of the scale of *Big Stories* requires significant funding. Although costs for online and participatory media projects are often much lower than broadcast projects, the investment is still substantial. Any effort to go beyond the immediate availability of basic resources involves funding requests to local, state or federal government, corporations or philanthropists. Burnett (1993) observes that funding for alternative media projects is at the root of an economic activity that is rarely, if ever, measured. I will outline the process of funding and then address how this affected the project. Funding proposals and financial breakdowns for both the first and second iterations are included as appendices to provide additional context.

4.3 FUNDING

The first *Big Stories* project received initial funding from the South Australian Film Corporation (SAFC).⁶ Following a presentation I made at the 2008 Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) with the NFB’s

⁵ *ibid.*

⁶ This flexible grant was a result of Canadian filmmaker Peter Wintonick’s period as a Thinker in Residence, a South Australia state government initiative, outlined in Wintonick, P. (2006) *Southern Stories, Southern Screens*.

Filmmaker in Residence Katerina Cizek on alternative roles of filmmakers in community, I met with Executive Producer Anna Grieve from Film Australia to discuss what would become the *Big Stories* project. This connection of *Big Stories* with *Filmmaker in Residence* was instrumental in leveraging initial interest from Film Australia and in scaling up the project from an intermediate program of limited regional engagement to a large scale participatory media program.

The first project was commissioned as an online project through Film Australia's National Interest Program (NIP), with substantial in-kind support from the MRC and Film Australia. In the second iteration, this organisational in-kind investment, an indicator of institutional goodwill, effectively disappeared, offset by a small increase in the cash budget and an increase of in-kind labour and equipment provided by the core creative team. Appendix 5: *Funding* details funding structures for the first and second iterations.

4.4 FILM AUSTRALIA (2008) AND THE NATIONAL INTEREST

Big Stories was the first online and participatory media project commissioned by the NIP of Film Australia and subsequently the NDP of Screen Australia. As outlined in Chapter 2, Film Australia had a history of ethnographic, participatory filmmaking, however online delivery was an emerging area of engagement for government screen agencies.⁷ *Big Stories* was one of only eight online

⁷ Between 2001 and 2008 the Australian Film Commission (AFC) funded thirteen online documentaries:

- 12 Canoes
- A Year On The Wing

documentaries produced under the NIP,⁸ an ongoing contract held by Film Australia since 1989,⁹ mandated to:

*devise, produce, distribute and market programs ... which deal with matters of national interest to Australia... The outcome is a curated national slate of programs that provide a “snapshot” of the nation.*¹⁰

The NIP mandate and the mechanism of delivery through a government film production agency had roots in the 1945 ideology articulated by Grierson and Hawes when the original Commonwealth Film Unit was founded under the Australian National Film Board.¹¹ This mandate provided an overarching editorial framework for content included in the *Big Stories* website. The first *Big Stories* commission had occurred just before Film Australia was amalgamated into a new

-
- First Australians Online Project
 - Knot@Home
 - Sanctuary
 - A Stowaways Guide To The Pacific
 - Alive & Dreaming
 - Long Journey, Young Lives
 - The Wrong Crowd
 - Dust On My Shoes
 - The Life and Times of the Extraordinary Vice-Admiral William Bligh
 - The Pure Drop
 - Homeless aka Zero Tolerant

Based on searches of the AFC archival site for all funding during the periods Jan 2001 to July 2008
Accessed on October, 2010 and November 2011.

⁸ Using the National Film and Sound Archives project search engine, selecting website and returning the following results of 9 online documentaries including *Big Stories*, *Small Towns*.
Accessed 10 September 2011.

The results from this search identify *Australian Biography Online* as the first project produced in 2004. Five projects were released in 2005, one in 2007 and *Big Stories* in 2009.

⁹ Connolly, S. (2004) Letter to Professor James Lahore, Chairman, Copyright Law Review Committee on 26 March 2004.

¹⁰ Film Australia (2008), *Working With Film Australia*, February 2008, information brochure.
Accessed 13 September, 2011: <http://www.filmaust.com.au/about/publications/WorkingWithFA.pdf>

¹¹ See: Moran, A. (1987) 'Documentary Consensus: The Commonwealth Film Unit: 1954-1964'. In O' Regan, T. and Shoesmith, B. eds. (1987) *History on/ and/ in Film*. Perth: History & Film Association of Australia. Pp. 90-100.

‘super-agency’ Screen Australia.¹² When the institutional context changed in the second iteration we used the NIP mandate as a framework for our development and as legitimization back to Screen Australia. We became a legacy project embraced within the new institution.

Our affiliation with the NIP and the NDP also created a sense of importance for participants and filmmakers, reflecting Anderson (1983) and Hartley’s (1992) assertion of the importance of media in manifesting a national communion. These were contributions of national interest, and like Kidd’s (2006) observations regarding participant engagement with BBC’s *Capture Wales*, this provided a motivation for participation and sense of pride in the finished product. The NIP commission also raised expectations of participants. They expected high quality content to be produced a result of their participation, as well as national visibility, reinforcing Carpentier’s (2009) analysis that technical quality and social relevance are key principles for both participation and audience.

4.5 DEVELOPMENT AND PRODUCTION TIMELINES

Following selection of the first *Big Stories* for a number of international festivals in 2009, notably Doclab at the International Documentary Festival Amsterdam (IDFA), the Media Resource Centre (MRC) was approached by Screen Australia in October 2009 to submit a development application for a second *Big Stories*. Due to policy changes at Screen Australia the MRC was subsequently deemed ineligible to apply for funding. To address this issue, Anna Grieve, online producer Nick Crowther and I formed the Big Stories Company (biographies are

¹² In 2008 the three federal government film agencies: Film Australia, the Australian Film Commission and the Film Finance Corporation were combined into a single agency.

included on pp. 12-14 Appendix 6: *Big Stories* Development Application). The company entered into a joint venture agreement with the MRC, enabling stories from the first iteration to be included in the second version.

In April 2010 the Big Stories Company received Screen Australia development funding (Appendix 7: *Development Proposal*) to develop a production application to their National Documentary Program (NDP) and to confirm additional partners. I conducted research in Murray Bridge and Raukkan in South Australia with Anna Grieve and Nick Crowther, and in Banlung, Cambodia with Koam Charasmey between March and May 2010. In May 2010, Big Stories Co. submitted a production proposal to Screen Australia and in June received funding. Production commenced in August 2010 with filmmakers Jeni Lee, Sieh Mchawala and me in residence in Murray Bridge. In October, the residency moved to Raukkan for 6 weeks, with sporadic activities continuing in Murray Bridge. From November, post-production for the Murray Bridge and Raukkan stories commenced in Adelaide. In December, Koam Chanrasmey and I were in residence in Banlung, Ratanakiri, Cambodia. During this time, post-production and web development continued in Australia. On 3 March 2011 the project was launched as part of the Adelaide Film Festival (AFF) and Australian International Documentary Conference (AIDC) featuring stories from Murray Bridge and Raukkan. From mid-May to mid-June we staged an exhibition of these stories at Murray Bridge Regional Gallery. The Banlung site was previewed at Doc/Fest UK on June 8 and Banlung community screenings took place from 6 to 10 July, 2011. Following these screenings the Banlung site was reviewed and launched in mid-July.

4.6 SHIFTING INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXTS

Prior to development of the second *Big Stories*, there was a massive shift in the institutional shape of Film Australia, initiated through the federal government. With organisational change of the scale experienced in the 2008 ‘super-agency’ amalgamation, which resulted in the formation of Screen Australia, there were inevitable inconsistencies around policy, partnerships and implementation. The MRC was subsequently excluded by Screen Australia as the production company to prevent perceived double dipping by federally funded Screen Development Agencies (SDA). Forming an independent company enabled the project to be sustained. However, the second iteration of the project did not receive the scale of in-kind MRC support that was a significant component in the first project. The changed contexts of the government film agency and distancing of the community media organisation resulted in the second project being developed with a less institutionalised perspective. This was further compounded as I had left the MRC and former executive producer of *Big Stories*, and subsequently co-producer, Anna Grieve had left Screen Australia. Whilst the first program emerged from extensive community and participant consultation and with substantial institutional in-kind support, the second project was developed in light of three factors: opportunity for funding, changing policy at federal level and managing conflicting institutional motivations.

4.6.1 Counter Institutions

As a worker at the MRC, I had found useful Marcuse’s (1972) recollection of Dutschke’s strategy of a “long march through institutions.”¹³ Unger and West

¹³Marcuse, H. (1972), *Counterrevolution and Revolt*, Beacon Press Boston. p. 55

(1998) describe "an informed vision of piecemeal but cumulative change"¹⁴ rather than complete renewal or revolution, as the solution. This involves "doing the job"¹⁵ and at the same time preserving one's own consciousness in working with others and in the face of short-term setbacks. This step-by-step approach consists of two components, representing internal institutional reconstruction and the concerted effort to build up counter-institutions. In the previous chapter I addressed the first component, outlining the substantial institutional reconstruction achieved within the MRC as a result of *Big Stories*.

The second facet of Dutschke's long march through institutions, according to Marcuse (1972), is to build up counter-institutions. I concluded the most effective technique to continue to preserve the original intent of the project was to frame *Big Stories* as a platform, process and system. The aim was to create a small counter-institution. Marcuse observes that counter-institutions, as the MRC was originally conceived, "have long been an aim of the movement, but the lack of funds was greatly responsible for their weakness and their inferior quality. They must be made competitive. This is especially important for the development of radical, free media."¹⁶ These institutions require a variety of support, including economic support. As Marcuse goes on to pragmatically observe, taking money "requires compromises."¹⁷ The terrain of practice that can be opened up cannot rely solely on vague notions of alternative politics as the measure of effectiveness or impact. The solution proposed by Illich (1979) is to focus attention on the

¹⁴Unger R. and West C. (1998). *The future of American progressivism an initiative for political and economic reform*, Beacon Press, Massachusetts, p. 32

¹⁵Marcuse, H. (1972) op.cit. p.13

¹⁶ ibid. p. 55

¹⁷ ibid. p. 55

institutionally determined shape of communal and individual expectations. He argues, “only then can we recognize that the emergence of a convivial and pluralist mode of production will follow the limitation of industrial institutions.”¹⁸ If institutions define values they will perpetuate themselves and their effect. Thus, the project needed not only money, but also strong and diverse partnerships and networks with other organisations, practitioners and participants. To be competitive, as Marcuse puts it, the company needed to meet the challenge posed by Carpentier’s (2009) analysis and offer high quality, socially relevant products and experiences of process for partners, participants and audiences. The development of the production proposal was a key document in fundraising and describing this new conception of the project.

4.7 PRODUCTION PROPOSAL: RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The final Production Funding proposal to Screen Australia envisaged two Australian residencies, a shorter residency in Cambodia and the construction of online mechanisms of a website and Content Management System (CMS). This was an attempt, within the budget and time available, to scale up across multiple sites and create a system that would enable future towns to come online more easily.

The initial Development Funding proposal to Screen Australia stated the second *Big Stories* would focus solely on Murray Bridge in South Australia. We were approaching the project as a repetition of the first *Big Stories*, with the main

¹⁸ Illich, I., (1979) *Tools for Conviviality*, 2nd edn. London: Fontana. P. 20

difference being the change of town. However, during a research trip undertaken by me, Anna Grieve and Nick Crowther, representatives from Murray Bridge Council, Country Arts SA, local health organisations and Raukkan community asked us to visit the town of Raukkan, with a view to including it in the Murray Bridge residency.

After discussions with Raukkan Community Council and our emerging Murray Bridge network, we proposed a split residency between the towns. I also proposed to develop a microsite around the town of Banlung in Cambodia that I had identified as a community with story themes that would mirror those found in the Australian towns.¹⁹ This microsite was intended to directly replicate most aspects of what I perceived as being the core elements of *Big Stories* process - the community consultation and participation, filmmakers in residence and local feedback mechanisms.

Chambers (2005) observes, “in participatory research, experience has been that each topic and context needs invention, piloting and refining of its own tailor-made methodology.”²⁰ In the production proposal I described the key to the *Big Stories* process as close collaboration with communities, preferably extending to a sense of community ownership of process and product. A number of principles in the production proposal reflect this community focus. Within this core of values there was opportunity for invention. In each town and with each topic we would

¹⁹ These themes were water, rapid growth of the community and the Indigenous experience of the development of the town.

²⁰ Chambers, R. (2005) “Critical Reflections of a Development Nomad”, in Kothari (ed) (2005). *A Radical History of Development Studies: Individuals, Institutions and Ideologies*, London, Zed Books

create a specifically designed methodology guided by the community, with the various methods consistently underpinned by an approach of positive deviance. So while each setting would involve invention, piloting and refinement of methodology, there would also be consistency, defined by the project's approach and values outlined in the "Philosophy and Process" section of the production proposal (Appendix 1). The values outlined in this section are an important underpinning of the core elements of the project's process.

Freire (1970) acknowledges that the values necessary for true dialogue may come across as purely idealistic, but he points out that while techniques may be described easily, it is the motivation and the intent that underpins the use of these techniques that dictates their success or failure. Regardless of the tools or models used, without the aforementioned values, outcomes will be reduced to a pious, sentimental, and individualistic gesture.²¹ Thus the techniques and approach outlined describe a practice in which the subjectivist tendencies of Freire's dialogue sit alongside more traditional processes of production such as research and development, pre-production, production, marketing & distribution and evaluation. These tendencies, reflected in our initial approach and subsequent relationship building with participants over the course of the project, were outlined as fundamental to the success of the first *Big Stories*. Models of production, such as digital storytelling, were simply tools employed in the expression of this idealism. The shared values of the filmmakers and producers that underpin our approach are essential in manifesting an environment of

²¹ Freire, op.cit. p. 50

collaboration, in creating work that is compelling and ensuring that personal development of participants is achieved.

4.8 IN RESIDENCE: MUTUALITY

Provision of training, mentoring and resources was an attempt to construct a relationship of reciprocity. The final paragraph of the “Philosophy and Process” section of the production proposal was both mission statement and description of our intent to funders:

Being ‘in residence’ implies that a significant workshop component and community feedback process is central to the project. There is an element of giving back skills and resources to community inside the residency and this is, in fact, instrumental to the success and sustainability of the project. This is the idea of making films ‘with’ not ‘about’ people.²²

There was a proposed mutual benefit of engagement where skills, time and resources were made available to the local community in exchange for local knowledge, community networks and access. Mutuality was important in that it attempted to move beyond notions of charity or dependency as well as economic exchange, instead, establishing a principle of exchange through collaboration and skills/ resource sharing, recalling the approach of Jean Rouch outlined in Chapter 2.

There is a more fundamental challenge to involve participants in the structure and ownership of the project as a whole, and to adapt to asymmetrical participation that may change over time. This is a reflection of the agency of participants

²² Appendix 1: Big Stories, Small Towns Production Proposal, p. 6

engaging in different ways at different times. In this second iteration we set out to address the centralized production methodology and the understanding of the unevenness of participation by increasing engagement of local people in the project through a variety of means. Those means include development of the role of community-based Local Content Producers both as a key production role, and as professional development opportunities for these individuals. We proposed a greater variety of models of co-creation and feedback loops – from gallery installations to public screenings. We sought to increase community ownership of content²³ and increasingly to blur the lines of filmmaker-made and community-made stories through increased production values and distribution of the community generated content.

One of the most substantive models of participation that was proposed was that of the Local Content Producer (LCP), a role that would extend on the engagements that emerged from previous workshop processes. The LCP sought to extend the role of social animator through increased involvement in targeted workshops and community-based advocacy for the project. LCPs were framed as ongoing contributors and advocates for the project, “the local face of the project to the community.”²⁴ Increasing local authorial capacity and the potential for longer-term participation also increased shared responsibility and ownership for the

²³ In the first version we had tried different mechanisms to enable formal ownership of stories. In the digital storytelling workshops, individual storytellers owned their story and we requested a non-exclusive license for use of the story in the project. Participants could request removal of their stories and images at any time and were free to use their story in any other setting.

We expanded this ownership in the second version so community based stories could be owned by the community or representatives of the community. This component of formal ownership of stories will be touched on in the following chapters exploring the residencies.

²⁴ Appendix 1: Big Stories, Small Towns Production Proposal, p. 5

films. The participants' expertise and independence, and by implication their view of themselves, is recognized as having equal merit to that of the filmmakers. This questioned assumptions of a uni-directional power that sees filmmakers empowered and participants disempowered. It was *The Oldies* project that best realized this principle in terms of production activity and community advocacy. In Raukkan, we identified three LCPs supported through Raukkan Community Council. However, it is in Banlung, Cambodia that the role worked as intended. The activity of LCPs in each town will be discussed in the following chapters.

The second *Big Stories* incorporated a range of intermediary personnel including arts workers, local council workers and representatives of non-government organizations who worked to facilitate the participation of other community members. Local organizations were also intermediaries that engaged with the project and supported their members' participation in various forms. Community arts practitioners working in the towns were important as they represented direct peers and their experiences of project delivery aided my understanding of local community structures and history. As well as trying to use new customised participatory models, we tried to, as Massumi (p.49, 2011) describes it, build in escapes from participatory processes to allow for individual and community requirements. This involved flexibility for participants to disengage at any time, for any reason and to preserve the option to re-engage later, or in a different way.

4.9 REBUILDING THE WEBSITE: BIGSTORIES.COM.AU

V2.0

My focus in this chapter has been on choices made prior to the residencies, and why these choices were made in light of the formative contexts of institutional components. In this section I will deal briefly with the online components of the project with a view to explicating how they shaped the process of production.

The website was intended as a showcase for stories produced during the residency. Participation happened during the residency with the local community, rather than through the digital interface with website users. As creative director, my main authorial input to online development was conceptual and contextual. Concepts emerged in response to principles and values of the overall project. This included collaborative design, use of emerging technologies to support regional expression and an interface and system that enabled multiplicity of representation in a non-hierarchical way. I advocated for use of accessible structures so that viewers in country areas on slower internet could still experience the site to some extent. The site, however, could be scaled up for higher speeds and for different devices. I intended the platform to be an evolving archive as more towns came online. Additional functionality such as mapping and stronger integration with social media and other elements could be added or refined later. This was not a locked off site.

The production proposal addressed completely re-building the website for the second iteration, and the development of a custom CMS, a database that stores and structures a collection of media for online presentation. The proposed build

would cost around a third of the total budget, a substantial investment that would place financial limits on the residency. However, the first website did not allow for ongoing community engagement, nor low cost hosting options. It also excluded future towns from coming online. A design refresh of the site would also be required to accommodate additional content and to highlight differences between first and second iterations.

In order to address these issues, online producer Nick Crowther and I proposed to use the recently released Hyper Text Mark Up Language 5 (HTML5) system for structuring and presenting content for the web.²⁵ In light of my desire to structure the project as a sustainable platform, Nick proposed a dedicated CMS, engineered to support multiple content delivery platforms, including standard hosting, cloud hosting and content delivery networks such as Akamai, which would lower cost and complexity for future towns to come online.

Although Manovich (2001) frames narrative and database in a war to make meaning, as a filmmaker I was unable to divorce myself from attachment to story and the artefacts produced. I aimed to make meaning with both online tools and stories. Interactive and online media allows - and pushes toward - multiplicity, participation and layering. Within the website I hoped to make visible levels of complexity. The grid-based design of the *Big Stories* website interface is a multitude of building blocks that together, and because of their particular inter-

²⁵ HTML is an acronym for Hyper Text Markup Language. Markup Language is a system for annotating a document with instruction texts encapsulated by tags. HTML is the main language used in the creation of web pages. HTML enables videos, images, links and other media to be embedded and formatted in a website. HTML is read by a web browser, which then displays the web page according to the HTML instructions and elements.

relations (i.e. their multiple connections to place, story threads, themes and content type), form a complex, yet integrated vision of what community can be. Grid-based interfaces have been used by a number of other online documentaries to convey an idea of multiplicity and poly-vocality.²⁶ Gaudenzi (2013) sees a contradiction in these projects. In trying to visualize the multiple within a single uniform interface there is a resulting standardisation and homogeneity. Gaudenzi appears to conclude that in Manovich's (2001) war to make meaning, database emerges victorious. In the first version handwritten, scanned rollover text created a layer that was individual and reduced potential homogeneity. This was a small but key element lost in the second iteration. Increased standardization, due to the limits of our CMS, triumphed over non-uniform interface possibilities. This is a shortcoming of the project dictated by the decision to move from a one-off project model to a platform-based model, as well as a lack of resources applied to this aspect of the interface. However, one advantage of iterative production is that additional elements that enhance user experience or convey a sense of individuality can be added later. In future iterations of the project (from 2014 onwards) some of these limitations, particularly in relation to the custom CMS, will be addressed and alternative online tools will be considered.

4.9.1 The Interface

The main interface of the second *Big Stories, Small Towns* website is a grid of 24 squares²⁷ with each square constituting a video, photo essay or HTML-based text.

²⁶ Grid based sites that influenced the development of the second *Big Stories* include:

Jonathon Harris's *The Whale Hunt* – <http://thewhalehunt.org/> and *Balloons of Bhutan* (2011) and Arthurs Betrand's *6 Billion Others* (2010) <http://www.6milliardsdautres.org/index.php>

²⁷ The main interface of the first *Big Stories* website (<http://v1.bigstories.com.au/#PA>) was a grid of 32 squares.

The site organises content by Town and allows navigation to key narratives, designated as Story Threads. The site also allows navigation by Media Type (filmmaker films, community made content, archival films and photos) and by Themes (Love, Work, Dreams, Family, History, & Community). Content may have additional textual information appended to it in the form of onscreen text, custom recommendations and contextualising HTML pages.

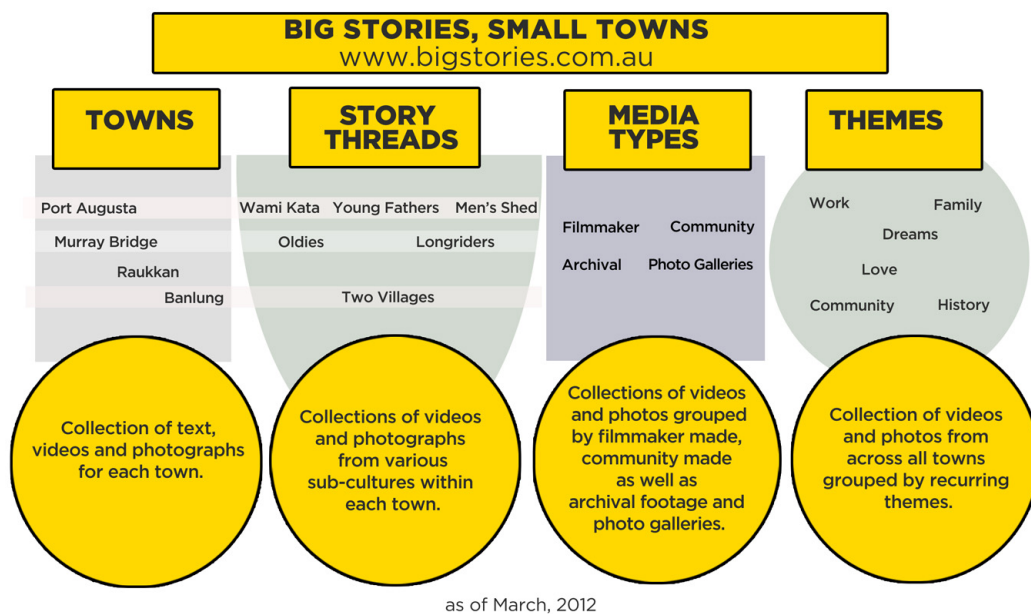


Figure 15: Structure of Big Stories website interface (as of March, 2012).

Figure 15 shows breakdown of content across main menus of towns, story threads, media types and themes and the sub-menus within each. Figure 16 shows the bigstories.com.au home page grid, with main menu icons seen on the left of the screenshot.

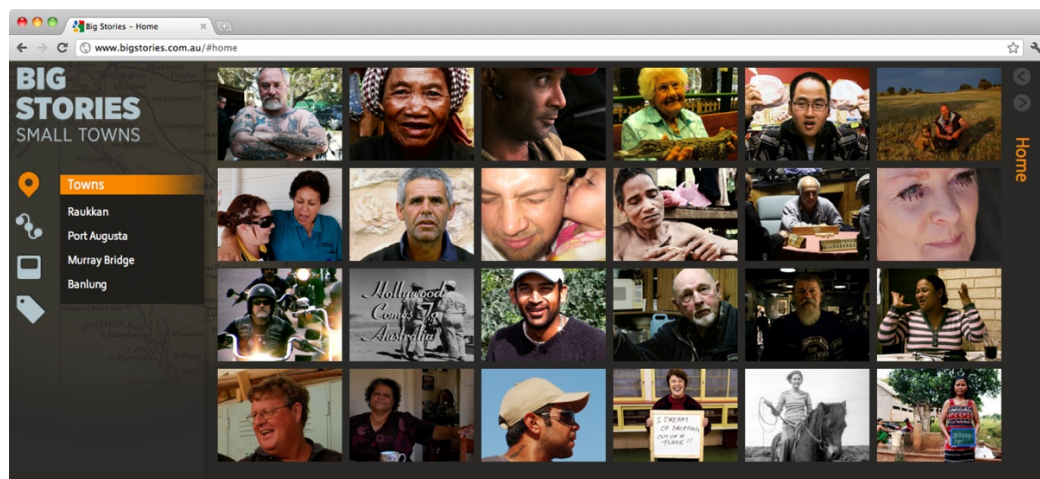


Figure 16: Screenshot, 6x4 grid of Big Stories 2 website

24 pieces of media content are needed to fill a town's grid. To enable content to be consistent with other towns and to be cross-pollinated through additional navigation mechanisms of Story Threads, Community Made Content and Photo Galleries, each town's grid needs to include the following components:

- **Introductory text** describing the Town, location, population and primary themes and issues that emerged from the project
- **Up to 2 x main Story Threads**, each constituting **4 - 12 short videos**.
Story threads could be re-purposed as a linear documentary for use in film festivals and other screening forums. It was assumed that more than two story threads would not be possible due to the limited amount of time of the residency
- **Up to 8 short Video Portraits** facilitated by Big Stories filmmakers.
Portraits could be described as a 'Definitive Moment', the recording of a single interview or event in a single place and are modelled after Low's Vertical Films developed during the Fogo Process. This will be explored further in Chapter 6. Video portraits could be a part of a story thread, or stand-alone pieces. The limit of 8 is nominal and reflects a balance

between ensuring diversity of content in the grid (with portraits making up to 1/3 of the grids content) and the time limit available to filmmakers

- Up to **4 Locally Produced Videos**, created by community members, facilitated by Big Stories filmmakers
- **Photo Essays** fill the remaining grid, including an introductory photo essay to the town and a continuation of the **Dreams photo series**.

These limits provide some structural and thematic consistency across towns. This makes ongoing production simpler to approach, and creates a clearer pattern of navigation for viewers. The imposition of these limits is due, in part, to the limits of the CMS, and it is also triggered by a desire to enable users to visit different town sites and to have a degree of familiarity in terms of how they will navigate content in each site.

4.9.2 Accessibility: Front and Back End

Most of the previous site had been built using Adobe's Flash software. With decreasing support of Flash-based sites on mobiles and tablets, we decided platform redundancy was a risk and HTML5 offered better integration with new interface and programming developments. HTML5 was a more future-proof option, even though at the time of production it was an emerging standard with only 20% of internet users able to view the HTML5 version of the proposed site.²⁸

²⁸ According to Statcounter: http://gs.statcounter.com/#browser_version-ww-monthly-200812-201001 the actual percentage at point of launch (March 2011) of HTML5 supported browsers was 31.5%

As at March 2012 both Statcounter and NetMarketShare estimate that around 55% of browsers support HTML5:

http://gs.statcounter.com/#browser_version-ww-monthly-201005-201206

<http://www.netmarketshare.com/browser-market-share.aspx?qprid=2&qpcustomd=0>

However, we could also serve a more basic HTML4 version, similar in look and with all the same content. Crucially HTML5 enabled easier integration for additional features that could go across all towns, and better integration with a CMS. With more content and the potential for future towns to come online, users would need additional tools to help them navigate and share stories. If *Big Stories* was to build momentum and even become self-sustaining, it was necessary to reduce the complexity and repetitiveness of building websites to showcase stories created by the filmmakers and communities. This approach runs counter to many web documentaries that are Flash dependent as this allows for a sleeker interface due to programmer experience.²⁹ As HTML5 is still an emerging technology, there are limitations of knowledge and skills of programmers and thus creative compromises are made.

The *Big Stories*' CMS was the foundation for enabling future towns to come online more easily as it enables filmmakers to produce their own *Big Stories* projects and publish them online with a much lower dependence on web developers. The grid-based mode of presentation used in Port Augusta was a relatively flexible framework for displaying the range of stories produced over the course of the residency. The presentation of the main stories in the first version, such as Men's Shed and Wami Kata, represented a proven system for weaving together individual elements into multi-threaded stories. If we wanted to re-use the Port Augusta stories and images in order to ensure continuity between the first and second sites the most pragmatic solution was to re-visit the grid framework

<http://www.streaminglearningcenter.com/articles/stat-of-the-week-html5-desktop-market-share-at-581-max.html>

²⁹ The NFB Interactive productions are mostly Flash-based – 80% - and one off works. For IDFA's Doclab in 2011 and 2012 there were only 3 HTML5 documentaries out of 50, including Big Stories.

and the idea of story threads. The difficulty with simply reusing this for *Big Stories 2* was that approximately half of the digital budget of Port Augusta was used purely in web production, preparing all the assets used in the project. Even if we re-used the framework from Port Augusta we would still have to undertake significant repetitive work for the second iteration.

The CMS enabled us to structure a series of design templates, such as the grid, text rollovers and image transitions that would automatically present content. We could automate a variety of tasks, such as conversion of content to different formats, which would save a huge amount of time and enable better integration with multiple platforms. The CMS would enable possible content distribution by RSS data feeds to other systems, addition of multi-lingual display and improved search engine optimization enabling people to find our website more easily through keyword searches. The CMS could also be refreshed, so that whilst the backend database remained the same, the frontend display could be significantly re-designed or expanded with additional functionality as the project developed. A system that enabled iterative development while archiving older versions offered an archival safety net and possibilities of continued technological innovation. Most importantly we could share the process of website creation. Most CMS are designed for non-technical users. The simplicity of the CMS user interface allows users to author and update content without much training and with little or no coding knowledge. Small edits can be performed by multiple authors, without having to rely on a web developer creating a more rapid management process at lower cost. If the site were to grow and have multiple authors for each town, or even within each town, the CMS would be essential to facilitate this.

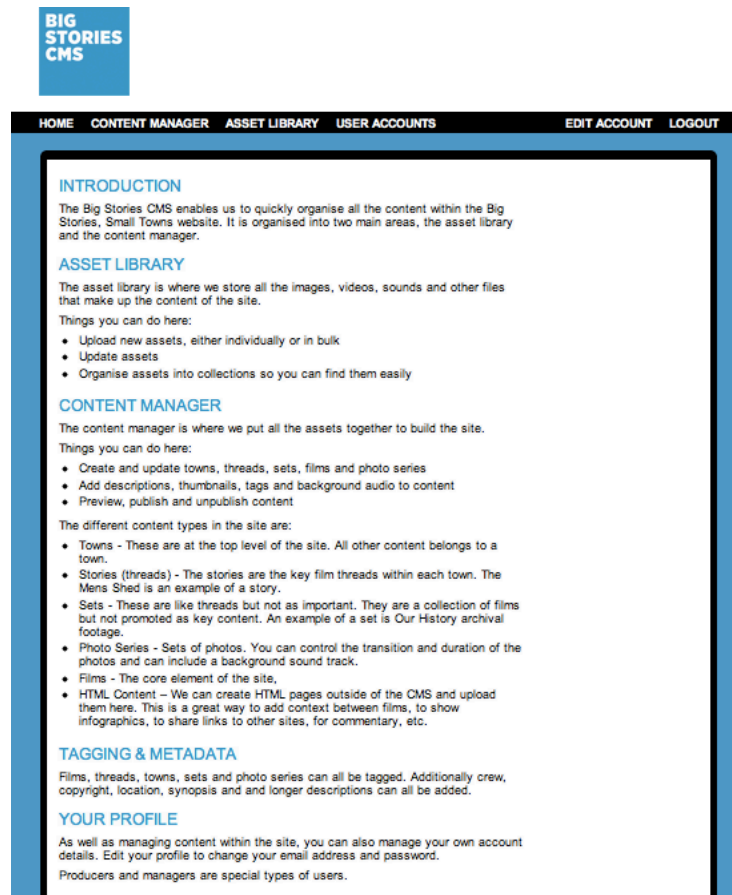


Figure 17: Screenshot, Big Stories CMS homepage

Figure 17 shows the landing page of the Big Stories CMS, the backend of the Big Stories website. It provides an introduction to the CMS's two main areas – the content manager and the asset library. The homepage text goes on to describe what can be done in each area, and notes additional functionality in terms of tagging and adding metadata to content.

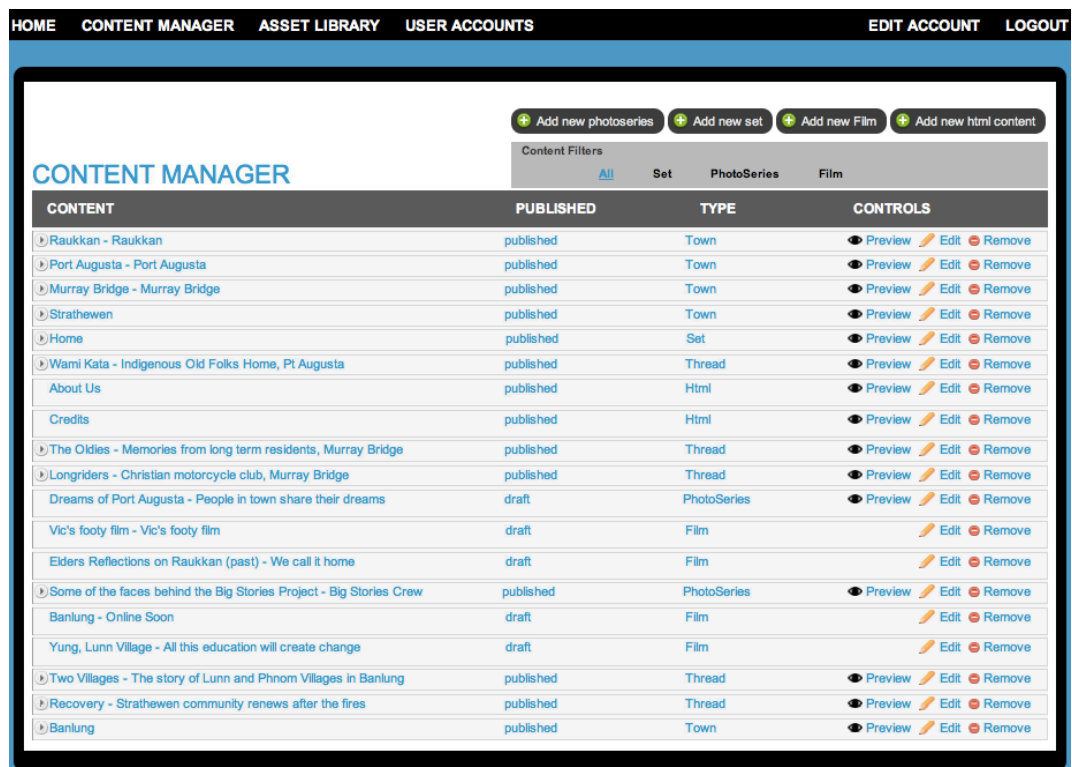


Figure 18: Screenshot, Big Stories CMS content manager page.

Figure 18 shows the *Big Stories* CMS content manager page featuring content assembled into towns, sets and threads (as well as individual items such as films, HTML and photo series). The CMS features tools such as a Thread Builder to create additional connections between content and to offer more context for content through the addition of text-based information, custom recommendations and links. A Site Builder is the core functionality of the CMS. This tool enables users to create the video and photo series that make up a *Big Stories* website. It is similar in concept to a standard CMS. Where you would create pages in a standard CMS and group them together in menus, the Site Builder enables the creation of stories and groups them together in sets. The Towns featured on the site are sets, as are the Media Types (Filmmaker Films, Community Made, Archival Films, Photo Galleries). In addition, given that HTML5 is an emerging standard, the CMS would determine viewers' browser type and deliver content

(HTML 4 or 5) according to the version of the browser and set cookies to continue providing content in the browser accessible layout. This platform focuses on building meaning around collection of assets, rather than around linking between web pages, as in the first iteration of the project. Figure 19 shows the Asset Library page of the CMS where assets (used interchangeably with “content”) can be uploaded, archived and sorted into collections.

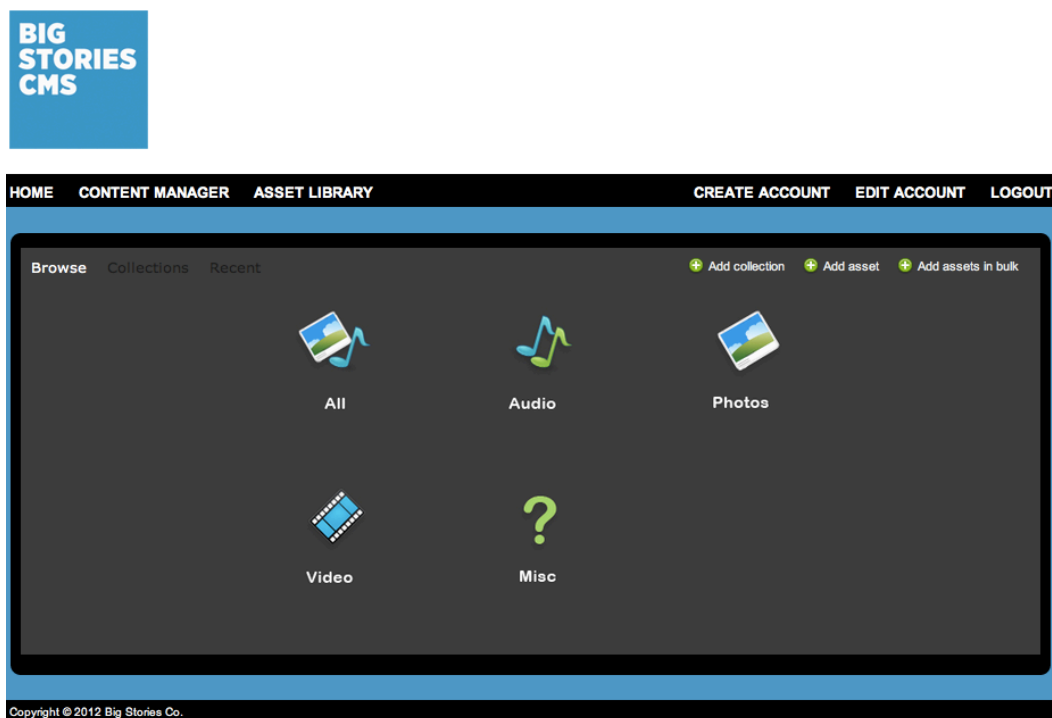


Figure 19: Screenshot, Big Stories CMS asset library page.

In the first *Big Stories* website, narrative was foregrounded within the videos and the Flash-based website had a limited point and click interactivity, nearly identical to that of a DVD with special features. The online presentation replicated our understanding of linear modes of presentation and the database was secondary to the video documentary narratives. The second iteration proposed a more complex system that could be interface and archive, as well as enabling wider participation. This system of the CMS and the website informed the process of production, as opposed to the first iteration in which the website had a closed backend and was

designed around the artefacts produced. We sought to more actively explore some of Manovich's (2001) five principles of new media: numerical representation, modularity, automation, variability and transcoding.³⁰ These can be seen in online components where stories are conceived of as content, and this exists as digitised data and so is numerically represented. The different elements of the project (i.e. video, photos, text, HTML etc) exist independently of each other within the CMS and are modular. Modularity also extends to other codes of categorisation such as towns, media types or themes. Mechanisms in the CMS exist to automatically create, order and modify data such as automation of display according to browser type and compression of material. In terms of variability, there are many variations possible in terms of the presentation, ordering and modifying or augmenting of data within the interface (i.e. the website) and of the interface itself. This includes the iterative additions such as additional stories or navigation features.

Manovich (2001) sees transcoding, as the most significant outcome of the computerisation of media. This is the substitution of cultural categories and concepts, on the level of meaning and/or the language, by new ones that derive from computer's ontology, epistemology and pragmatics. A detailed exploration of this complex principle is beyond the scope of this exegesis. However, it raises many questions in terms of how practitioners can engage with this wider set of embodied cognitive, creative and contextual factors. How can a compelling viewer experience of an evolving online documentary platform be sustained given resource and interface limitations? Can the contradictions observed by Gaudenzi

³⁰ Manovich, Lev (2001) *The Language of New Media*. Cambridge: MIT Press. P. 36.

(2013) in relation to grid-based modes of presentation be satisfactorily resolved?

Will a template and database based CMS approach result in narrative losing the war to make meaning?

There is an emerging body of academic work exploring the impact on viewers of web-based modes of presentation of documentary, notably Nash (2011b), Gifrau (2011), Gaudenzi (2013) and Dovey and Rose (2012, 2013). However, these questions warrant continued exploration especially for practitioners working in the area of relational web-based documentary where interactivity between viewers and interface plays such a vital role.

4.10 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have explored some of the key elements that influenced the delivery of the second iteration of *Big Stories*. These elements include the changing institutional contexts, the approach to funding and development, establishment of guiding principles and the decision to construct a CMS as a central component of the production process of *Big Stories 2*.

The process of developing the work through changing institutional contexts had a profound impact on my understanding of *Big Stories* and its situation within the broader context of the conceptual framework and historical precedents outlined in Chapter 2. As the project was released from its institutional setting it was necessary to investigate the history of both organizations that seeded the work as part of a reflection and re-assessment of the project. Navigating the shift in formative contexts of institutional support also involved a re-assessment of the

project. Would it still be relevant outside of the institutional framework? What compromises had to be made in order to resource the project appropriately without diluting the intent of the project?

Key to resolving the question of effective techniques in this work is negotiating the contexts surrounding the resourcing of a project of this scale. The understanding of positive deviance that has shaped many of the stories and the approach to community and participants can also be seen in this approach to both development and institutional partnerships of the project. In this case Unger's (1987) framework has provided a structure to assess the possibility of mutual reconstruction. The production proposal to Screen Australia is, effectively the embodied artefact of this understanding. This chapter outlined the process of research to develop this artefact and highlighted the ideas defined in this document, which subsequently shaped the residency. The proposal offers a unique insight into the development process and expectations of funders. It also offers an outline and justification for the approach to the web-based components of the project.

This chapter has also offered a brief analysis of the viewer experience of the *Big Stories* website as a result of the focus on 'backend' development rather than 'frontend' interface design. This raised many important questions and concepts around the interface of documentaries presented in the online space that offer numerous opportunities for future research.

CHAPTER 5: *BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS* – AUSTRALIA, MURRAY BRIDGE AND RAUKKAN

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter focuses on the Australian towns of Murray Bridge and Raukkan, while the following chapter focuses on the Cambodian town of Banlung and the experience of production in an international context. The review of the production process in all sites follows a similar format. An overview of the town provides context for production. I then detail the activities in each town, first offering a breakdown of content produced and processes employed. Case studies form the main body of each review. The selection of these micro case studies is based on depth and breadth of engagement with the sub-community involved, the perceived originality of process and/ or product and connection to previously identified theoretical or practical influences.

Evaluation of each of the three town-based productions takes place in the following chapter through a variety of means:

- Overview of the content produced
- Reflection on process and perceived outcomes
- Interviews with filmmakers and other producers
- Semi-structured interviews with participants

- Feedback forms from workshop participants (structured interviews)
- Semi-structured interviews with Local Content Producers
- Feedback to the *Big Stories* Facebook page
- Data taken from Google analytics of *Big Stories* website and *Big Stories* Facebook page.

The evaluation reflects the opportunistic and flexible project methodology in offering a mix of quantitative and qualitative data. A key document in this chapter is the external evaluation of the project by Dr. Christine Putland for Country Arts South Australia as part of the program evaluation of the Ripples Murray Bridge, South Australian Regional Centre for Culture 2010, (Appendix 7: *Ripples Evaluation Excerpt: Big Stories Case Study*).

5.2 MURRAY BRIDGE

Murray Bridge is a microcosm of many of the challenges facing much of regional Australia. A brief background on the town illuminates key community concerns that directly impacted on the residency in terms of local ecological, industrial, indigenous and social issues. Murray Bridge is on the Murray River at the gateway to both the devastated Coorong and the Southern Mallee, another vulnerable ecological system. Parts of this area were referred to by white people as Mobilong, adapted from the Ngaralta Indigenous people name Moop-pol-tha-wong, meaning haven for birds. Another area is called Pomeruk by the Ngarrindjeri (the Ngaralta are one of 18 groups constituting the Ngarrindjeri nation). White settlers began living in the area from 1855. The road bridge over the Murray River was completed in 1879, followed in 1886 by the Adelaide-

Melbourne railway line, guaranteeing Murray Bridge's importance as a vital link across the river, as well as river port. The town has grown to around 18,000 people, first as a service base for local farmers and increasingly as an accessible base from which to commute to Adelaide. In 2010 at the time of the *Big Stories* residency, Murray Bridge was in a state of massive development. In early May 2010 Murray Bridge Council revealed the town was to be rezoned as part of the greater Adelaide district and population is expected to double to 35,000 by 2020.

5.2.1 Scope of Participation

Murray Bridge was the main site for the second *Big Stories* project based on duration and scale of engagement. The residency in Murray Bridge lasted six weeks with additional production occurring during the Raukkan residency and in the post-production period. *Big Stories* filmmakers facilitated workshops for, collaborated with, interviewed, photographed or filmed over 200 people.¹

¹ In a letter to Country Arts SA project manager Jo Pike from me and Anna Grieve on 2 October 2010 we estimated numbers as follows for Murray Bridge:

- MB Council (consultation and meetings: 4 people)
- MB International Photographers Club (presentation and Dreams photos: 16 people)
- New Settlers (15 people - includes meetings and filming Ngarrindjeri Women's choir)
- Tapping Into the Oldies - digital stories (40 people's life stories) prepared with assistance of Friends of the Murray Bridge Library (5 people)
- MB Historical Society - meeting and photo collaboration with Ken Wells (2 people)
- Other Dreams Photos: (24 people)
- Headless Video Series (projected @ Ripples Office): (4 people)
- Digital Storytelling Workshop: (7 people)
- Longriders Motorcycle Club: est. 40 people
- MB portraits (video and photos around town): est. 40 people
- Inki's Grocery Store: 4 people
- Photo Essays from Local Content Producers: 7 people

TOTAL: 208 people (est.)

Previous arts practitioners working with the Ripples Regional Centre for Culture had told us that interest in arts activities had been low for both participants and audiences.² Proximity to Adelaide impacted on participation. One person commented that Murray Bridge is having “an identity crisis, moving from a rural area into almost a suburb.”³ However with the Regional Centre for Culture there was an extensive amount of arts activity during 2010, augmenting existing local cultural initiatives. Local radio and newspaper were also active. Table 1 sets out an overview of the main activities of filmmakers for *Big Stories* in Murray Bridge:

² Attendances at workshops and events had been significantly lower than in Port Augusta during their year of being the Regional Centre for Culture (41,417 attendees/ participants in Murray Bridge, as compared to 47,525 in Port Augusta) in Putland, C. (2011), *Ripples Murray Bridge SA Regional Centre of Culture 2010*, Country Arts SA, Program Evaluation Report, Country Arts SA, June 2011. Received on July 2011. Accessed online July 2013: <http://www.countryarts.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/ripples-FINAL-evaluation-report-2011-all-pages.pdf>

³ Putland, C. (2011), *ibid.* P. 67

MURRAY BRIDGE ACTIVITIES		
ACTION	NUMBER	OUTCOME
Partnerships	13	Media Resource Centre, Murray Bridge Gallery, Ripple Regional Centre for Culture, Country Arts South Australia, Murray Bridge Council, Lutheran Community Care, Murray Bridge International Photographers, Murray Bridge Historical Society, Ngarrindjeri Women's Choir, Longriders Christian Motorcycle Club, Nunkuwarrin Yunti (Laklinjeri Tambutin Waal), Friends of the Murray Bridge Library, New Settlers.
Training	5	Local Content Producers trained
Training	7	Digital Storytelling workshop stories produced and participants. Duration: 16m25
Training	4	Training with Lutheran Community Care Home project staff
Production	8	Portrait Films produced. Duration: 26m 16s. Excludes 5 incomplete portraits.
Production	9	Stories produced for story thread <i>Longriders</i> . Duration: 44m 47s
Production	24	Digital stories produced for story thread <i>The Oldies</i> . Duration of Videos: 45m 43s. In addition: 48 interviews conducted, 48 booklets published.
Production	6	Collaborative Photo Essays: Then & Now (parts 1+2) with Ken Wells; Head in the Clouds with Shaun Patrick; From Home to Town: Nancy Smith; First the Clouds, Then The Water Came: Don Smith; Two Bridges: Barbara Martin
Production	42	Dreams Photos
Production	6	Photo Essays made by Big Stories filmmakers: Longriders, Around Town, State Footy Carnival, Ibrahim's Card Game, Election (not published on website) and NAIDOC celebrations
Production	5	Murray Bridge articles on Big Stories blog: blog.bigstories.com.au
Production	5	Murray Bridge articles on Big Stories blog: blog.bigstories.com.au
Production	568	Social Media: Facebook friends (460) and Twitter followers (108) at 1 September, 2012
Exhibition	681	Attendance at Exhibition at month long Murray Bridge Regional Gallery
Exhibition	462	Viewings (estimate) of 3 weeklong 'Headless' exhibition at Regional Centre for Culture, two-screen shop front projection of video piece. ⁴

⁴ Headcounts were taken between 7pm – 9pm on three separate occasions – with 18, 25 and 23 individuals stopping and watching the projection for a minimum of 1 minute, for an aggregate of 22 people per night at peak viewing times, over 21 days of exhibition.

Exhibition	2	'Dreams' exhibitions on LED board cnr. Swanport and Bridge Streets. Viewed by estimated 14,000+ people. ⁵
Exhibition	36	Attendance at screening as part of Australia Council and Country Arts SA Regional Centre for Culture forum in Murray Bridge Town Hall.
Exhibition	80	Attendance at Longriders Clubhouse screenings
Exhibition	18	Screening of Murray Bridge Digital Stories for participants, family and friends at CASA Ripples Office
Exhibition	360	Launch at Adelaide Film Festival, including 80 Murray Bridge residents.
Exhibition	14070	Social Media: Facebook post views, 8 January 2010 – 1 September 2010. ⁶
Exhibition	4	Archive of Big Stories: National Film and Sound Archive, Murray Bridge Regional Gallery, Murray Bridge Library, Murray Bridge Council
Exhibition	7	Screening international Film Festivals 2011 - 2012: IDFA Doclab, SXSW Interactive, Adelaide Film Festival, Australian International Documentary Conference, South Australian Screen Awards, AIMIA Awards 2012, Australian Web Awards 2011

⁵ Given the nature of the exhibition – in a public space on the corner of two main roads - it is difficult to ascertain exact numbers of people, length of time of engagement and awareness. An estimate of 14,000 individual views is made based on: 6 minutes of every 60 minutes displayed Big Stories content (30 seconds every 5 minutes) – 144 minutes over the entire day. Assuming 5000 people per day passed this corner (as per council estimates) at even timeframes (this is clearly an incorrect assumption, but for ease of calculation it is a reasonable base to calculate from) this is 208 and 1/3 people per hour. With 1/10 of each hour displaying Big Stories content 20.833 people per hour were reached – 500 people per day (i.e. 1 in 10). Over 4 weeks (28 days) of continuous display approximately 14,000 individuals would have seen the display.

6



Table 1: Main activities in Murray Bridge

A number of community training, production and exhibitions activities listed that occurred during the residency are not featured on the website.⁷ A process did not have to result in product for the *Big Stories* website. This reflects an increasingly loose coupling between process and product, recalling Benkler's (2011) observations on new managed systems outlined in Chapter 2.



Figure 20: Exhibition of Dreams, LED noticeboard, Murray Bridge

5.2.2 Research

The producers conducted research into story possibilities in Murray Bridge in April 2010 (see Appendix 1). During our research, specific community

⁷ This includes:

- production and exhibition of a 2 screen video projection *Headless* in a local shop front;
- recording songs and video of the Ngarrindjeri women's choir;
- training with Lutheran Community Care's Home project staff;
- a video letter project with residents of the rehabilitation centre Laklinjeri Tambutin Waal.

Additional training and production activities beyond the scope of the residency also occurred.

members and local organizational representatives directed us to particular peoples or places. We assembled a list of story possibilities included character-driven studies of individuals working with Lower Murray Nungas Club, New Settlers Program, Community Cops and a list of people interested in workshops or as subjects of the portrait series. These lists were arrived at through the interests of community and the approach of positive deviance. As in Port Augusta, we sought individuals who would illustrate an idea or an experience that seemed unique to the town and conformed to the idea of positive deviance. The question underpinning this was “How was this particular person able to find solutions, both for their own life and for others around them, that addressed significant social issues?”

5.2.3 Story Threads

Three main story threads emerged in Murray Bridge: the Longriders Christian Motorcycle Club, an oral history project called *The Oldies* and a series of portraits of local people with a focus on new arrivals to the town. Two of these threads will be investigated in detail, exploring issues in the development and production process.

While the filmmakers in residence all collaborated on different projects, a clear division of responsibility emerged. Jeni Lee co-ordinated the Longriders project, Sieh Mchawala oversaw the portraits and I worked on *The Oldies* project with the Friends of the Murray Bridge Library and led the community workshop and local exhibition programs. With the limited amount of time for the residency and based on research and previous experience in Port Augusta, one story thread per

filmmaker seemed realistic within the six weeks available. This division of production was primarily driven by the importance of personal relationships between the lead filmmaker and the participants in the story.

5.2.4 The Longriders – Relationships, Trust and Motivation

The Longriders story thread emerged from an interview conducted during research with Mac Hayes who straddled three communities often seen as very separate – Biker, Aboriginal and Christian communities.



Figure 21: Mac Hayes - work, family and Longrider

During research, co-producer Anna Grieve and I were interested in these contrasting and apparently intertwined aspects of Mac's life. However, the Longriders were distrusting of any media due to recent mainstream media vilification. Due to this distrust of the media, relationship development took time. The Longriders did not wish to be vilified again, nor did they wish to be portrayed by the filmmakers as victims of bad press. Nichols (1991) characterizes this type of victimization as placing a person in a scenario they cannot control so they become a documentary stereotype in the filmmaker's argument.⁸

⁸ Nichols, B. (1991) *Representing Reality: Issues and Concepts in Documentary*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press. P. 91.

To address issues around control and representation, Jeni Lee and I worked through existing power structures, in this case the Longriders Council. We agreed to re-negotiate the filmmaker/participant relationship at all stages of filming and take a role of what Winston terms “advocate or enabler.”⁹ We discussed the process of production, feedback and ownership and the possibility of removing content from the website if deemed inappropriate. Outlining how we would approach the filming and how we had been funded was necessary to address issues of control of the documentary image and transparency of our institutional relationships. The first steps in developing trust entailed explaining the underpinning principle of positive deviance and showing examples of the first *Big Stories*, as well as why we felt the Longriders would be a compelling story. We stressed that we did not see this as a public relations exercise for the club. However, it was clear that the Longriders were very aware of the complexity of their group and realized that a sanitized telling of their story would reduce them to stereotypes and superficial representations of villain, victim or hero.

We made clear to the Club that we would not be filming what we needed and then leaving them with no recourse around the representations that we would construct. As one of the founding members noted, “They told us they would show the final cut and we knew they were clever enough to leave out the crap and honest enough

⁹ This recalls Winston’s (p. 162, 2000) understanding that a documentary filmmaker may reconstruct the power relations through taking a position of advocate and enabler.

to show us what they had got.”¹⁰ We agreed that no participant releases were to be signed by the club until they had seen and approved the final cut.¹¹

Nash (2011a) observes that trust between filmmakers and filmed has been found to rely on mutual vulnerability and a shared sense of the documentary project as a valuable goal. The agreement about signing releases, effectively disempowering the filmmakers until participants approved final cut, was significant in establishing trust based on our vulnerability in their eyes. The Longriders realised early in the process that through contributing to the project they would be constructing a representation of their group that would go some way to diluting previous representations. The group would increasingly value putting forward a nuanced series of stories as they continued to experience negative media portrayals elsewhere.¹²

Founding members Mac Hayes and Graham ‘Bonny’ Gibson saw value in using video as a tool for reflection as an extension of the narrative therapy practice both had used in the rehabilitation process.¹³ Both work in Indigenous health care services and at the time of filming, Mac began to incorporate video at the residential rehabilitation centre he managed, Laklinjeri Tambutin Waal (LTW),

¹⁰ Interviews conducted by author with Longriders (2011)

¹¹ We offered the Club copyright ownership of the content. However they saw no purpose (or fairness) in owning the film’s copyright and the *Big Stories* team retained copyright.

¹² Nankervis, D. and Houlihan, L. (2010) Cross Border Bikies Feud Set to Ignite in *Sunday Mail* (South Australia) September 11 2010 edition. Accessed online:
<http://www.adelaidenow.com.au/news/national/cross-border-bikies-feud-set-to-ignite/story-e6frea8c-1225918895583>

¹³ Narrative therapy refers to the ideas and practices of Michael White and David Epston as expressed in White, M., & Epston, D. (1990). *Narrative means to therapeutic ends*. New York: W. W. Norton.

run by Nunkuwarrin Yunti who had overseen the Indigenous Women's Group digital storytelling project *Journeys From Heartache To Hope* outlined in Chapter 3. With this previous project forming a basis for trust, Nunku allowed us inside LTW. Mac facilitated collaboration between residents and Jeni Lee, using video to reflect on their experience of rehabilitation.¹⁴ Mac observes:

*Stories are an important part of how we work. One guy told his story and it was very powerful and healing. It is doing more than just telling a yarn – speaking about struggle and pain then moving on. He said he just found himself talking and it all came out. When his family saw the film it was very emotional for them.*¹⁵

The use of narrative extended beyond their workplaces. The Longriders as a group have a weekly Story Circle. The routine of sharing stories is described by Mac as a way of externalizing problems, forming a collective identity and having a space to reflect, and re-author personal narratives.¹⁶ Another concept of narrative therapy that Mac raised in an early conversation was that of the “outsider witness.”¹⁷ The act of listening or recording is central to this experience and the concept of the camera as witness was something Mac was interested to investigate professionally. Following the showcase of material at the Murray Bridge gallery, Mac would go on to say, “the camera makes people feel that it is anonymous, that they can say anything. Then afterwards they remember that it may have a huge

¹⁴ Some of this video was used to make a story focused mostly on Kelvin and can be viewed here: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/ltw>.

¹⁵ Putland, op.cit, p. 134

¹⁶ Mac Hayes in “The Story Circle: This is Where Change Happens”, part of the Longriders Story Thread. <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/longriders/film/story-circle>

¹⁷ White and Epston, (1990) op. cit. p.15

audience.”¹⁸ The confessional nature of an encounter with the camera creates a false confidence, and the subsequent re-presentation of filmed material outside of the initial encounter, or presentation context (e.g. a therapy group) moves this encounter from private to public with a simultaneous loss of control. There must, therefore, be an opportunity for participants to re-consider their involvement. The advantage of the online form is that content can be removed and a continuing relationship enables this.

The word relationship recurs in many descriptions by documentary makers of how they engage with participants in their film. Aufderheide et al. (2009) have found many filmmakers who enter into a longer-term relationship in which they become stewards of participants’ stories.¹⁹ One filmmaker stated, “I am in their life for a whole year. So there is a more profound relationship, not a journalistic two or three hours.”²⁰ The relationship that emerged between filmmaker Jeni Lee and Mac Hayes has continued into another feature length documentary. The sustainability of this central relationship, as well as the capacity for ongoing re-negotiation and adaptation within a variety of contexts is central, not only to the quality of the stories produced, but also the continued goodwill from the Club towards the stories.

The documentary project provided the Longriders with validation of their community and of the individuals in the club. They have since advocated strongly

¹⁸Putland, op.cit.p. 134

¹⁹Aufderheide, P., Jaszi, P., and Chandra, M. (2009) *Honest Truths: Documentary filmmakers on ethical challenges in their work*, American University Center for Social Media. Accessed 4 October, 2010: http://www.cmsimpact.org/sites/default/files/Honest_Truths_--_Documentary_Filmmakers_on_Ethical_Challenges_in_Their_Work.pdf

²⁰ibid. p.7

for the project to their networks, as well as appearing in photos with the filmmakers, launching the Murray Bridge Gallery show and appearing en masse in full colours on their Harleys at the Adelaide Film Festival premiere. Mac has also found that the reflective benefits observed in the use of video with LTW residents is mirrored in his own experiences watching the films in which he features:

Through telling about what I do a number of things have become clear for me. I live and work in several different worlds and I'm more reflective about that, more aware of what motivates me. I'm in a unique position in that I am privileged to be accepted and can have an influence in these worlds.

5.2.5 Tapping into the Oldies

Everyone has their memories, and it is good to sit down and tell about them. The tears roll down but it needs to be told otherwise the young ones don't get to know.²¹

The Oldies project is based on oral histories recorded by the Friends of the Murray Bridge Library (FOMBL). Twenty-four digital stories were produced, each one a short video (between 45 seconds – 4 minutes) underpinned by a first person story told by an elder citizen from Murray Bridge. Photos, paintings and images provided by the storyteller illustrate the stories. The FOMBL recorded and transcribed another sixteen oral histories and created a series of booklets held at the Murray Bridge Library. The project received an Eric Flynn Community

²¹Putland, op.cit. p.139.

Service Award in 2011, presented for community activities taking place through libraries around Australia.

During the research period, Murray Bridge Council worker Di Gordon referred me to Ann Hughes knowing that Ann had an interest in local oral histories. Ann, along with five other women, had received training on use of a digital audio recorder and scanner from the State Library of South Australia with the intention of recording interviews with elders in the town and scanning their photos to create a book of stories. The group had already undertaken a few interviews and transcribed these. I agreed to create a few digital histories based on this pre-existing visual and audio material. The aim was to explore the viability of creating a digital archive suitable for the *Big Stories* website as well as for FOMBL, their network and local archives. The experiment resulted in a renewed enthusiasm by the FOMBL team, and a core group of six women continued recording and transcribing stories, scanning images and getting release forms signed. Ultimately 40 stories were recorded and transcribed and 24 digital stories were made.

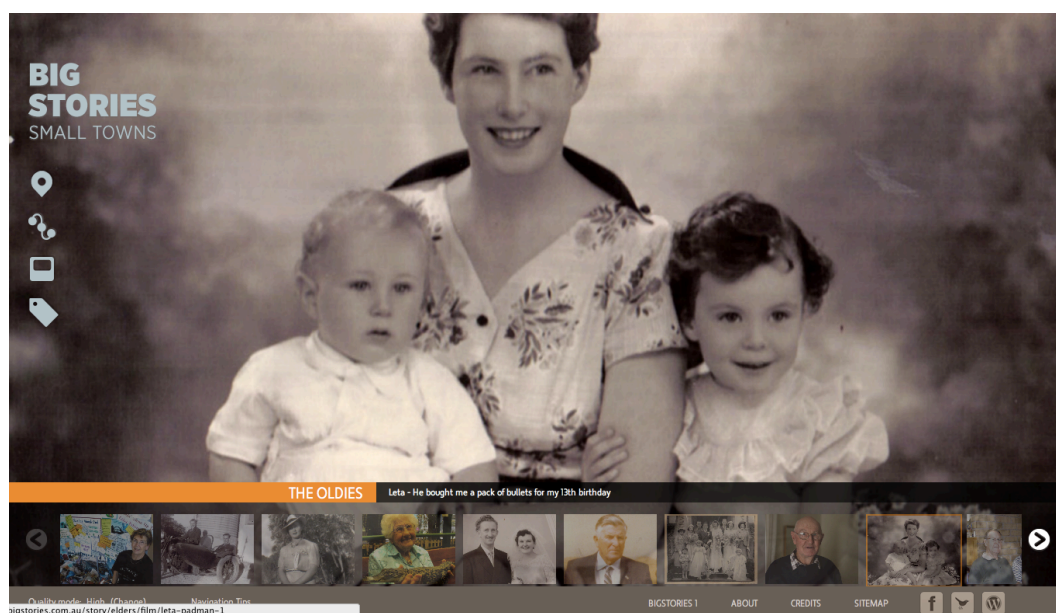


Figure 22: Screenshot of *The Oldies Story Thread*, *Big Stories* website, v.2.

Thumbnails of other stories in the thread are at the bottom of screen.

This project was a continuation for me of previous projects working with older people, including various Seniors programs at the MRC.²² It also had strong connections with the first *Big Stories* project, as the focus of the Men's Shed and Wami Kata stories was on ageing. Whereas the *Longriders* thread featured a diverse range of participation across multiple communities and substantial linear documentary components, the *Oldies* was framed as a one-off collaborative project in which the community participants initiated and controlled the project with technical input by *Big Stories* filmmakers and ongoing support for dissemination. Filmmaking techniques employed in the *Longriders* project such as observational, verité documentary as well as non-film specific techniques such as narrative therapy were not seen by this community as appropriate for this work. The material already captured by the Oldies and the limits to their technical skills and resources, dictated the structure of the content produced. Using only the assets recorded by the Oldies, (digital audio recordings of first person oral histories and scanned personal images) meant the resulting videos resemble the first person, still-image driven form of digital stories generated through the workshop model of the Centre for Digital Storytelling.

Ownership of the stories would remain with the Local Content Producers (LCP) and the *Big Stories* project would license the content for use. Stories would not be released until approved by FOMBL. The *Oldies* team would conduct interviews,

²² I developed and delivered the first series of the ongoing and multi-award winning *Seniors on Screen* project and developed *Aged Care, Digital Lifestyles*, winner of the Australian Centre for Social Innovation's Bold Ideas, Better Lives challenge.

record all audio and scan images. Ann Hughes, who was managing the project, was the bridge between the community and the project. For me, Ann's role constituted the first true LCP in that she initiated the project, produced the content and activated that content at a community level. This extends beyond the role of social animator described by Low (1972) in relation to Fred Earle on Fogo. Like Ann, Earle identified issues and people in the community to speak to those issues. Earle was involved in the production of the films as co-interviewer with Low, but Ann's creative engagement in the process was more extensive as she conducted and recorded interviews, photographed participants, scanned images and gave editorial guidance during post-production. Like Fred Earle, Ann led community discussions and was involved in feedback. Ann and her group also created additional material in the form of a series of books of oral histories drawn from the interviews.

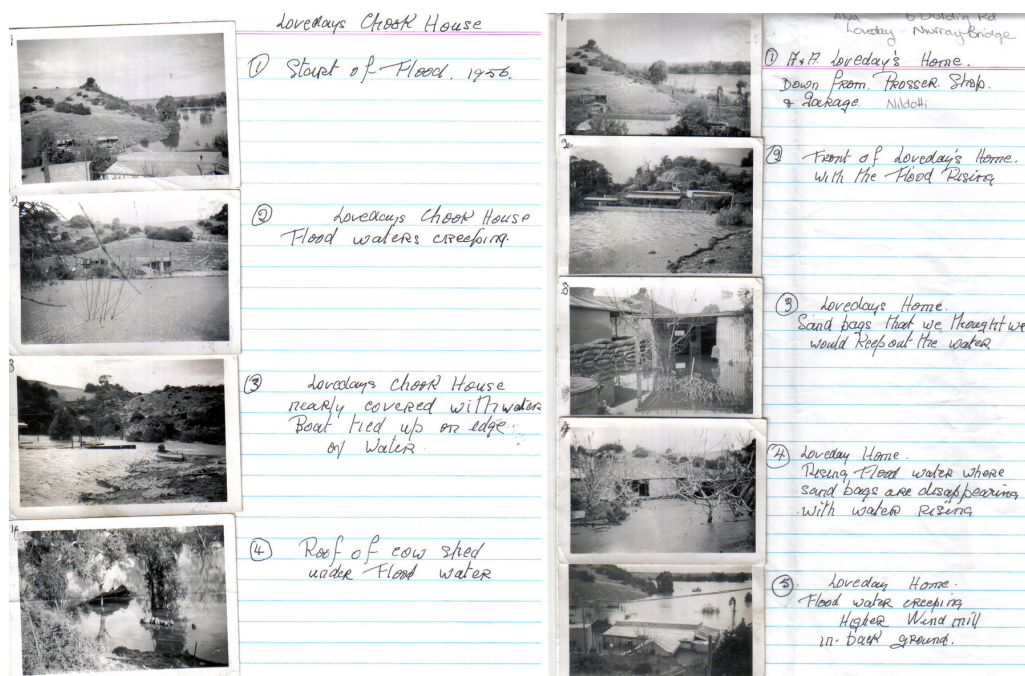


Figure 23: Storyboards by Alva Loveday about 1956 flooding of Murray River

Criticisms of power relations between facilitators and participants abound in participatory media projects, often concluding that handing over the camera does not mitigate against these imbalanced relations, nor exonerate the facilitator in terms of responsibility for representation (Thumim, 2009 and Ruby 1991).

Isolating the facilitator as simply a provider of technical support does little to dilute these issues. Cleaver (1999) asserts that if the role of the professional outsider is restricted to ‘facilitator’ this may stand in the way of “genuine dialogue and exchange.”²³ Local facilitators often come to an encounter with a pre-existing power relationship firmly inscribed between themselves and the storyteller and pre-existing assumptions about the form and function of the story and the project as a whole. Participants also bring their own perspectives and expectations to this encounter shaped in advance by their relationship with the local facilitator and their perception of their place in the community. Including a local facilitator does not automatically result in unhindered representation, as the following comment from a Murray Bridge community member shows:

*This is a wonderful project but it's a pity we don't hear more from some of the other people involved – it is always the same ones who are asked to stand up and talk. This gives people the idea that is what our community is about.*²⁴

Ann and other LCPs in different towns focused on issues they felt were important to their understanding of community. With the exception of one of the Banlung content producers Lam Suot, who sought a “cultural exchange through media” in

²³ Cleaver, F. (1999) Ch. 3, in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. eds. (2001) *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, London: Zed Books.

²⁴ Putland, op.cit. p. 132

order to learn about different ethnic minorities in Ratanakiri, other producers have consolidated a vision or voice that reinforced their opinions of their community.

As in Turner's (1991, 2002) work with the Kayapo, the Murray Bridge project involved consideration of social hierarchies. Communities are complex arenas of competing interests and none of the sites that we have visited through *Big Stories* are an exception. We have inevitably encountered local rivalries and politics, and have had to negotiate between following a story and the need to keep everyone happy. Of the 40 interviews conducted by the Oldies' team there was a fairly balanced gender selection (60% female, 40% male) with the imbalance in selection possibly a result of longer life spans for women and the gender of interviewers (all female). However in terms of including diverse cultural backgrounds, the majority of interviewees were Anglo-Australian. Of the 24 videos only one person was from a non-U.K. migrant background and there was no Indigenous representation.

Imposing my ideology of inclusion on this project may not have been appropriate, given the creative autonomy promised to LCPs. However, I included Indigenous and migrant elder voices in other stories to reflect the demographic make-up of the town and framed this authorial input as re-balancing. Stories from the local Indigenous Ngarrindjeri people and from migrants (new and old) form a part of a series of filmmaker-created portraits that responded to a desire for accurate reflection of local demography. I felt that the principles of the project required attention to preserving poly-vocality, not only to make the website reflective of the diversity of community but also to avoid alienating possible partners. My

vision of *The Oldies* was that although it was a highly satisfying project, we needed additional stories to offer a more socially, culturally and politically accurate portrayal of the town. This illustrated the authorial impulse to select, interpret and frame, as pointed out by Chambers (2005). While my feeling is that this is the right thing to do, there is no measure of certainty around this, and it represented an intervention about which I am still conflicted. Increased diversity of representation in the stories is gained at the cost of a dilution of the Oldies' authorial impulse.

When the facilitator or an institution controls context, individual representation is filtered through that context, and this filtering must be acknowledged. Thumim's (2009) essay on the BBC's *Capture Wales* project strikes a note of caution against the expectation that self-representation necessarily equals truth.²⁵ Choices made at a community level may be problematic, due to intra-community disagreements based on personal preconception and pre-existing social hierarchies and networks.

The process of this project, the results that emerged and the action that I took to present what I considered a balanced representation are all in keeping with my understanding of the *Big Stories* project. Absolutes have no place in this discussion. I don't believe that this is a perfect solution, simply the best one available at the time. It is raised in order to address unavoidable questions concerning the site of control, authorial engagement and the concept of a genuine community dialogue. Despite any shortcomings, this project represents a high

²⁵Thumim, N. (2009) "Everyone has a story to tell" : Mediation and self-representation in two UK Institutions" p. 12.

level of collaboration in which the agency of the LCP was realized to the best extent possible in the prevailing context.

5.3 RAUKKAN



Figure 24: Aaron Love outside Raukkan Church

It fits well with Aboriginal ways of being and passing on knowledge through stories... It's very powerful, people really responded.²⁶

On the picturesque shores of Lake Alexandrina, Raukkan consists of a community settlement of 167 people and a farm holding totalling an area of approximately 15000 acres. It is approximately 150 kilometres southeast of Adelaide and 80km from Murray Bridge. Raukkan has been a cultural, spiritual and economic centre for the Indigenous Ngarrindjeri people for many thousands of years. It was

²⁶Putland, op.cit. p. 134

renamed Point McLeay Mission in 1859 by the Aborigines' Friends Association (AFA) and reverted to Raukkan in 1982. George Taplin started the Mission and wrote two historically important books *The Nyarrenyeri* (1870) and *The Native Tribes of South Australia* (1879). He worked closely with a number of Ngarrindjeri people such as James Unaipon, who is described as the unaccredited co-author of *The Native Tribes of South Australia*.²⁷ Unaipon's son David, an inventor and preacher, is pictured on the Australian \$50 note, along with the local Raukkan Church. The Mission experienced a steady decline from the early 1900s due to environmental degradation impacting on traditional lifestyles, new industries such as wool washing, abusive behaviour by many of the Chief Inspectors, inconsistent and racist government policy and management, and the severing of ties by the AFA in 1916. In 1974 Point McLeay was handed back to the Ngarrindjeri people. In recent years, the Raukkan Community Council (RCC) and the community-owned business, Raukkan Incorporated, revived the economic fortunes of the community through innovative farm and land management programs and diversification into education, tourism and environmental services.²⁸ At the time of the *Big Stories* residency in late 2010, the community was experiencing higher levels of social autonomy and livelihood security than at any time in living memory.

²⁷ Jenkins, G. (1979), *Conquest of the Ngarrindjeri*, Rigby, Adelaide.

²⁸ Raukkan Incorporated has cleared over \$1 million of farm debt inside five years and 2009 was the first year the farm moved into profit after being decimated by drought and the decline of dairy farming in the region.

5.3.1 Scope of Participation

Jeni Lee, Sieh Mchawala and I spent six weeks in Raukkan in a house provided by RCC. Raukkan was the smallest community that we had worked in and we hoped that this would result in a higher percentage of people participating and a more detailed representation of the community. The opportunity to work with three LCPs, who had been identified by the Council because of their previous involvement in media, also represented a chance to enhance local authorial capacity, to develop longer-term individual creative relationships that could be sustained beyond the scope of the residency.

Table 2 provides an overview of the *Big Stories* activities in Raukkan:

RAUKKAN ACTIVITIES		
ACTION	NUMBER	OUTCOME
Partnerships	13	Raukkan Community Council, Raukkan Primary School, Raukkan Incorporated, Ngopamuldi Aboriginal Corporation
Training	3	Local Content Producers trained
Training	1	Work experience placement at Free Range Future (Vernon Walker)
Production	30	Additional interviews with Ngarrindjeri people or others with connection to Raukkan
Production	8	Videos produced by filmmakers for online: 6 individual stories, 1 Raukkan community video, 1 Raukkan Primary School video. Total Duration:
Production	59	Community members in Raukkan interviewed, photographed or filmed
Production	1	Aboriginal Football Carnival video produced by Local Content Producers Victor Koolmatrice with Vernon Walker. Duration: 18 minutes
Production	1	Video Letter produced by LCPs (exchange with Banlung).
Production	1	Unfinished video: The Elders (as at August 2012), Proposed duration: 12 minutes
Exhibition	500	Estimated attendance at Big Stories Exhibition at Raukkan Primary School (RPS) 150 th anniversary featuring video; photos and archival photos. Also filming of the event for community use.
Exhibition	47	Exhibition of video and photo content in Raukkan

		Hall at end of residency to community.
Exhibition	681	Attendance at exhibition of video and photo series as part of Murray Bridge Gallery Show, including photos by Local Content Producer Belinda Koolmatrerie
Exhibition	7864	Views of Raukkan videos through Big Stories' LCP Victor Koolmatrerie's Youtube page: SWillThaSWaY at February 2013 (http://www.youtube.com/user/SWillThaSWaY/videos). Also extensive Facebook and other YouTube based community engagement ²⁹

Table 2: Main activities in Raukkan

Due to the proximity to Murray Bridge, there was also crossover in production, content creation and exhibition. With multiple screening and exhibition outcomes of the project, there were over 4000 viewings of Raukkan content produced during the residency in both offline and online formats³⁰ with 617 people viewing

²⁹ A 49 second clip Owen Love's goal in the AFC final (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i-GPIb1VP1E>), filmed by Big Stories and uploaded to Local Content Producer Victor Koolmatrerie's Youtube channel, had 3813 views as at 1 February 2012.

³⁰ Raukkan based content produced by the Big Stories team and viewed between August 30 and mid-November 2010. Figures are:

- Owen Love's goal on Youtube: 1564
- Catch Luke Wilson if Ya Can: 875
- Facebook page views: 715
- Big Stories Exhibition at Raukkan Primary School: 515
- Individual Screenings and Consultation: 54
- Big Stories Cut Out Screening at Raukkan Town Hall: 48
- Raukkan Video Letter to Banlung: 104

TOTAL: 3875

(Online viewing may represent multiple viewings by individuals, or group based viewings with multiple people watching and only one view counted. Raukkan Primary School figures are based on attendance at the school.)

content offline in Raukkan as part of screenings and a school exhibition open to the public.³¹

5.3.2 Research/ Context/ Interest

The Country Arts SA community reference group for the Regional Centre of Culture had identified that Raukkan community had wanted to capture their narrative history for some time and were seeking forums to share their cultural heritage.³² We had been advised by a number of other people that the project would be both welcomed and useful in the town. We met with Derek Walker, Executive Officer of RCC, CEO of Raukkan Inc. and Manager of Ngopamuldi Aboriginal Corporation (Ngopamuldi) and Clyde Rigney, Manager RCC. There was local interest in training and work experience in documentary production and web design. With events such as the Aboriginal Football Carnival, organized by members of Raukkan community and the Raukkan Primary School's 150th anniversary, there was an interest in archiving these events and taking the



(Screenshot of post views of Big Stories Facebook page between August 30 and November 15).

³¹ This figure is a combination of the Raukkan Primary School 150th anniversary *Big Stories* exhibition (500), a town hall screening (68) and one on one screenings, council viewings and feedback (estimated 50 people).

³²Putland, op.cit. p. 65

opportunity to capture stories from elders who would return to the town for these events.

There had been recent work related to the community managed farm, Indigenous land management programs, tourism, local infrastructure and education, and RCC saw an opportunity to express its history, values and vision either within the *Big Stories* project or through the development of local creative and technical capacity. As the spiritual and cultural homeland of the Ngarrindjeri nation, there is a rich tradition of story and art making in the area.³³ The recent community developments offered RCC an opportunity to position the community as a role model.³⁴

There were low levels of home computer ownership with less than half of the houses owning a computer and only half of these online.³⁵ However public computers and internet were available in the Council and Raukkan Inc. offices and students had limited access at the primary school. Despite moderate levels of access, there appeared to be a high use of Facebook. A search of Facebook revealed 11 Raukkan groups, places and pages.³⁶ Ngarrindjeri-related groups and pages were more common and more popular.³⁷

³³ The town produced notable artists from author James Unaipon in the 19th century to comedian Kevin Kropinyeri.

³⁴ Discussions with Derek Walker and Clyde Rigney May 2010 and October 2010. Also see Raukkan Community Council support letter included in Appendix 1: Big Stories Production Proposal.

³⁵ Interview by author with Derek Walker and Clyde Rigney of Raukkan Community Council and Raukkan Incorporated, October 2010.

An informal survey of participants during the residency also reflects this estimate.

³⁶ Places: Raukkan (local business) 90 people here and 65 likes.

Groups: 3 Raukkan groups with Raukkan Netball team the most populous with 54 members

5.3.3 Community, Silence and Space

The Raukkan residency proved problematic for a variety of reasons. It had been timed to start as the RCC was organizing the Aboriginal Football and Netball Carnival. This was at Council's request as they felt filming the activity of the Carnival would be beneficial for the community. However, the Carnival was followed by school holidays and the population of Raukkan more than halved. For nearly two weeks there was barely any activity in town. This made it extremely difficult to form relationships and represented a slow start to the residency.

The start of school meant a return to regular routines in the community. However it was clear by this stage that the RCC had not discussed with the wider community the presence of the filmmakers and relationships with the LCPs had not been clarified. It was difficult to develop relationships in such a short time frame and to offer a continuity of experience with the LCPs. In all other settings there has been a long period of relationship development with community leaders and members who have then advocated on behalf of the project.

We had planned to distribute cameras to people in the community and undertake facilitated storytelling projects, but few people engaged in this. We discussed stopping the residency early but decided the best approach was to simply wait and

Pages: 8 Raukkan pages with Raukkan Back to Back receiving 265 likes (relating to football).

Results found through searching 'Raukkan' on Facebook:

<http://www.facebook.com/search/results.php?q=rauukkan&type=all&init=quick&tas=0.8565140878781676>

³⁷ 5 pages named Ngarrindjeri (<https://www.facebook.com/search/str/ngarrindjeri/pages-named>), 16 groups named Ngarrindjeri (<https://www.facebook.com/search/str/ngarrindjeri/groups-named>)

Results found through searching 'Ngarrindjeri' on Facebook

build relationships. We did this through birthday and dinner parties, at community events such as a disco at the town hall, weekend BBQs, many cups of tea and participating in any activities available, from after-school basketball to the community shop and garden. There was an increase in community engagement and filming activity in the final three weeks, with the School's 150th celebrations as well as work with farm and Ngopamuldi natural resource management workers.

The decision of many Raukkan residents to allow us into their homes with cameras was not taken lightly. Many were shy or distrustful and other responsibilities of work, family and community necessarily came before the filming. The degree of participation also ebbed and flowed. Two of the most engaged advocates of the project had an unexplained change of heart and did not wish to appear on screen. We had made stories and screened the stories back to them. While initial approval was given, after re-consideration they requested the films not be screened. We honoured our commitment even though they were some of the strongest stories.

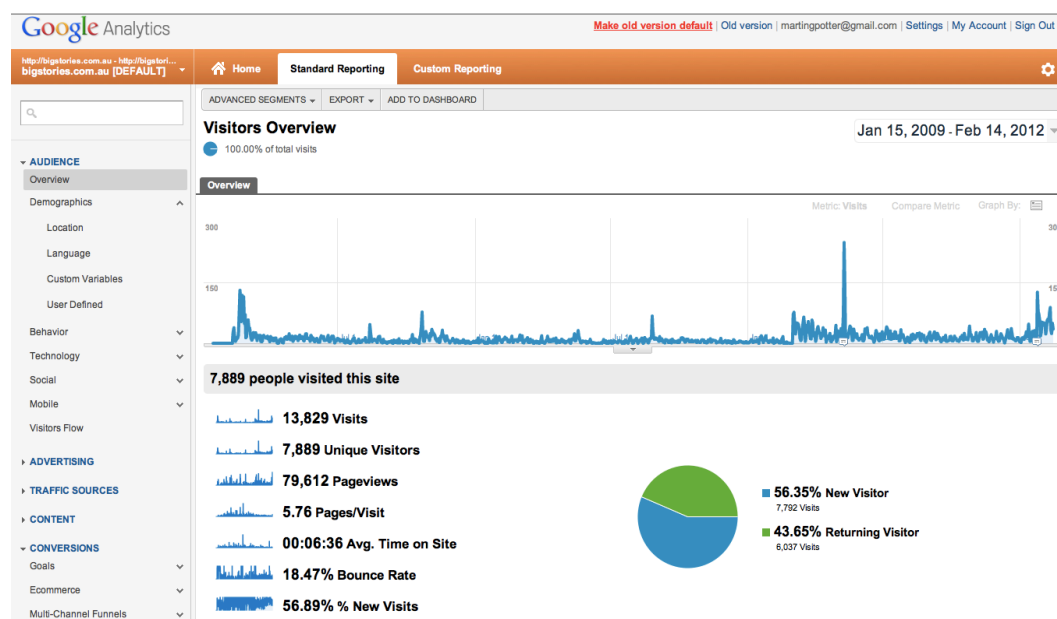
Kelleher (2011), reflecting on Foucault's (1982) three inter-related "silencing" controls, observes that revealing Indigenous knowledge through storytelling is closely tied to trust, and it may be that the degree of trust that existed with participants in this case was not sufficient to allow the stories to be revealed to a broader public. However, feedback from community members indicated our approach was appreciated:

*They left it open and there was no pressure to be involved. So people felt in control. One woman didn't want her face on film so they showed her hands instead and heard her voice.*³⁸

In the previous example participants withdrew from the project. In other cases participants were excluded from the project on editorial grounds. Jeni and Sieh had filmed two long and deeply personal stories that both represented the first time the person had spoken in public about particular experiences. However, limitations related to the web presentation of *Big Stories* created issues. The limitations were partly financial as higher web-hosting costs result from longer videos, but the main limitation is editorial. The site had never featured videos longer than 12 minutes. Site analytics indicated viewers stayed for around 7 minutes and watched one or two stories each time.³⁹ With this in mind, we placed temporal limits on stories. As a result, it was impossible to edit coherent stories from the two interviews as each story was described over the entirety of the recording, in one case close to two hours. To edit down these stories to a few

³⁸Putland, op.cit. p.132

³⁹ Image below from 14 February 2011 Google Analytics page for bigstories.com.au:



minutes was beyond our capacity. Such substantial removal of content would render an emotive and detailed story in a way that would not reflect the intent of the storyteller or the feeling experienced by the listener (in this case the filmmaker). To place the majority of the story online was an unsatisfactory compromise as it would be unwieldy (for both filmmakers and viewers), inconsistent with other stories and expensive. This would also expose the storytellers, and there was an acknowledgement of the sensitivity of these particular stories at that time. Jeni, Sieh and I made a decision not to produce a story from these interviews and discussed the decision with the respective interviewees. In each case, the filmmaker who had conducted the interview led this discussion with the interviewee. One of the participants observed:

It was interesting how they went about it, So much more than documentary making, more like a counseling approach taking time to understand things from people's perspectives.⁴⁰

Ultimately, the Raukkan films produced represent the most engaging films we were able to make in the time available, with the access we had and the permissions we were given. However, this resulted in a smaller scope of representation than other towns. Whilst many people got involved in some shape or form, this was often in the context of supporting the project or offering guidance or appearing in the community-based videos such as *You Get the Raukkan Fever*, *Welcome to Raukkan School* and *The Elders*.⁴¹ We recorded some powerful stories from individuals, but with only four individual portraits online, there was a lack of diversity and depth. Derek Walker observed:

⁴⁰Putland.op.cit. p. 135

⁴¹ Raukkan Fever can be viewed at: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/raukkan-past-present-and-future>; Rakkan School: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/school-film>

*Some of the stories have been really important for the individual who is telling the story to get it out. That is one thing. And the story may be interesting for others to see and hear about their life of hardship. But the stories do not necessarily reflect the experience of the whole community and yet people who watch get a perception of the community. So we are trying to think carefully: what kind of message does it give about our community? Our job is to respect everyone's opinion. We have a responsibility to work towards a positive way forward, another direction for our community.*⁴²

There is complexity to representation when a community as a whole asks how they describe experience, compared to individual members of the community. We put forward some deeply personal and individual stories,⁴³ but in terms of a narrative that reflects the whole community, these are misleading. A narrative of community may transcend, or be different from the narratives of individual community members. This experience in Raukkan brought into question assumptions of that had been established in the experience of other towns.

Derek seeks to balance individual expression with a positive community representation. If both individual expression and community representation are aligned this makes the proposition simple. However, individual expression varied substantially from what Derek saw as representative of the wider community in this case. Derek's comment reflects a community that is structured so that a few

⁴² Putland, op.cit.

⁴³ For example two stories from Robert Blades: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/blades-jail> and <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/blades-dog>

people control power. A grassroots, participatory approach runs counter to these norms and may be misrepresentative.

In previous residencies we had undertaken a process that focussed on community voices, not the voice of community. Plurality was the principle, based on the assumption that homogenous notions of community misrepresent the complexity and diversity of any community and that the notion of a unified community voice was unrealistic. Derek identifies the importance for Raukkan, as both a small and marginalised community, in presenting a united and positive front and acknowledges the issue of audience perception of the community as a whole.

Whilst some individuals in the community have lives of hardship, most people connected to the community (including those living through tough times) acknowledge Raukkan as a positive and empowering place. This is reflected in all the community-based stories on the *Big Stories* website. The RCC also acknowledges the limitations of the community and seeks to address these limitations through both external partnerships and local development initiatives. The community reconstructs itself through a visionary and hopeful position projected to potential partners and also to members of the community.

We were unable to consolidate key local relationships especially in terms of a social animator who would be able to navigate what Low and Nemtin (1968) described as the “precarious position” between definition and recognition, and division. Representation became an issue and raised the question of balancing individual expression against Raukkan’s desire for communal representation and

community narrative. Criticisms of participatory processes emphasizing the general over the specific, or projecting only the official view of the community abound (Kothari p. 146, in Cooke and Kothari eds, 2001). We had managed to avoid these issues.

In a marginalized community such as Raukkan, with fewer options to engage with institutional mediation, there was also a need to project an official view. In this cultural context, a projection of visionary cohesion was crucial, as it had been in Port Augusta. Negotiating this view required key individuals in the community conferring with the community. The power and status of these individuals is dependent on kinship, personal relationships and connections in the community.⁴⁴ Relationships are at the heart of these negotiations. A balance is necessary between re-affirmation of power and a genuine belief in the value of collaboration and participation. This is Nemtin and Low's (1968) "precarious position." It is clear from our experience in Raukkan that only community members who already have standing and relationships in the community can negotiate this.

Acknowledging shortcomings of the process is instrumental to enabling future projects to be delivered successfully. Adapting a participatory process to fit a community context can take time. Building relationships, then trust takes time. Participation is conditional on participants' priorities. If other, more essential aspects of life are prioritised then the participation will be slower, or less, and it is up to the facilitators to manage these limitations. Working through local contexts

⁴⁴ John Hailey comes to a similar conclusion in his chapter in *Participation: The New Tyranny*. Hailey, J. (2001) "Beyond the Formulaic: Process and Practice in South Asian NGOs" in Cooke, B. and Kothari, U. eds. (2001) *Participation: The New Tyranny?*, London: Zed Books. P.96.

and power structures is crucial. Consultation is essential and although the space for creation may be characterized by difference, a balance must be made with community priorities and this will take more time.

5.4 LOCAL EXHIBITION: UNPACKING *BIG STORIES* AT THE MURRAY BRIDGE REGIONAL GALLERY EXHIBITION

In Port Augusta, we premiered the stories and films with a screening at a local cinema and a photo exhibition in shopfronts. It was the first time the groups involved could come together and see all the stories that were made. It was also the first time we were able to get a broad range of feedback from the community. We sought to replicate this screening event in Murray Bridge. However there were fewer opportunities to put on a high impact event. As a less remote community than Port Augusta, Murray Bridge residents had other opportunities for entertainment both in and outside of the town, and the local cinema was poorly attended due to superior facilities in Mount Barker. Other local cultural events similarly attracted low audiences and participation rates.⁴⁵

We successfully tendered for an exhibition space at the Murray Bridge Regional Gallery. This would enable us to produce a non-linear showcase that would run over a month, allowing more people to come, potential multiple visitations and diverse inputs for feedback. The exhibition was a mix of photos, video

⁴⁵ Putland, op.cit. Particularly: Appendix, Attachment 2 Overview of Ripples Program and Attendance Statistics (no page numbers given), and commentary on p. 5 (“negative comments related to lower than desirable participation rates”), p.170 (“no obvious changes in patterns of participation...”) and p.172 (Barriers to Involvement and Awareness of Regional Centre of Culture).

projections, TVs, computers, LED displays and books, as well as borrowed objects from the Longriders clubhouse. Images used in the exhibition and photos taken at the exhibition offer an insight into how the project was presented in the gallery space:



Figure 25: Big Stories Exhibition 1

(Left) Digital Storytellers and photographers Shaun Patrick and Barbara Martin view Shaun's photos; (Right) Computers with pre-loaded Big Stories website in Murray Bridge Regional Gallery



Figure 26: Big Stories Exhibition 2

(Left) Wide view of gallery with Oldies TV Wall in background; (Right) Opening night



Figure 27: Big Stories Exhibition 3

Longriders Exhibit (Left and Right). Loop of Mac Hayes filmed from a camera attached to his handlebars as he rides his bike from Murray Bridge on a Longriders run, plays behind the main Longriders story thread on DVD.



Figure 28: Big Stories Exhibition 4

Dreams Exhibit (Left) Photo montage of 24 Dreams photos; (Centre) the Dreams with LED scrolling text on right of frame; (Right) wide of Dreams photos on left of frame, Oldies on right.

This exhibition was designed to provide opportunities to discuss the material that had been produced. A variety of mechanisms were established to enable this. A wall chart offered an opportunity for a quick response for attendees on the opening night:

Which one of the following best describes your response/s to the exhibition?

Use the black dots on your glass to show us.
(glasses available at the bar – only 3 dots per person please!)

You can use your 3 dots as you choose:
1 dot in each of 3 boxes
OR
3 dots in 1 box
OR
2 dots in 1 box, 1 dot in another box.

If you would like to give us more detail please complete the feedback form and leave it in the box provided. Thank you!

<p>surprised</p>	<p>interested</p>	<p>impressed</p>	<p>inspired</p>
<p>moved</p>	<p>uncertain</p>	<p>amused</p>	<p>informed</p>

Vox pops were invited from opening night attendees and Putland (2011) records a variety of positive feedback touching on diversity of stories, quality of presentation, ease of access, the power of the stories and memory.⁴⁷

Attendance records kept by gallery staff show 150 people attending the opening night and a further 681 people attending over 25 days. Feedback forms were left at the gallery with 11 responses completed over the following month.

Respondents were positive in feedback with “Impressed” (10 responses of 11) and “Interested” (8 of 11) as leading responses. No one selected the more ambivalent choices offered – “Confronted”, “Uncertain” or “Unsatisfied.” Putland observed at the Murray Bridge exhibition that the participants in attendance seemed most attracted to viewing the stories in which they had been involved. For some, this may reflect the fact that this was the first time they had had access to the stories on screen. But it also indicates a sense of ownership and pride in their involvement as expressed by one participant:

⁴⁶ TEXT READS:

Which of the following best describes your response/s to the exhibition?

Use the black dots on your glass to show us. Glasses available at the bar – only 3 dots per person please. Young use your 3 dots as you choose:

1 dot in each of 3 boxes

OR 3 dots in 1 box

OR 2 dots in 1 box, 1 dot in another box.

If you like to give us more detail please complete the feedback form and leave it in the box provided. Thank you!

Chart designed by Christine Putland and she features the summary of responses in her report .p.

137

⁴⁷ Ibid. p. 138

*I didn't think my life was important, not really, not compared to others. All these years I thought it was just ordinary. Now I can see it is important for people to know how it was, how we had it hard.*⁴⁸

While Putland identifies what she describes as self-interest, the feedback also spoke of a strong connection to a sense of shared identity, of fitting in and of “common values within diversity.”⁴⁹ Some of the comments reflect on the sense of connection or commonality within diversity that the presentation mode encourages:

*It's funny when you see it all together like this. You know your own story but when you see it all you see how it fits together.*⁵⁰

Putland observes that community-based training, and mentoring continued to bear fruit as community members applied their skills in ongoing initiatives.⁵¹ Personal letters indicate that the practice of making work continues in diverse ways. Filmmakers Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchawala continue to work with a number of individuals to support the creation of work.

Putland concludes that the project made a significant contribution in achieving the broader program goals of the RCC around arts and cultural development, community capacity building and individual health and wellbeing. She finds anecdotal evidence of increased awareness of different groups within the

⁴⁸ Putland, op.cit.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid. p. 130

community, “sowing the seeds of a stronger sense of community identity”⁵² and concludes *Big Stories* has encouraged a sense of identity and pride in which participants felt safe in sharing their stories. The Oldies project was identified as a program highlight of the RCC.

The majority of feedback recorded by Putland was favourable, although a single negative comment re-affirms Carpentier’s (2009) findings that an end result that is perceived as professional or high quality is also important in making participants feel proud, valued or special,

*I think it needs to aim higher and make it powerful and artistic not just ordinary. It is easy to satisfy some people but I am picky. So it should be done properly, it needs to be beautiful. I want people to be impressed, not go home and forget about it.*⁵³

Creating participatory processes is not enough for many participants. There is a desire for the work “to be beautiful” and to make an impact on viewers.

Carpentier (2009) argues aesthetic, narrative and technical qualities as defined by professionalised media are deeply rooted within audiences and need to be met in order for the work to be valued positively. Quality of representation that supports the participation of media non-professionals is appreciated. However, simply using new technology or participatory processes does not shield the work from criticism. If audiences and participants fail to be engaged by the quality of the work or cannot see the social relevance of the work they remain indifferent and disconnected.

⁵² *ibid.* p. 139

⁵³ *ibid.* p. 136

Beyond the responses of participants and viewers, the exhibition at Murray Bridge offered me a final insight. With more public and community events, especially unique exhibitions, there is more engagement with process overall. The sooner locally produced outcomes can be creatively displayed the more rapid the integration of the filmmakers into community and the stronger the local engagement with the process.

5.5 CONCLUSION

The lessons learned in the first iteration of *Big Stories* around multiplicity of engagement, flexible processes, diversity of partnerships and acknowledgement of community hierarchies were reaffirmed in this version of the project. Working within a system that enabled participant input across all stages was valued by participants and aided in developing trust. We aimed for an environment of decentralised authority that enabled a practical capacity to adapt in marginalised settings. Individual community-based advocates or liaisons for the project were central to the success of the residency. In Murray Bridge the close relationships with Mac Hayes of the Longriders and Ann Hughes of FOMBL resulted in positive processes and acclaimed work. In Raukkan we experienced issues as a result of a lack of initial advocacy from the community liaison and both the residency and end products were compromised. As a general principle the best work continued to emerge from the closest relationships. When filmmakers and participants find a context in which they can share a productive tension of the practical and imaginative, and the critical and visionary the relationships and artefacts that emerge from this are inspiring and transformative.

Most significantly, it was in Raukkan that fundamental assumptions were challenged through the need to balance individual desires to share particular stories with community mediation. Derek expressed, on behalf of Raukkan's community leaders the need for "a positive way forward" whilst still honouring self-expression. This is Nemtin and Low's (1968) precarious position – the intersection between definition and recognition, and division. Relationships are at the heart of these negotiations and for this balance to be achieved to the satisfaction of all concerned these relationships need to be underpinned by the values articulated by Freire (1970) in relation to dialogical practice.

CHAPTER 6: *BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS* – CAMBODIA, BANLUNG



Figure 30: Some of the people involved in “Big Stories” in Banlung

6.1 INTRODUCTION

The residency in Banlung differs from other *Big Stories* residencies. The project was initially motivated by a desire to explore the process of delivery of *Big Stories* outside Australia. Additional motivations were to investigate the process of delivery within a restricted timeframe, and to test remote use of the Content Management System (CMS). There was a lower budget available to the project with \$5000 to cover local wages and transport costs that imposed further limits on this residency. Due to these motivations it was necessary to identify support networks and media activity already present in a town that would enable the project to be achieved within the limitations of budget and time. Banlung was identified as the best fit during the research and development process, as outlined in section 6.4.

Located 636 kilometres north east of Phnom Penh, Banlung is the capital of Ratanakiri Province in Cambodia, bordering Vietnam and Laos. Banlung is a commercial centre with a population of 14,699 in the town and 23,888 in Banlung District in 2010.¹ Key industries are rubber, gems, timber and cash crops. This is a land of opportunity for developers keen to take advantage of cheap farmland and natural resources. Logging, particularly illegal logging, has become a major

¹ National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning. (2008) *General Population Census of Cambodia 2008 - Provisional population totals*, 3 September 2008. Downloaded from: http://www.stat.go.jp/english/info/meetings/cambodia/pdf/pre_rep1.pdf

van den Berg, C. and Palith, P. (2000) *On people, roads and land Immigration and its consequences for Highland communities in Ratanakiri*. IDRC and CRDI.

Haynes Sumaylo, K. K., (2009) *Current population figures from Mapping Vulnerability To Natural Hazards in Ratanakiri*, International Organization for Migration (IOM), IOM Phnom Penh Report (English)

problem.² Tourism has increased from 6,000 visitors in 2002 to 105,000 in 2008.³ The arrival from the south of ethnic Khmer (Cambodians) has tripled Banlung's population in the last 20 years with the percentage of Khmer population increasing from 8% of total population in 1992 to 26% in 2008.⁴ Ratanakiri has a diverse Indigenous population, referred to by the Cambodian government as Khmer-Loeu (meaning Upper-Khmer or Highland Khmer). During the time of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) up to 60% of the Indigenous population were killed. Around 65,000 Khmer Loeu now remain in Ratanakiri and their traditional livelihoods are under threat.⁵

The Indigenous Tampuon people have lived for thousands of years near the volcanic lake, Yeak Loam ('Giant's Lake') at the edge of town. Other Indigenous populations include the Kreung and Jirai. For these locals, this lake is home to the

² Baird, I. (2008) "Reflecting on changes in Ratanakiri province, Northeastern Cambodia" in *Watershed* Vol. 12 No. 3 November 2008 Pages 65-73.

Brown, G. and Naung, S.O. (2011) *An Assessment of the Information and Media Needs of Indigenous peoples in Cambodia*, Building Community Voices, May 2011. pp 14 – 29. P.50

Haynes Sumaylo, K. K., (2009). *Current population figures from Mapping Vulnerability To Natural Hazards in Ratanakiri*, International Organization for Migration (IOM), IOM Phnom Penh Report (English)

³ Kurczy, Stephen (2009) "Cambodia's last frontier falls". *Asia Times* (June 16, 2009). Accessed Online (June, 2010) from: http://www.atimes.com/atimes/Southeast_Asia/KF16Ae01.html

⁴ The overall population in Ratanakiri province has increased from around 67 000 to 150 000 over the same period.

1992 population figures from;

van den Berg, C. and Palith, P. (2000), op.cit.

2008 population figures from;

Haynes Sumaylo, K. K., (2009). op.cit.

⁵ Indigenous People NGO Network and NGO Forum on Cambodia, in cooperation with Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP). February 2010, *The Rights of Indigenous People in Cambodia*, Report submitted to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (76th Session, 2010).

spirits of the land, water and forest and a sacred feature of Indigenous identity.⁶

Indigenous people in Ratanakiri have traditionally had little contact with the cash economy, relying on barter exchange. Now, many farmers are shifting from traditional crops and slash and burn agriculture to cash crops such as cashews, sugar cane, mangoes and oil palms.⁷ While average income for Indigenous people in Ratanakiri is \$US5 a month, possessions such as motorcycles, televisions and karaoke sets have become extremely desirable.

Within Indigenous communities in Cambodia, perception of distance from authorial control in media is compounded by a lack of shared language and cultural separation from the dominant Khmer culture. Baird (2011) says that cultural and language distinctions between ethnic minorities are rarely acknowledged and *Chunciet* (ethnic groups) are constructed in terms of their otherness from the majority Khmer. There is widespread racism against Indigenous people, characterized by use of pejorative labels including *Samre* (similar to hillbilly) and *Phnong* (a descriptor probably derived from the ethnic Pnong people in Monduliri, but applied to all Indigenous people and loosely translated in Khmer as savage).⁸ Even the term *Khmer Loeu* was viewed sceptically by Charles Meyer, King Sihanouk's adviser in the 1960s, as an attempt

⁶ Ironside, J. (1999). *Culture and Agriculture - Hill Tribe Farming Systems from an Agro-ecological Perspective: A Case Study of Yeak Laom Commune, Ratanakiri Province, Cambodia*. IDRC/UNDP-CAREERE - Community Based Natural Resource Management Programme Ratanakiri, November 1999. P. 7

⁷ *ibid.*

⁸ Baird, (2011) "The Construction of Indigenous Peoples" in *Alterities in Asia: Reflections on Identity and Regionalism*, ed. Leong Yew (2011), Routledge, New York. p. 162

to negate the cultural identities of the Indigenous peoples and subsume their identity within the Khmer nation.⁹

There have been recent attempts to re-dress these imbalances. The passing of the 2001 Land Law was the first formal recognition in Cambodian law of the rights of non-Khmer Indigenous peoples. The law protects Indigenous peoples in accessing their traditional land and contains a framework for acknowledging traditional communal ownership of land.¹⁰ However, fuzziness around legal status of community, lack of enforcement and knowledge of the law has seen land-grabbing, illegal land sales and the granting of large land concessions increase dramatically since 2001, leading to land alienation of Indigenous peoples.¹¹ Despite this, a number of formally recognized Indigenous community organisations in Ratanakiri have been supported to take legal communal ownership of land.

Indigenous education was, until recently, perceived as oxymoronic, with more than 80% of Khmer Loeu classed as illiterate in 2000.¹² The introduction in 1997

⁹ Meyer, C. (1979) "Les Nouvelles Provinces: Ratanakiri – Mondulhiri" in *Revue Monde en Développement* 28, pp. 682 - 90

¹⁰ Calling it the "immoveable properties of Indigenous ethnic minorities." p. 8, Part 2, Article 23, Law of Land, February 2002. Document prepared by the MLMUPC Cambodia, supported by ADB TA 3577 and LMAP TA GTZ. Accessed Online (June, 2010) from: [http://www.gocambodia.com/laws/data%20pdf/Law%20on%20Land/Law%20on%20Land,%202001\(EN\).pdf](http://www.gocambodia.com/laws/data%20pdf/Law%20on%20Land/Law%20on%20Land,%202001(EN).pdf)

¹¹ Indigenous People NGO Network and NGO Forum on Cambodia, in cooperation with Asian Indigenous Peoples Pact (AIPP). February 2010, *The Rights of Indigenous People in Cambodia*, submitted to United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (76th Session, 2010).

¹² Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport (2000). *Report on the Assessment of the Functional Literacy Levels of the Adult Population in Cambodia*. UNDP (Cambodia), Phnom Penh. Ministry of Education, Youth & Sport, Kingdom of Cambodia. P.41

of non-formal bilingual education programs by Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP) and International Co-operation for Cambodia (ICC) was a key point in engaging ethnic minorities and this program began to be mainstreamed by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport from 2002. Since 1997, NTFP and ICC supported the creation of written scripts, based on Khmer script, for the Kreung and Tampuan languages that have been widely embraced. The ability to read and write in both Khmer and local languages has supported an increased interest from Khmer people in what is now commonly called “original ethnic minority” culture.¹³

Access to, and interest in, all aspects of media and screen culture are expanding rapidly across Cambodia, though hampered by lack of opportunities that encourage participation, especially in non-urban areas. Although nearly 80% of the population lives outside the main urban centres,¹⁴ cultural activities mainly occur in Phnom Penh, Siem Reap and Battambang. At the time of production, internet speeds in Cambodia were relatively slow¹⁵ and internet uptake low,¹⁶ with

¹³ This is the terminology used in the Land Law and now commonly used in an official context. Baird (2011) op.cit. traces the evolution of this terminology.

¹⁴ Urban is defined within the 2008 Cambodian census report as
 “(a) Population density exceeding 200 per km²
 (b) Percentage of male employment in agriculture below 50 percent
 (c) Total population of the commune should exceed 2,000”
 in National Institute of Statistics (2008) op.cit.

Additional demographic information from Central Intelligence Agency. (2010). *The World Factbook: Cambodia*. Accessed May, 1 2012: <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>

¹⁵ Cambodia is consistently ranked as a low internet speed country:
 Akimai (2011). *State of the Internet Report*. <http://www.akamai.com/stateoftheinternet/>
 Pando Networks (2011) *Global Internet Speed Study*. <http://www.pandonetworks.com/Pando-Networks-Releases-Global-Internet-Speed-Study>, graphic available at <http://chartsbin.com/view/2484>

an additional divide between Phnom Penh and other areas. Computer literacy in Cambodia is low due to factors including poverty and cultural relevance. It was only in 2001 that a system emerged for writing Khmer language on a keyboard. The complexity of this system is a further barrier to engagement. Most Cambodians experience a multi-level digital divide and this is further exacerbated by ethnic divisions and in non-urban settings.

6.2 COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT

Given the remote and developing setting, a framework that influenced project delivery is the body of literature and work referred to as Communication for Development (C4D), a term addressed earlier in Chapter 2. C4D literature has stressed community-based engagements and voice (Rogers 1976; Williamson 1989; Braden and Huong, 1998; Gumucio-Dagron, 2001; Tufte, Hemer et. al. 2005; Huber, 2005; Pettit, Salazar, Gumucio-Dagron 2009). International development theorists, such as Chambers (1983, 1997) advocate approaches characterized by the use of Participatory Action Research (PAR) processes, such as the techniques of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). These techniques have, in turn, influenced a variety of participatory and community media practices (see Avni et. al., 2005; Harding, 2001; White, 2003) generically referred to as video

Net Index (2012). *Household Download Index*.<http://www.netindex.com/> (based on data from <http://www.speedtest.net/>). Akimai rates Cambodia's average connection at 1.243 MBps, placing it 4th lowest in South East Asia.

Pando rates Cambodia's average download speed at 167 KBps, 4th lowest in South East Asia.

¹⁶ CIA World Factbook identified approximately 78,500 internet users in Cambodia in 2009 (most recent data at 2012). Based on a population at the time of 14 million people this is 0.056% of the population;

Central Intelligence Agency. (2010). The World Factbook: Cambodia. Updated May, 1 2012, Retrieved May 12, 2012, from <https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/cb.html>

for development. This spans a range of methods, tools and techniques for using video in developing communities often delivered in conjunction with PRA-type tools, or in support of civil society project work. Lie and Mandler (2009) note that reviews of video for development projects are scarce, highlighting Braden and Huong (1998), Harding (2001), White (2003) and Gabriel et. al. (2005) as limited examples. Shaw and Robertson's (1997) book on Participatory Video (PV) and a PV handbook by Nick and Chris Lunch (2006) discuss specific practices directly inspired both by Chambers' models of participation and the *Fogo Process*. This is defined as PV and the use of this term is strongly identified in C4D areas as the model described in the Lunch handbook. Lie and Mandler (2009) also identify a noticeable gap in the literature on video for development - documentary making. They note an overlap of intent of some documentary making processes and video in development work in terms of the link into processes of social change.

Due to limited project reviews and in order to gain a better understanding of implementation of video for development work, I actively sought out experienced video for development practitioners in Cambodia. The process and products of video for development can provide multiple outcomes, suitable for educational, advocacy, research or promotional uses.¹⁷ Such a diversity of use, as well as usefulness of process and products was something we sought to achieve in Banlung. We had achieved tangible, outcomes at a community level in Australia, but I approached this particular part of the project with a greater understanding of video for development methods. The phases of C4D projects as outlined by Tufte

¹⁷ Lunch, N & C. (2006) *Insights into Participatory Video: A Handbook for the Field*, Insight, UK. P. 13, 76,

and Mefalopulos (2009)¹⁸ mirror our approach, as does the assumption that both community and outsiders could gain greater insight into local concepts through the process of making media. In keeping with observations by Servaes (1996, 1999) and Gumucio-Dagron (2001) of what constitutes good practice, we set out to augment current media activities and build on existing infrastructure to support the ongoing sustainability of local media practice.

This approach also reflected the values of the Australian residencies through a process of consultation and collaboration. The project assumed that solutions are embodied both in the process *and* product created by individuals within the community. The process and products would serve as a site for discussion and engagement – both within the community and beyond the community. We sought to function as a catalyst through which individuals and institutions could address issues that impacted on their community and to express these issues and solutions to their own community and a global audience. These are values shared with many C4D practices. What separated this project from the community

¹⁸ Tufte, T. & Mefalopulos, P. (2009), *Participatory Communication A Practical Guide: World Bank Working Paper, # 170*, The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank, Washington. Accessed Online: <http://siteresources.worldbank.org/EXTDEVCOMMENG/Resources/Participatorycommunication.pdf>
Tufte & Mefalopulos typify the basic phases of a (participatory) communication for development program as;

- Participatory Communication Assessment (PCA) - where communication methods and tools are used to investigate and assess the situation;
- (Participatory) Communication Strategy Design is based on the findings of the research and defines the best way to apply communication to achieve the intended change;
- Implementation of Communication Activities to determine where activities planned in the previous phase are carried out;
- Monitoring and Evaluation through the whole communication program, monitoring progress and evaluating the final impact of the intervention.

development focus of most C4D projects is my primary focus on a collaborative mode of production between professional media makers and the community in order to create stories for both local community and wider audiences. The production of collaborative stories was the central objective, however the aspiration to create process and product that could act as catalyst for community benefit was also a consideration.

6.3 SCOPE OF PARTICIPATION

Production was centred on a three-week residency undertaken by Koam Chanrasmey (Smey) and me. We spent one week in Banlung for research and development and an additional six part-time weeks of research, partnership development and pre-production in Phnom Penh both preceding and following the first Banlung research trip. Post-production occurred over eight weeks and screenings of completed stories were run over three days in Banlung and surrounding villages. Table 3 provides an overview of the main activities:

BANLUNG ACTIVITIES		
ACTION	NUMBER	OUTCOME
Partnerships	3	Local NGOs Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP), Phnom Village management committee, Lunn Village council
Interviews	42	Banlung Residents interviewed
Training	2	Local Content Producers trained: Ang Yung & Lam Suot
Training	4	Consultation services on media production for local NGOs: Health Unlimited, NTFP, Indigenous Co-operation Support Organisation (ICSO) and Highlander's Association, Yeak Loam Arts Group
Production	12	Portrait Films produced in Khmer, Kreung and Tampuon languages. Duration: 28m20s

Production	12	Stories produced for story thread <i>Two Villages</i> in Tampuan and Khmer languages. Duration: 48m42s
Production	2	Linear Documentaries: 1 x 26 minute documentary <i>Lunn Village</i> 1 x 45 minute documentary <i>The Tale of Two Villages</i>
Production	3	Films produced by Local Content Producers in Tampuan and Kreung languages. Duration: 8m08s
Production	24	Photo Essay: Around Banlung
Production	20	Dreams Photos
Production	50	Stills produced for National Film and Sound Archive (Aust.)
Production	6	Banlung based articles on Big Stories blog: blog.bigstories.com.au
Distribution	24	Films archived at Bophana, Cambodia's audio and video archive
Distribution	1	Video letter exchange between Phnom Village and Raukkan
Distribution	2	Village based screenings: Phnom Village (64 people) Lunn Village (78 people)
Distribution	12	Banlung based screenings to organizations, participants, family and friends Est. 400 people to July 2011)
Distribution	40	Banlung DVD compiles distributed to NGOs and community
Distribution	4	Broadcast of stories through UNESCO and Ministry of Information Indigenous Radio show (audio only)
Distribution	2	Cambodian International Film Festival, screening
Distribution	5	Phnom Penh based screenings: Meta House x 4, Bophana x 1
Distribution	1	Old Hall UK, fundraising screening for Yeak Loam community
Distribution	9	Screening international Film Festivals 2011 - 2012: DocFest UK (as <i>Remote Transmissions</i>), IDFA Doclab, SXSW Interactive, Adelaide Film Festival, Australian International Documentary Conference, Asiatica Film Mediale, South Australian Screen Awards, AIMIA Awards 2012, Australian Web Awards 2011

Table 3: Main activities in Banlung

6.4 RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT

The research and development phase was designed (in no particular order) to find a town, develop key local partners (organizations, communities and individuals), identify LCPs and establish possible story threads. From this we established our approach underpinned by the structural limitations of the project. The balance of structural limitations (time, money, human resources and the limits of the CMS) and our assumptions of content requirements must be considered alongside community aspirations. Addressing this tension between project limitations and community expectation was an early requirement. The structural limitations on the project dictated by the form of the website and CMS have been outlined in Chapter 4. Given the smaller scale of the residency, we identified a minimum content requirement of 24 items to fill the grid of the website. These items would include a text-based introduction to the town and a mix of filmmaker films, community-made content and photo essays. This minimum content requirement was the first clear articulation of an emerging format for the project.

In terms of identifying possible locations, I had produced a comprehensive survey of the Cambodian television and film production landscape for the Cambodian Film Commission in early 2010, later used by producers of the BBC World Service Trust program *Loy 9*. This survey, echoing the practice of media audits pioneered by the BBC World Service Trust,¹⁹ had identified producers (both Khmer and foreigner; independent and organisations) and broadcasters/ funders (e.g. television stations, UN agencies, international and local NGOs etc).

¹⁹ Coulter, P. and Baldwin, C. (2013) *Digital Deprivation: New Media, Civil Society and Sustainability* in Trägårdh, L., Witoszek, N., and Taylor, B., eds. (2013) *Civil Society in the Age of Monitory Democracy*. Berghahn, New York.

Independent travel and a number of regional media programs I had produced for other organisations between 2009-2010²⁰ further developed my knowledge of media and creative activities in regional Cambodia. Co-director Koam Chanrasmey had also worked in a number of provinces across Cambodia since 2008 and we both shared an interest in the visual history of Cambodia. This history was greatly enhanced by significant time spent in Cambodia's audio-visual archive Bophana - an early partner in the *Big Stories: Banlung* project. Despite this comprehensive

However, it was other practitioners who had worked in media in Ratanakiri who were a primary influence on our choice of location, and our approach to the stories - particularly the community media NGOs Forest Mountain Voices (FMV), Building Community Voices (BCV) and the UNESCO-supported Indigenous language radio program that began broadcasting in Banlung in 2009. Workers on these programs and from other non-media NGOs active in Ratanakiri provided extensive time, experience, advice, networks and distribution support. Given this interest and support, Banlung was emerging as the location of choice. Through these practitioner based-networks we met with Banlung-based organizations using video in their work. These included Indigenous Community Support Organisation (ICSO), 3 Rivers Protection Network (3SPN) and Health Unlimited. We wanted to tie in with on-going activities, as this could offer opportunities for local community and participants to access media beyond the

²⁰ These projects included regional training programs funded by UNHCR-Cambodia and SKN-Netherlands; a youth forum TV special featuring a selection of young people from all provinces in Cambodia; a participatory video project in some of the floating villages on the Tonle Sap Lake; development of a funding application for UNESCO for a community radio station in the province of Kratie, where I first learnt of the Indigenous language broadcasting in Ratanakiri.

scope of our residency. We were also referred to the NGO Non Timber Forest Products (NTFP). NTFP is a well-established and respected organization with strong community and organizational partnerships. NTFP is focused on supporting Indigenous communities to preserve natural resources and cultural heritage through a diverse range of programs and advocacy. Programs include non-formal education, co-operative management, land rights education, community governance, community forestry, eco-tourism, wellbeing and youth development.²¹ NTFP had been using media for a variety of programs, including a previous digital storytelling project. They had staff that was interested to be involved in the project as producers, translators and local advocates for use of thematically appropriate stories. NTFP's director and board were strongly supportive of the project. The organization's strong connection with Indigenous communities shaped our focus for the residency. A program with Indigenous content also had thematic parallels with other towns in Australia, and augmented upcoming Banlung programs.

We trained NTFP staff and interns in media production, and NTFP offered an administrative base and network into communities. We positioned our stories independently of NTFP's programs so that the media produced was not simply a reflection of NTFP's work. However, given the connections to their work around Indigenous communities' traditional livelihoods, conservation, land rights and young people, the content could be utilized by the organization for education and advocacy.

²¹ Non Timber Forest Products Cambodia website: <http://www.ntfp-cambodia.org/>

6.5 INDIGENOUS MEDIA IN BANLUNG

During the research process, we met with a number of Indigenous communities in the area, as well as NGO and government workers to discuss local media.

Representatives of three Tampuan communities - the villages of Phnom, Lunn and Lapo, identified the issue of land rights, loss of natural resources and maintaining cultural identity and traditional livelihoods, as the most pressing issues they faced. In addition, lack of access to education, health services and relevant information and communication services were identified as further pressures on communities.

Many community members and supporters described a lack of cultural and media representation and a sense that they were drowning in new noise that could not be kept out. Their silence in this context was oppressive. Another factor was the transformation of formal communal spaces, such as the village halls and fields. Buying and selling land and crops radically changed agriculture practice. The traditional slash and burn, high field rotation methods had been greatly reduced with increased pressure to sell land and increased theft of land.²² A cash economy, rather than barter and exchange, resulted in a shift to cash crops like cashew nuts instead of traditional bartered crops such as rice or foraged food.

The Tampuan communities near town expressed interest in using media for education, cultural and language preservation and for advocacy purposes.²³ Low

²² Backstrom, M. Ironside, J. Paterson, G. Padwe, J. Baird, I. (2007) Indigenous Traditional Legal Systems and Conflict Resolution in Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri Provinces, Cambodia, United Nations Development Program Report, UNDP Bangkok. Pp. 8-11

²³ This need was expressed in preliminary interviews with me and Koam Chanrasmey in Banlung, and is consistent with the experiences of others including in Brown, G. and Naung, S.O. (2011) *An*

levels of literacy meant oral communication through video, radio, songs and plays were most accessible for the community and were well received. There was strong demand for Indigenous-produced content and for building local authorial capacity. The opportunity to speak to other communities (especially beyond Cambodia) in their own language was also of interest. The need articulated by these communities reflects their awareness of the absence of Indigenous voices in the media and a perception that the technological advantage of other cultures was symptomatic of their power.

A 40 minute weekly UNESCO radio show that started in 2009 was the only regular Indigenous language media in Ratanakiri. The show was 10 minutes duration, repeated in four different Indigenous languages and is delivered through the Ministry of Information's radio station. Many listeners to whom we spoke, commented that although hearing their own languages on the radio was good, it is at the wrong time of the day after people have gone to the fields and are out of radio range, contains mostly non-indigenous news and is understood to be "government radio, not community radio."²⁴ Forest Mountain Voices (2003 – 2006, and subsequently ICSO and BCV) regularly produced Indigenous language videos. There were also sporadic, project-based engagements through NGOs and independent media practitioners creating education and advocacy videos.

Broadcast television is not widely used in Indigenous communities due to weak reception and irrelevant content. DVD or VCD players and karaoke systems are

Assessment of the Information and Media Needs of Indigenous peoples in Cambodia, Building Community Voices, May 2011. pp 14 – 29.

²⁴ Comment from anonymous community member, noted by me during research period, Banlung, October 2010.

becoming increasingly popular in homes as well as the communal halls.

Indigenous voice in the mainstream Cambodian media is largely absent and when present is mostly spoken in Khmer, not the native Indigenous language. Non-community institutions produce the majority of Cambodian media, so opportunities in Banlung for developing an entirely new model given the national context were unlikely.

Participatory models reinforce the expressed desire of Indigenous communities that decision-making processes should be based within their communities.

Following on from the experience in Raukkan, it was important to reflect local power structures. A media project would need to recognize that traditional elders and women should be given a lead role. Young people in Indigenous society are often not invited to community meetings. However due to bilingual education programs and higher levels of engagement with the dominant Khmer culture, they are more literate in Khmer, have higher levels of formal education and engage more with technology and media. To complement this, Indigenous youth could engage in media production as active members of the community operating in partnership with other age groups.

For the Tampuan communities that we worked with in Banlung, the project had a deep resonance. New technologies and social changes were surrounding them.

The project represented a way to conceive of bridging this divide and to have the opportunity to respond in some way. It was far from a complete solution. I attempted a considered intervention by partnering with organisations and communities that were already using media in some way and extending on these

programs as well as trying to leave a useful legacy that meant we were part of an ongoing body of work. Extensive research, consultation and local partnership development was instrumental to this approach. Strong engagement with Local Content Producers (LCPs) was a core part of this project, as was engagement with elders in Tampuon communities in order to work with traditional community structures. Given that the process was seeking to encourage active community involvement and a sense of collectivity, an understanding of how the community comes together and how power flows within it were necessary in order to structure a process with which the community would engage.

6.6 LOCAL CONTENT PRODUCERS (LCP)

During the research process, we met two young Indigenous men, Ang Yung and Lam Suot, who worked at NTFP and who became *Big Stories* LCPs and our guides into communities and the town. This role was an integral component of this residency. Yung and Suot identified many story possibilities and produced a number of stories themselves, as well as filming, recording sound, translating, interviewing and editing and managing follow up questions and participant and community feedback processes. They also identified additional crew for the production, principally translators and transcribers.

Their backgrounds, motivations and role in the project provide an insight to their selection of particular stories. Yung, a university student interning at NTFP, is a Tampuon man, from Lunn Village near Yeak Loam Lake. Suot is Kreung and worked as a project officer with NTFP. During the research period in Banlung, we

worked with Yung and Suot on a short film called the *Weavers of O'Chum Village* about a Kreung women's weaving group, established through an NTFP program.²⁵

This was a way of starting a relationship with Yung and Suot, building their production capacity and creating something that could be of value to their work at NTFP. Smey recounts the initial experience of working with Yung and Suot:

It was my first time to work with Indigenous people. I found it a bit of a challenge to work with them initially. I had to make sure that they understood the project well and were happy to work on the project.

"Understanding the project well" was a crucial first step in manifesting collaboration. With no context for what the project would look like, and therefore what it could do, it was not a straightforward process to create this understanding. Kamlongera, quoted in Hemer, Tufte et. al. (2005) observes, "the villager can't eat communication."²⁶ The effort, time and resources required to produce media is difficult to justify when basic needs such as housing, food, health and education are not being met. The production of a short film during the research process, and the screening of this film to NTFP colleagues and clients were crucial in developing an understanding of the usefulness of the project. At the end of the research in Banlung, we were able to clearly describe to Suot and Yung what we hoped to achieve in the main residency and to set up clear pathways for remote communication and continued development.

The residency involved filming stories identified during research, focusing on Khmer migrants to Banlung such as Uk Chantuok, photographer at Yeak Loam

²⁵ The Weavers of O'Chum Village: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/a-story-by-lam-suot>.

²⁶ Hemer, O. and Tufte, T. eds. (2005), *Media and Glocal Change: Rethinking Communication for Development*, CLACSO, Suecia, Nordicom.

lake and his sons at Kachagn Waterfall²⁷ and Chhun Kunthea, a woman selling sugar cane juice at Ratanakiri airport.²⁸ Smey, the LCPs and I had discussed creating a portrait of Banlung that would reflect the diversity of the town's population and balance the conflicting impulses of migration with efforts to maintain cultural identity. Our research showed that high levels of Khmer migration were changing the cultural, social and economic face of Banlung. Chantuok the photographer came to take photos for tourists and Kunthea the sugar cane seller, came with her husband to run the airport while others came for agriculture, gems, construction and hospitality.²⁹ We were aiming, through the portrait series, to create a snapshot of this activity as well as expand on the history of migration of Khmer people, from the "Sihanouk settlers" of the 1960s who moved to shore up Cambodia's borders at the behest of King Sihanouk and were encouraged by free and low cost land packages, to the present-day migration driven by economic imperatives. Alongside this, we would contrast the experience of Indigenous peoples and show how the migration of lowland Khmer created pressure on traditional livelihoods. Tampuon woman and Highlander's Association Director Dam Chanthy³⁰ and Jirai woman Sorn Rath (aka Vek) who appears with Khmer woman Ven Chantha,³¹ also featured in the portrait series,

²⁷ Uk Chantuok the Photographer: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/chantuok-photographer-yeak-loam-lake>

²⁸ Chhun Kunthea the Sugar Cane Juice Seller: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/kunthea-banlung-airport>)

²⁹ Y Mam the Cow Farmer: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/y-mam> ; Seoun, jeweler: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/seoun-banlung-markets>; Khut Dy, construction worker: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/khut-dy-tae-seng-construction-site> ; Yim Vanny, restaurant worker: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/we-are-the-same-nationality-after-all>

³⁰ Dam Chanthy: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/little-by-little-the-bird-builds-its-nest>

³¹ Ven Chantha and Sorn Vek (also called Sorn Rath) <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/indigenous-people-call-their-friends-companions>

although most stories from the Indigenous communities around Banlung emerged later in the residency.

The roles of filmmaker in residence and producer were shared between Smey and me. We shared the other roles of production with the LCPs Yung and Suot. We all filmed and recorded sound at different times. We discussed how to show onscreen stories and issues that participants wanted to address. These discussions were led by Yung and Suot and conducted in the participants' mother tongues. Yung took the role of interviewer for Tampuan language interviews and Suot did Kreung interviews. Questions and answers were asked by the LCP, translated to Khmer for Smey, who then translated to English.

As Yung and Suot gained confidence, they began to offer more directorial input. George Stoney, director of the NFB's *Challenge For Change* program observed, "it is really not so important that the people who have the concern actually use the camera themselves if they are directing the camera or holding the microphone."³² A couple of months' worth of technical knowledge would not enable complete technical and creative autonomy but having the ability and confidence to direct technically proficient filmmakers was a shared goal for Yung, Suot, Smey and me.

Suot wanted to explore village-based Indigenous women's weaving collectives. He also wanted to highlight shared Indigenous knowledge and cultural diversity

³²Sturken, M., (1984). "An Interview with George Stoney" in *Afterimage*. Visual Studies Workshop, Rochester, NY (1984). January (part 1 of 2) from: <http://www.experimentaltvcenter.org/history/people/pview.php3?id=21>, 10 June 2009.

through cultural exchange. He wanted to focus on Tampuon people rather than his own Kreung ethnicity and encouraged Yung to make a story about a Tampuon man, Pregn Nouch, who had married into a Kreung farming family.³³ Suot's motivation was to show diversity of Indigenous people in the area, making it clear that Indigenous cultures were non-homogenous and had unique language, traditions and social structures. The story of Pregn Nouch was intended to show one man's experience of bridging two of these cultures. For his next film, Suot identified Yull Thanh, a weaver in Phnom Village, who trained her daughter in weaving and supported her disabled husband through weaving and farming.³⁴

From the initial encounter with Thanh, we met master weaver Vi Thonh and her husband, Phnom village chief Yung Sam (Sam).³⁵ Sam's vision and advocacy for Phnom Village and the *samakee* (solidarity) and continued connection to culture of the village, was a complete contrast to Yung's experience in his village. Both Yung and Suot felt that a contrasting experience of each village would allow people to see both positive and negative impacts of development and offer some strong examples of how some people and communities preserve their traditions and manage the impact of the New Society. This resulted in what would become the main story thread, *Two Villages*, a comparison of the Tampuon villages of Lunn and Phnom, located only one kilometre apart.³⁶

³³Pregn Nouch: From Tampuon to Kreung: (<http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/pregn-nouch>)

³⁴Yull Thanh: A Tampuon Woman's Work: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/yull-thanh-phnom-village>)

³⁵ Also known as Yuns Sam. As with most transliterations of Tampuon names, spellings are approximate.

³⁶ Two Village Story Thread: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages>

Yung emerged as a narrator in the Lunn village films. He had introduced us to interview subjects in his home village and guided us through the changing situation of the community. Yung and Suot identified all interview subjects in the *Two Villages* story thread except for Mouk Chieng.³⁷ This is a story inspired by Smey's and my curiosity about the Indigenous women who walked into Banlung markets with their produce in baskets on their backs. Thus the twelve stories in this thread represent a range of authorial engagement and voices.

6.7 DEFINING A FORMAT: VERTICAL FILMS AND DECISIVE MOMENTS

We began to describe the portrait films as Vertical Films, in the style of Low's (1967) Fogo films. I saw these portraits as developing a style that had been established in some of the stories produced at Wami Kata in Port Augusta and experiments attempted in Murray Bridge.³⁸ These films captured a decisive moment of a personal story or experience that emerged from a single encounter with the filmmaker present. The combination of memory, person and place recorded in a moment, creates an effect of spontaneity, immediacy and authenticity. As a result, these films are often most powerful in a community.

A number of Banlung films used this vertical format. However it is the two stories from Tampung communities - the Story of Yeak Loam Lake as told by Peung in

³⁷ Mouk Chieng: While We Are Alive and Strong We Have To Work Hard: (<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/while-were-alive-and-strong-we-have-to-work-hard>)

³⁸ Mehmet and Ibrahim: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/ibrahim>; Perminda: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/perminda>; Trevor the Bush Poet: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/trevor-bush-poet>

Lunn Village³⁹ and the creation story of the Tampuon people and the history of Phnom Village as told by the Maykuntreyung of Phnom Village, Tel Thou,⁴⁰ that are closest to achieving my ideal of the format. They do so as the unique record of a moment, almost in real time, told by a person with a unique insight into the story. The stories of Peung and Thou are a reflection of tensions that have found a clear artistic expression, satisfying my impulses as facilitator/ filmmaker towards professionalism, and the participants' motivation, in this case towards cultural preservation and reflection on community.

The decisive moment, described by Cartier-Bresson (1958) as the tantalizing potential of the event, rather than the event itself,⁴¹ is present in Peung's story of Yeak Loam Lake. As Peung tells his story, his son sells their land to a local policeman. This occurs off-screen over the course of the story and I have described on the *Big Stories* Blog how we experienced this moment.⁴² Peung's telling of the story recognizes the significance of this moment. As he recounts the depth of connection Tampuon people have with the Yeak Loam Lake, he concludes that despite the strength of their belief in the magic of the lake, they have still lost their land, community and culture and that "the magic did not work." This provoked some of the strongest reactions in Lunn Village when we screened the film. The story, initially conceived to offer context to the Tampuon

³⁹<http://bigstories.com.au/#!/story/two-villages/film/peung-chief-of-lunn-village>

⁴⁰<http://bigstories.com.au/#!/story/two-villages/film/thou-phnom-village>

⁴¹Cartier-Bresson (1958) is paraphrased from the Candid Recordings' vinyl record *Famous Photographers Tell How* (1958). Transcribed by McDonald, E. (2009). Accessed: <http://www.ericamcdonaldphoto.com/-/scribbling-in-the-dark---photographers-talks/famous-photographers-tell-how---hcb>.

⁴²<http://blog.bigstories.com.au/2012/01/a-story-of-yeak-loam-lake/>

connection to Yeak Loam Lake, becomes a powerful commentary on loss of cultural and social autonomy.

The translation of traditional oral history and knowledge into the video form is one of the strengths of these participatory media projects, as it can position the storyteller as an expert. In his story, Tel Thou states, “in this village I have become an elder and a mentor.”⁴³ Once framed as elder, Thou’s knowledge of Tampuon history is understood as legitimate by the primary audience - in this case other Tampuon people and those interested in Tampuon culture. Within two minutes Thou encapsulates the Tampuon creation story, describes the origin of Phnom Village and conveys the ambivalence of older generations towards the New Society.⁴⁴

⁴³ Tel Thou in *The Horses Were As Fast As A Motorbike*, from Banlung stories, Big Stories, Small Towns. <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/thou-phnom-village>

⁴⁴ A transcript of Thou's story is included as a footnote for archival purposes;

I'll tell you an old story. I'm a Tampuon person by birth. I was born as a Tampuon naturally without changing (my race). Yeay (Grandmother) Trut has been known. We believe that Yeay Trut gave birth to us. Yeay Trut gave birth to Yeay Croul, Yeay Hra, Yeay Ta (Grandfather) Pa, Yeay Hrogn, Yeay Tong and Yeay Hyin. Yeay Trut also gave birth to sons, Ta (Grandfather) Tor Chik, Ta Lik Hyeng and Ta Hleng Hya. Yeay Trut sent Yaey Hyin to take care of Antrang village. And (she) sent Yeay Croul to Louch village and Yeay Ta Pa to Yeak Loam where we live now.

He describes the origin of Phnom village as follows,

Before, this village was not Phnom village, it was Angkor Lao. The Angkor Lao and Anchach Villages have been united. Before, they were two separate villages. At that time, my wife lived in Anchach village and I lived in Angkor Lao village. Now we live in unity and solidarity. Since after the Pol Pot regime collapsed and under the Hun Sen regime we've lived together again.

Thou conveys the ambivalence of the older generations to the New Society and some of the contrasts of old and new,

Before, there were only wooden houses and bamboo wall houses. Now it's different. There are motorbikes and cars, which we never saw before. Before, Tampuon rode on elephant back and carts or they rode horsebacks. The horses were as fast as motorbikes. We were so happy.

Yung Sam saw this film as having potential to reinforce traditional power structures as well as educational and advocacy value. Following the Phnom Village screening he commented, “many of our young people don’t know this story and it’s important to tell. We need to know where we’ve come from and what’s changing. That’s why we watched it again and again.”⁴⁵ One organizational worker in Banlung commented, “I’ve never had a chance to just have a conversation about life and the past. We always talk about work and the future, so this is a really valuable insight into history and culture that we just don’t get as development workers focusing on the day to day.”⁴⁶

6.8 SCREENINGS AND FEEDBACK

The main screenings of completed films took place in June, six months after the residency. The screenings were primarily for participants to give feedback and for support organizations to view films and discuss possible uses of process and products. In the outcomes of the residency (Table 4), a breakdown of screening activities is presented.

Participants had been promised the opportunity to give feedback, and to stop public distribution of their story if they deemed the content inappropriate and so individual screenings were the first priority. Following individual screenings, all participants requested multiple screenings for family and friends. We also left DVDs, VCDs, still photo prints and digital files with participants as requested.

⁴⁵Conversation with Phnom Village Chief, Ang Sam following the Phnom Village screening, June, 2011.

⁴⁶ Conversation with Tania Heath, Project Officer with Yeak Loam Arts Group, post screening of films in Phnom Penh, June 2011.

Smey did informal interviews following screenings and participants reported a sense of pride in the films and acknowledged a reflection of their everyday lives that they were happy to share.

The common question following screenings was, “What will happen next with my story?” Showing Banlung participants the online site was not possible and the multi-voiced presentation of a story of the town was diminished. As discussed in Chapter 4, the disadvantage of the CMS is that it is online only. With no or slow internet, the website was inaccessible. As this was known from the outset, I had endeavoured to build relationships that would allow ongoing local accessibility through NGOs, government and local businesses. DVDs were left with participants and also with ten local organisations. Audio of some Tampuon stories was broadcast on the UNESCO Indigenous radio program. We had planned a partnership with a UNESCO-supported cultural centre to hold the stories, but the centre was not completed when I left Cambodia in mid-2011.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The Indigenous Cultural Centre was being built with support from UNESCO and was scheduled for completion in the middle of 2010, however the centre was not opened until late December 2012.



BANLUNG SCREENINGS



(Top left to right) The hairdressers review their film; Chantha and Sorn Rat watch their film with the next generation; in the market restaurant Vanny's family re-watches her film

(Left) Sugar cane seller Kunthea rounds up friends to share her film

Night time screenings were held in both Lunn Village and Phnom Village. In each village the films were watched again and again with discussions about the issues raised continuing long into the night.

VILLAGE BASED SCREENINGS

Screening in Lunn village



Figure 31: Banlung screening, June 2011.

Image from Big Stories Press Kit, 2011.

6.8.1 The Village Screenings

Our second screening priority was Lunn and Phnom village screenings. The films had the potential to be contentious for these communities, and offering an

opportunity for discussion was necessary. The two village screenings drew an audience of over 150 people and the screening in Phnom village lasted until the fuel in the generator powering our projector ran out - more than three hours of continuous screening. In both villages we screened all the Lunn and Phnom films. Disconnection between the two villages in terms of community solidarity and their divergent experiences of land alienation, was a starting point for discussion in both villages. Yung, in his home village of Lunn, introduced the screening and facilitated discussion. In Phnom Village we held the screenings at Chief Sam's home and Sam introduced the films and facilitated discussion. These screenings gave a sense of the immediate engagement and response that could be achieved. Both villages resolved to use the films for advocacy and fundraising and we provided links to organizations facilitating this.

Both villages saw the films as valuable for showcasing Indigenous voices alongside Khmer voices. Considering the cultural separation that exists, this created a sense of engagement with the town and with Tampuan culture. The absence of local language content in the wider media was discussed, and at both screenings it was stressed that hearing their language in the context of the films supported a sense of Indigenous identity and represented the possibility of future access to other communication channels. The creation of films by Yung and Suot also raised their profile in the community. The film of Dam Chanthy provoked much interest, with both communities loudly cheering her knowledge of Indigenous languages and admiring her position as a leader in the Banlung and Tampuan communities. The dilemma that Chanthy identified concerning her children's embarrassment about speaking Indigenous language was also

discussed. People expressed concern that if such a successful woman would face these issues in her own family, what hope did the average Tampuan family have?

The *Two Villages* story thread was the main focus of discussion. The stories address the most pressing issues of Indigenous peoples' experience in this area, that of natural resource alienation, the impact of the New Society and lack of access to education and health services. The intent of the *Two Villages* story thread was to positively reinforce aspects of traditional culture such as local governance and oral histories and to support discussion around problematic issues such as selling land and describing the effects on the community. In discussions following the screenings, land alienation, particularly disputes between marginalized communities and powerful interests was the most frequently expressed concern and there was a consensus that it had reached a critical stage. A lack of access to reliable, accurate information and being swamped by other culture and new media was also seen as driving a fragmentation of the Tampuan communities. Addressing this concern through the creation of locally produced media and information, designed and produced with and for the local communities was identified by representatives of these communities as important to their survival. Although the project delivers more technology and seeks social change, it is designed around community desires to speak back to the New Society.

The response to stories reflecting on tradition such as Peung's story of Yeak Loam Lake and Tel Thou's story in Phnom Village was immediate and powerful. The elders in both villages highlighted the importance of young people being connected to these stories and engaging in their traditions, but balancing this with

their place in the New Society. Contradictory opinions reflected the inconsistent responses to the films. The presentation of a variety of experiences resulted in a sustained debate with people responding to particular voices and taking sides with that person. Perhaps most interesting for us as outsiders, was the response in Lunn Village to the stories told by Peung and Yung's father Prak Ang. Ang's explicit criticism of the villagers for selling their land and the frustration he describes around the short term thinking of his community, was a direct challenge to many in the village who had sold their land. The response to the film, and to Yung (Prak Ang had decided not to come to the screening) was, for a moment, difficult. Ang had raised points in a group forum that had not been addressed beyond private conversations. He also raised them in Tampuon language and from a Tampuon perspective. He was not an outsider criticizing the community, or seeking to help, and his ideas were not articulated as a person beholden to the values of the New Society. He was a respected insider challenging the community on its actions.

At the end of the Lunn Village screenings, the chief declared, "we know that what is being said is right, but it's not easy."⁴⁸ While the stories were reflected elements of people's experience ("what is being said is right"), they failed to acknowledge the complexity of the situation that each family faced in reforming their community ("it's not easy"). At the end of the post-screening discussion, a resolve was made to formulate a community group to oversee the completion of the Communal Hall and support families in the new Lunn Village to complete their

⁴⁸Conversation with Lunn Village Chief, Tul Pherng following the Lunn Village screening, June, 2011.

homes. It is too early to see if any impact has been achieved as a result of this, but it was evident that the films initiated a tangible response.

6.9 ACTION & REFLECTION

The project's usefulness identified by community partners (including village organizations, NTFP and local participants) illustrates both tangible and potential outcomes.

Tangible outcomes identified in interviews conducted by me with the local partners included benefits for LCPs⁴⁹ and the collaborative approach with participants.⁵⁰ Local partners described this approach as a good model of ethical media making, reflecting their aspirations to explore participatory processes in their own programs. The community dissemination process offered a model of event-based showcase. Organizational partners also observed they had reinforced local and national networks through the project.

Partners also identified numerous *potential* outcomes of the project. This included increased knowledge of traditional cultures and deepening knowledge of new cultures and technologies for Indigenous young people. The development of Indigenous youth voice was seen as supporting the emergence of future leaders. The stories could also be used as educational tools and a Tampuan language preservation resource. The importance of the role of women was illustrated

⁴⁹ The benefits included technical and skills development around media production, project and event management and community engagement.

⁵⁰ Informal interviews with organizational partners, LCPs and participants were conducted by me following the screening program.

through stories featuring local women's work on cultural preservation, small business management and through initiatives like the women's weaving co-operative.

For the wider Tampuan community there was potential for improved communication and networking between Tampuan communities and stronger community governance and solidarity. Stories could support communities to create legally recognized bodies to advocate through both legal and political systems for communal land ownership.⁵¹ Stories could enhance knowledge of Indigenous land and forest management to ensure long-term sustainability of resources in the region. The transmission of this knowledge as embodied in the Lunn Village films featuring Prak Ang and Chief Peung supported both Tampuan people and outsiders in understanding mismanagement of the land from land grabbing to destruction of old growth forest. Some stories promoted alternative livelihoods such as Indigenous managed tourism projects, the weaving co-operatives and appropriate cash crops⁵² and could be used to support promotion of these initiatives and increase market opportunities.

⁵¹ Khmer land law does not recognize collective ownership, unless there are particular legally recognized bodies (e.g. a registered CBO). A Jarai community in O'Yadaw region, Ratanakiri was the first village to register as a CBO and achieve legal recognition of communal ownership of their land. A recent revision of the land law (as of February 2013) indicates communal titles have now been dropped. See: <http://www.cambodiadaily.com/news/national-land-program-dropped-communal-titles-9480/>.

Shifting legal territory in this area continues to complicate issues around Indigenous land rights as outlined by advocacy organizations such as ADHOC (2012): <http://adhoc-cambodia.org/?p=2726>. Pelosi (2005) notes only six groups were allowed collective ownership since the introduction of the 2001 Land Law which enabled communal land title and ownership under Cambodian law: <http://firstpeoples.org/wp/tag/cambodian-indigenous-youth-association/>

⁵² I'd Like To Safeguard Our Traditions and Culture: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/sam-chief-of-phnom-village>; I Weave So I Can Have Knowledge: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/vi-thonh-weaver-farmer-phnom-village> and Suot's

However, these were only potential outcomes. The process of making the stories along with those stories made, may be beneficial to participants and is generally appreciated but they require some further form of activation. On both Fogo Island and with the NFB's Filmmaker in Residence project, the resources devoted to screening and exhibition outcomes were substantial. Cizek (2007) quantifies the importance of the distribution of the work as 90% of the filmmaker's time.⁵³ Low and Nemtin (1968) asserted that, "a more conscious community is far more able to anticipate the realities of its future"⁵⁴ and the community-driven actions that followed the Fogo Process, can be correlated with a process of advancing critical consciousness (or conscientization⁵⁵ as Freire (1970) would have it) that emerged through the screening back of the films and resulting discussions. Snowden, in Newhook (2009), observed, "film created an awareness and self-confidence that was needed for people- advocated development to occur."⁵⁶ In this process, participants become stakeholders of social change. This is further evidenced by the request of Fogo residents to take the films off the island for screening to

story: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/a-story-by-lam-suot> : I Warned Them Not To Sell Their Land: <http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/prak-ang-yungs-father>

⁵³ Cizek, K. (2007) "Filmmaker in Residence Manifesto" p. 30 in *FIR overview FEB18.ppt*, PowerPoint presentation. Accessed via email from Cizek to the author: February 19, 2008.

⁵⁴ Nemtin B., and Low C., (1968) *Fogo Island Film and Community Development Project*, Report submitted to the National Film Board of Canada, 1968. (Accessed : <http://onf-nfb.gc.ca/medias/download/documents/pdf/1968-Fogo-Island-Project-Low-Nemtin.pdf>, September 2010. p. 27

⁵⁵ Conscientization ('*conscientizacao*') is people's movement towards self-determination through engagement in emancipatory and critical praxis. It emphasises critical thinking, collective action and empowerment.

⁵⁶ Snowden, D. in Newhook S., (2009), "The Godfathers of Fogo: Donald Snowden, Fred Earle and the Roots of the Fogo Island Films 1964 – 67," *Newfoundland and Labrador Studies*, 24, 2, pp. 171 – 197. p.189

government, as well as by the direct action of Islanders in establishing a fishing co-operative. The process was activated both beyond and within the community.

Only some of the potential outcomes identified by local partners were achieved in *Big Stories* due to a lack of reflection and analysis. Cadiz (1994), recalling Freire, says “too much action and too little reflection is activism, while too much reflection and too little action, verbalism.”⁵⁷ The act of making and showing without simultaneous reflection and analysis becomes activism. Less than half of the time spent on the project by all involved (producers, participants and active partners) was spent getting the stories out to the world. I allocated time and resources to production and post-production, with smaller amounts spent on research and final screenings.⁵⁸ Establishing opportunities for a response to the stories was also lacking. High impact local events such as community screenings had no connection to national or international events (and vice versa). The disconnection between the different opportunities for reflection resulted in lower impact. During the research and production phases we achieved a balance of action and reflection. A subsequent lack of reflection and analysis typified by community-centric distribution and dissemination opportunities shifted the project towards activism. Many of the potential outcomes identified by partners and the original intent of the project required this community-based reflection. We lacked sufficient time and resources to screen the films in a broader setting beyond the village screenings. A commitment to a well-rounded project cycle, including

⁵⁷Cadiz, M. C. H. (1994) *Communication and Participatory Development*, College, Laguna: UPLB College of Agriculture.

⁵⁸ The approximate split of the \$5000 budget across the production cycle was: production 35%, post production 35%, research 15%, screening 15%.

sustained local distribution outcomes and well-crafted, thoughtful opportunities for discussion, is essential. Distribution and activation of the content requires significant commitment to support communities in using their media for their own ends. Broader partnerships beyond the community are essential to facilitate change of the scale achieved by projects such as Fogo. Some of the screening outcomes outside of town have been validating for the filmmakers and local producers and have seen direct benefits flow back to those involved in the project. However, there remains an imbalance in local outcomes as a result of a lack of activation of the content locally. The screening program could have culminated in a broader, well-resourced public screening enabling a sense of completion and recognition for those involved. This would have enabled organizations and communities to see more value in the project and allowed them to find mechanisms for ongoing use.

In addition, we did not test a core hypothesis of the project - that through showing both Indigenous and Khmer stories in one setting with Indigenous and Khmer people together, we could build connections between the different groups. This exists in the online presentation, but could not be replicated in the community.

These shortcomings run parallel to positive outcomes of the project, including the sustained engagement of fellow filmmaker in residence – Koam Chanramsey and his subsequent development as facilitator and documentary filmmaker; the experience of Yung and Suot as LCPs; the quality and diversity of stories evidenced by the response to those stories locally and internationally; and the

commitment of many participants particularly in the Tampuon villages, to share personal stories.

6.10 CONCLUSION

The Banlung project provided a valuable space for examining the use of participatory media processes and online representations in non-Australian settings and with the additional influence of C4D practice. The project revealed a tension between the actions of making, screening and the process of reflection. The project represented the most successful engagement with LCPs to date and established a clear format with the vertical films. These first person films, like digital stories, emerge from this work as a powerful tool for documenting and archiving memory and experience. The stories offer insight to Tampuon culture and the complexity of issues that their co-existence with the New Society brings. Individuals sought to address issues that impacted on their community and as a result raised these issues as well as possible solutions and hopes, in their own community and to a global audience. Although shortcomings in the screening and feedback processes have been identified, the feedback process that we were able to undertake, from individual screenings to the village-based screenings, drew positive and insightful responses.

Technology and social change is surrounding the Indigenous communities near Banlung and many are struggling to manage the pressures of this New Society. If this change were completely absent, the intervention of the project in its current form would be highly problematic. However the New Society is present and often outside the control of the local Indigenous people. They can't talk back to it, not

only that, they are being both drowned out and diminished by new technologies and new cultural practices. The embarrassment of Dam Chanthy's children to use Tampuan language is an example of this diminishment, as is the systemic discrimination by the Cambodian government described earlier in this chapter. The shift of traditional farming and trading practices to cash crops and land alienation are examples of the drowning of traditional livelihoods. The project is, hopefully, one of many opportunities for these communities to have a chance to navigate their own path against an unyielding wave of change.

The project sought to challenge individuals in communities to address issues that impacted on their community and to express these issues and solutions and hopes, to their own community and a global audience. The process of developing the work through the development-centred methods introduced by Snowden and Low on Fogo in 1967 had a profound impact on my understanding of the work and its position within the broader conceptual framework and historical precedents outlined in Chapter 2. While experience had been theorized as central to the project from the very beginning, the experience of making and evolving a project with these tools and methods has transformed my appreciation of the issues surrounding my practice and the validity of practice-based research more generally. Through the process we have uncovered some powerful tools for studying, documenting and thinking about the work that participatory media can do.



Figure 32: Chief of Phnom Village and Tampuon man, Yung Sam and his Dream

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

This chapter provides reflections on *Big Stories*, *Small Towns* and a summary of key findings. This is followed by a brief summary of the developments that have taken place in the project since the residency in Banlung, with a more comprehensive outline in Appendix 8: *Big Stories 2014*.

7.1 REFLECTIONS ON THE PROJECT

I approached the work with a key assumption of the potential for participatory media to create a more inclusive culture. With this in mind I sought to describe effective techniques for practitioners in this field by reflecting on my own experience of the project. Techniques can be limited by methodological and technological determinism, which undermines the emancipatory ideals of story and participatory media, as embodied in the key assumptions. In order to address this determinism, I identify that a flexible though principled approach is necessary. A focus on social relations and an awareness of community structures and institutional factors are central. Methods and technology are secondary to the primary concerns of the values and relationships that define the practice.

Principles that define a dialogical practice emerged, drawn from Freire's (1970) understanding of the values necessary to manifest such a relationship - trust, faith in others, humility, love and critical thinking.

An approach of positive deviance, underpinned by these values and awareness has been central to the approach of *Big Stories*. Working in this way and seeking to

showcase stories that embody this transformative approach illustrates that both individual emancipation and broader social reconstruction require arrangements that minimize barriers to collective learning. This is, in turn, connected to our relations to the institutional and discursive structures we build and inhabit. Unger (1998) notes that we develop our faculties and powers by moving within these structures, but also by resisting, overcoming, and revising them. These structures can even be made more open to the exercise and strengthening of our capacity to defy the limits of our social and cultural contexts.¹

Thus the question of effective techniques also addresses awareness of institutional and social conditions beyond the immediate relationship of facilitator and participant. This awareness constitutes a situated, reflexive research-practice that attempts to locate the researcher in relation to the researched and map broader contexts. The exegesis therefore includes reflections on context, process, form, as well as my experience of particular relationships. It explores the unravelling and re-integrating of various strands of practice and critical enquiry in relation to the iterative development of the project within successive contexts. There is an ongoing dialogue between, within and around the facilitators, participants, stories and settings, where each is used to help create new understanding. This dialogue is a dynamic and reflexive meaning making.

These approaches recognise practical and ethical issues and reveal the connections and contradictions, which along with an awareness of systemic pathways and linkages, are important in making sense of participatory, online projects delivered

¹ Unger (1998) *Democracy Realized* Verso, London. pp. 8-10

within institutional settings such as *Big Stories*.

7.2 KEY FINDINGS OF THE PROJECT

Stories emerged from longer term relationships with local people, rather than a broader, more generally representative approach. Extensive research and development was an important component of the project as was ongoing and diverse community engagement throughout the project cycle. Community partnerships were central in establishing credibility and trust with participants and broader community support during the feedback period.

A mix of approaches addressed community imperatives for time-sensitive participation, as well as production of complex, intimate stories from the community. It also reflected the experimental nature of the residency. In some cases, such as the Dreams photo series, a rapid participatory approach to creation was used. In other cases, training of local people occurred within workshop settings such as a digital storytelling program, or through ongoing training, mentoring and facilitation. In both cases the process did not need to result in a product or story for use within the project. This was an early example of the intentional loose coupling of the project, recalling Benkler's (2006) observations regarding the potential for online work to be human-centric system. Different forms of participation in different settings reflected the flexibility and responsiveness Chambers (2005) asserts is necessary to manifest a participatory approach.

Firstly, there was an approach of positive deviance in terms of relationships with

participants, and with the story-making process. This was reinforced through ongoing consultation and feedback with individual participants through to the wider community. The importance of aesthetic quality in the work also emerged as a significant component. Participation alone was not enough. Participants shared with facilitators a desire to make something beautiful that would deeply connect with their peers and beyond the community.

The collaborative relationship between participant/ facilitator and filmer/ filmed was partly based on an attempt to find a path in which the goals of both can be reconciled. This necessitates compromise based on aesthetic concerns, time and resources available. Often there are continued discussions, negotiations and disagreements to get to this place of compromise. There must be a balance between critical analysis and consensus. This balance may result in the coalescence of participant and facilitator voice I describe as the third voice (after Meyerhoff and Ruby, 1991). A third voice locates the artefact of the relationship, as embodied by the story produced, between professional or non-professional endeavours. This voice is also influenced by contexts and relationships beyond the filmer/ filmed relationship such as intra-community relationships, or institutional imperatives.

As producer, filmmaker and facilitator I needed to operate at both a systemic level and personal level to ensure the goals of individual emancipation, community engagement, innovation and institutional reconstruction that originally framed principles and inspired individual participation in the project were still directly addressed.

When given the opportunity to develop a second version of the project, I hoped to create a work that drew on the strengths of the first version but would be clearly distinct from it. Navigating a shift in the formative contexts of institutional support present in the first iteration was necessary. A key issue addressed was in re-imagining the project outside of these original institutional contexts. The work of Marcuse (1972) in exploring counter-institutions and the pragmatism needed to evolve viable and competitive structures was an ideal framework to negotiate these shifting contexts. The paradigm shifted from one of mutual reconstruction within the lead institutions, to an approach of building a counter-institution, with institutional supports.

As a producer of the project, my experience of making the work is deeply entwined with the various contexts of developing and resourcing the work. The work of the residency is important, but my understanding of development contexts and how I worked within or around those contexts is part of my practice and instrumental in shaping the resulting project. Offering reflections on how the project was resourced and how this impacted on all subsequent aspects of the work is crucial in illuminating effective approaches to broader contexts beyond the immediate social relations in the residency.

This mode of thinking returns to a consideration of the power of a specific system as a whole and its capacity to add meaning, value and enjoyment to those involved. This thinking explores complex, adaptive systems in light of social, communal and democratic thought. Whilst process and artifacts may be

systematised, people should not be. Creating human-centric systems, need not equate to the systematising of human beings who design, use and often rail against these systems.

Such systems link the aesthetic experience and the experience of everyday living to fields which offer an opportunity to re-imagine not only the work of the documentary maker, but the entire mediascape in which such activity takes place. There is an opportunity to explore and negotiate the creation and evolution of meanings, values and pleasures from our contemporary experience. This grounds the process of story making, presentation and distribution within a wide ranging and socially engaged relational framework, particularly relevant to practitioners working with interactive and participatory practices. Central to the work of the project is to use process and product to facilitate reflections and generate responses that encourage critical thinking and collective identification. The challenge is to transform these processes and artifacts from isolated personal disclosures into a compelling and empowering personal and communal experience.

The importance in the first iteration around multiplicity of engagement, flexible processes and diversity of partnerships was revisited in the second version of the project. Ongoing negotiation through participant input and feedback across all stages was again a feature of the work. The training and workshop aspects of the project were expanded and the role of Local Content Producers (LCP) became an important part of the project. The LCP model was re-visited in Banlung in Cambodia and subsequent residencies beyond the scope of the exegesis. The

filmmakers' extensive work with local organisations, which is not featured on the website, is a reflection of the importance of process unencumbered by expectations of product. This reflection is indicative of the continued loosely coupled nature of the system. Working in an environment of decentralised authority enhances the capacity to act and adapt in marginalised settings in order to address opportunities and challenges.

A key learning in the project came from challenges faced in Raukkan. With the absence of key community-based advocates the filmmakers struggled to achieve deeper engagement and create longer lasting outcomes for the community. This reinforced the observation in Chapter 3 that the best stories continued to emerge from the closest relationships, rather than from efficacy of formal methods. When filmmakers and participants find a context in which they can share a productive tension of the practical and imaginative, and the critical and visionary, the relationships and artifacts that emerge are inspiring and transformative. However, there is a shared responsibility of community, participants and filmmakers to articulate a balance between re-affirmation with a genuine belief in the value of collaboration and participation. This is Nemtin and Low's (1968) "precarious position" between definition and recognition, and division. Only community members who already have standing and relationships in the community can negotiate this position. Each community will have different expectations, needs and structures. Continued dialogue is essential, and time and resources must be applied to this endeavour.

Resources devoted to local screening and exhibition outcomes need to be substantial to achieve local impact and to sustain the dialogic process beyond production. As Low and Nemtin (1968) note, “a more conscious community is far more able to anticipate the realities of its future.”² A commitment to a well-rounded project cycle including sustained local distribution outcomes and well-crafted, thoughtful opportunities for discussion are essential. Broad and strong partnerships within and beyond the community are essential to facilitate this balanced cycle of action and reflection.

7.3 FUTURE DIRECTIONS – OTHER WORKS

I have continued to explore online and mobile participatory works where interactivity between participants, viewers and interface plays an important role. New technologies, beyond online, supports unique and ever more complex interactive and distribution opportunities, even as particular areas of the networked digital commons become increasingly enclosed. My recent practice has begun to more deeply engage with such opportunities, including the recent project *Stereopublic: Crowdsourcing the Quiet*, a crowd sourced mapping of quiet spaces in cities using mobile technology and the web to create a public commons for a community of quiet seekers.³

² Nemtin B., and Low C., (1968) *Fogo Island Film and Community Development Project*, Report submitted to the National Film Board of Canada, 1968. (downloaded : <http://onf-nfb.gc.ca/medias/download/documents/pdf/1968-Fogo-Island-Project-Low-Nemtin.pdf>, September 2010. p. 27

³ This project was inspired by Illich's (1982) *Silence as a Commons*. The project is described on the Stereopublic website (stereopublic.net) as “A sonic health service for built environments. A public commons for a community of quiet seekers.” One of the most exciting components of this work has been the direct exchange between composer Jason Sweeney and participants. For each

The work in Banlung has also shaped my current community practice in Cambodia. This work is a blend of arts practice and community development work in an inner city apartment building called the White Building in central Phnom Penh. There is an art projects space, film school, artists in residence, a community archive and library, an online archive (whitebuilding.org), community organizing program and ongoing series of community performances and exhibitions. I am part of a large collaborative team from a range of backgrounds and interests – teachers, researchers, architects, artists, lawyers, journalists, information technology specialists and NGO workers. The informal education programs of NTFP have greatly influenced our approach, as has the work of Forest Mountain Voices and Building Community Voices in terms of using media, local discussion groups and other community organizing practices to mobilise people in the community to define the terms of the development that is happening around them.

7.4 FUTURE DIRECTIONS – BIG STORIES: ASIA PACIFIC

My aspiration was to continue to expand opportunities for regional communities in Australia and internationally to address a multi-level digital divide. At the time of completion of this study, the project is ongoing having received funding through Screen Australia's Signature Documentary fund, as well as funding through state agencies in Australia, to support *Big Stories, Small Towns: Asia Pacific*. Six more residencies are now confirmed in Australia, Myanmar and West

quiet space submission submitted Jason creates a personal micro-composition for the participant, which they can choose to share on the collaborative map or keep private.

Papua for 2014 and a residency was completed in Strathewen, Victoria in 2013.

These developments are outlined in Appendix 8: *Big Stories 2014*.

Values and process are still central to the work and are described early in the briefing for partners and filmmakers. The theme of “shining a light on people who care for and create their community” is now designated as a “common theme” accepted by all institutional stakeholders.⁴ A month-long research and partnership development component precedes the residency. In order to replicate the project in other settings, some aspects have been formatted. The themes (of Love, Work, Family, Community, History and Dreams) are now themes for six separate photo essays to be produced in each town. Local Content Producers will be a part of each residency, as well as a community workshop component (or workshops, dependent on interest and resources). In order to secure additional funding a linear documentary about elders in the community will be produced, incorporating stories from a number of different residencies. The vertical films have now been described as a format, following the vision outlined in Chapter 6. The feedback and local exhibition component is maintained prior to launch online. Ownership of stories is now divested to filmmakers in residence or communities or licensed through a Creative Commons license according to the needs of filmmakers and communities. *Big Stories* takes a non-exclusive license to show the images and stories in the project.

Much of the focus of the work has been on the community development and participatory aspects of the production process, rather than viewer participation

⁴ Appendix 8: *Big Stories 2014*

online. In 2014 stories and images from the project will be proliferated across a variety of online spaces and new developments will allow for increased user interactivity through various input and feedback mechanisms as well as additional features in the main website. Alternate online interface options will be explored such as off-the-shelf interfaces and open source, collaborative website development. The process of exhibition, distribution and dissemination of stories, as well as the viewer experience of the work will be considered in more detail than has been possible to date. Addressing the contradictions observed by Gaudenzi (2013) in relation to the flattening and homogenizing effects of grid-based modes of presentation will be a key concern. I have also sought to look beyond the interface of a single website and explore multiple mechanisms for online delivery. The project will now see stories and images distributed across a variety of video sharing and social media sites. The main website will more strongly integrate this multi-site experience, as well as a series of iterative interface enhancements such as mapping of stories for each town and enhanced compatibility across various devices.

Creating an engaging, sustained and evolving experience in widely accessible settings where the technology effectively disappears is my current hope. Simple and minimal interface design combined with intuitive and responsive navigation that mirrors the values of the project is the goal for the online presentation of *Big Stories*. Stories and the experiences of people are foregrounded and the technology complements. As technology continues to change rapidly, an important aspiration I hold for the project, and for my work as a whole, is that it is not focused on technology as a solution. My work sits within an historical

framework of ethical engagement with the processes of representation that extends beyond immediate determinants of current technologies. Thus, balancing the opportunities presented through new technological innovations with other factors such as community and individual emancipation and reimagining institutional and ideological contexts is important. For the technology to ‘disappear,’ there needs to be the ability for participants to engage in dialogue with each other about their reality with a view to transforming it together.

APPENDICES

Appendix 1: *Big Stories* Production Proposal to Screen Australia. May 2010



Every community has a memory of itself. Not a history, or an archive, or an authoritative record... A living memory, an awareness of a collective identity woven of a thousand stories

Joe Lambert, Founder, Centre for Digital Storytelling

Synopsis

one liner A collaborative, multiplatform documentary project that gathers local stories for a global audience.

one para A collaborative, multiplatform documentary project that gathers local stories for a global audience. Big Stories is grass roots and collaborative and stories are made *with* not *about* communities. This is a unique model of community engagement and participation through media - an opportunity for the rich repository of local stories found in and around small towns to be told with global impact.

one page A collaborative, multiplatform documentary project that gathers local stories for a global audience. Big Stories is grass roots and collaborative and stories are made *with* not *about* communities. This is a unique model of community engagement and participation through media - an opportunity for the rich repository of local stories found in and around small towns to be told with global impact.

In the first Big Stories completed early 2009, award-winning documentary makers Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchawala lived in Port Augusta, South Australia for three months - making films with the locals to create an inspiring portrait of the town. The project was shaped through extensive consultation and the resulting very personal and heartwarming stories revealed what the community knows as its hidden truths.

As a model project it has been internationally acclaimed as one of the '*best examples of an online documentary project in the world*' Hussein Currimboy, Programmer, Sheffield Doc/Fest. It is one of 26 international projects showcased at IDFA Doc Lab 2009, <http://www.doclab.org/projects>.

The key to Big Stories is close collaboration with communities. Big Stories 2 will focus on three communities in transition all connected by the contested issue of water, Murray Bridge and Raukkan in South Australia and Ban Lung in Cambodia.

The production of a Big Stories Platform will create a single, centrally hosted website that can be used to publish Big Stories, and create new Big Stories communities across the globe.

Introduction

This production proposal is for Big Stories 2. It features Murray Bridge and Raukkan in South Australia and Ban Lung in Ratanakiri Province in Cambodia along with the new Big Stories Platform connecting communities across the country – and the globe. Research has confirmed terrific story leads in all three places with the central connection of communities in transformation and communities all dealing with the contested issue of water.

Inspired partly by the National Film Board of Canada's Filmmaker-in-Residence Program and others as indicated in the urls at the end of this document, this project will be a media rich website that gathers a range of digital story telling approaches.

We have put together a simple site to showcase some of the characters and locations we discovered during our research and to give you a taste of Big Stories 2.

You can find it at <http://bigstories2.freerangeclients.com/> from Wednesday 12 May 2010

Philosophy and process

Big Stories is not just the sum of its parts. Time and resources are the only limits to the stories that we can tell in each community. Thus, the stories that are featured on the site are just a few threads in a massive social tapestry that defines each and every community.

In Port Augusta we discovered the value of community engagement and community ownership of the stories, the process and the final product. Port Augusta has celebrated the successes of the first iteration of the Big Stories project with as much verve as the producers (more on many occasions!). Local media, council, community groups and individuals in this community have continued to find innovative ways to share their stories. Absent from our first site has been this narrative of Port Augusta's incredible grassroots distribution and marketing and their connection and support for this project. In part this helps shape the narrative. The method of making the media is an instrumental part of the project - it's not just the story, but also the story behind the stories.

The digital storytelling workshops and participatory media/ art programs we ran in Port Augusta were a key part of generating community content and engagement. Each digital storytelling workshop generated about 10 watchable short films. They are short, structured films. They work with an integrated format, yet allow for individual creativity and community participation.

In this version of the Big Stories project the lead filmmakers and producers will again be undertaking facilitated filmmaking and community media interventions. The stories are made *with* not *about* the community. This is a significant part of what the residency component is all about - the facilitated filmmaking and community engagement process.

We aim to take advantage of the nature of the media and spread a limited amount of high quality content in many different directions and in to places that are often untouched by anything but the most mainstream of media – from the Speedway, the Skate Park, the Op Shops, the pub to those who live by the river. We will deliver workshops targeted towards a small number of local people. These people will be our *Big Stories local content producers* and ongoing contributors and advocates for the project. It is hoped that they can, in part, become the local face of the project to the community.

So being in residence implies that a significant workshop component is central to the project. There is an element of giving back skills and resources to community inside the residency and this is, in fact instrumental to the success and sustainability of the project. This is the idea of making films 'with' not 'about' people. To this end, we are developing key points around why we are doing what we're doing. These are our guiding principles inspired by Katerina Cizek and the NFB's Filmmaker-in-Residence Project.

Guiding Principles

- *The community is our key partner - work closely with them, but respect each other's expertise and independence.*
- *The filmmaker's role is to experiment and adapt documentary forms to the original idea. Break stereotypes. Push the boundaries of what documentary means.*
- *The Big Stories project is not a local PR department. Use documentary and media to participate rather than just to observe and to record.*
- *Use whatever medium suits – video, photography, web, cell phones or just pen and paper, it can all be documentary.*
- *Work through the ethics, privacy and consent process with the community before beginning and adapt the project accordingly. Sometimes it means changing the whole approach – or even dropping it. That's the cost of being ethical.*
- *Always tell a good story.*
- *Track the process, the results and spend time disseminating what we learn with multiple communities: professionals, academics, filmmakers, media, general public, advocates, critics and students.*
- *Support the community in distribution and outreach. Spend 20% of the time making it and 80% of the time getting it out into the world.*
- *Just showing it is not necessarily a goal unto itself. Work with the partners to harness the project's momentum to effect real participation and real engagement.*

Financing and production plan

The core production team is the same as the first *Big Stories*, Producers Anna Grieve and Martin Potter, Interactive Producer, Nick Crowther and Filmmakers in Residence Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchwahala. As one of the originating partner's the Media Resource Centre in South Australia retains an active interest in the *Big Stories* brand and continues to provide filmmaker training, digital story telling workshops, and gear hire and post facilities.

Country Arts SA has confirmed \$12,000 contracted via MRC to support a digital storytelling workshop to create Digital stories. These stories will contribute both to the website and the filmmakers building of local relationships and networks.

SAFC invested in the original *Big Stories* via the MRC. The Producers will aim to secure SAFC investment in *Big Stories 2* with our application for \$22,222K to the Digital Media Investment Fund that allows up to a maximum of 10% of the total Production Budget. However while we have attached here a budget for \$222,222K we would like Screen Australia to consider financing this project regardless of SAFC investment .If SAFC is not secured we will cut our budget accordingly via Producer Fee and Filmmakers Fee and Residency time .

ABC Adelaide has expressed strong interest in partnering with BS2 in regard to building South Australian profile. The possibility of *Big Stories* on the ABC platform will be further explored during the production phase.

About the Towns

Murray Bridge in brief

Although only an hour's drive from the CBD of Adelaide, Murray Bridge is a microcosm of a number of the challenges and dilemmas facing much of regional Australia as well as, in some cases, metropolitan Australia. And it is also at the front line of Australia's most pressing environmental stories.

Murray Bridge is on the Murray River at the gateway to both the devastated Coorong and the Southern Mallee, another vulnerable ecological system. Raukkan is only 40 kms away on the shore of Lake Alexandrina, the mouth of the Murray.

Following Goolwa as the port at the mouth of the Murray in the 1850s, Murray Bridge was established with the road bridge over the Murray River completed in 1879. This was followed in 1886 by the Adelaide-Melbourne railway line guaranteeing Murray Bridge's importance as a vital link across the river.

The original township was laid out in 1883 and was called Mobilong. The land was sold in Adelaide in 1884 under the advertisement '*Murray traders, wool washers, builders and all men of enterprise. Give heed to what is now offered to you.*

Murray Bridge is a town in a state of massive development. In early May 2010 Murray Bridge Council revealed that the town has been rezoned as part of the greater Adelaide district and this year will be the beginning of large scale developments – a new education facility, police station, court house, horse racing development and shopping precinct. Also slated for development are expansions to Mobilong prison, residential developments in and around town and new leisure developments for residents commuting to Adelaide during the week for work. Not for much longer will 'the Bridge' be a sleepy service town.

See: ([Mayor and Murray Bridge Youtube video](#))

Murray Bridge is a great location for *Big Stories 2*. It is a town that straddles country and city, an intersection of road, rail and river and a historically important site in the history of the Ngarrendjeri nation. We have discovered an incredibly rich and accessible archive of photos and home movies from within the community and from the Screen Australia Library we have the classic film about Murray irrigation *The Valley is Ours* (Dir: John Heyer 1948) and the charming 1953 *Richard Takes a Train Ride* (from Murray Bridge to Adelaide) It is a town of fascinating local characters and politics, hosting activities, events and places that are stories in their own right, this – as the local Council proclaims – is surely “the Bridge to Opportunity”. However with high youth unemployment, internal pressures within Council, a rapidly changing industry base and above all big sustainability issues around water – the “Bridge” is also a town in transition.

Murray Bridge currently has a population of 18,364. Most estimate that the Indigenous population is around 10% (estimates from local Council and Indigenous community). The total population has grown slowly over the last decade but Council predicts that by 2018 the population will nearly double to 35,000.

Story themes and possibilities

Changing face of the town – evolution from small service town for dairy farmers into satellite city for commuters. Increase in hills based workers commuting to work in MB and poorer people commuting from MB to the city/ stringer work.

Trouble Downstream Environmental Stories from the river. How can this town manage upstream water over allocation, riverbank destruction, acid sulphate soils and salinity. Effect downstream to Raukkan and the Coorong.

New Settlers’ Retreat as part of Murraylands New Settlers Program

Murray Bridge has been always been a centre for new settlers to South Australia. Over the last two decades. Afghani refugees have been settled in Murray Bridge with many working at the local abattoir. Bhutanese refugees also live in Murray

Bridge including former journalist **Dorji Dhap**. Recently Sudanese families have begun to arrive. Lutheran Community Care (LCC) supports refugees and new arrivals through the New Settlers' Retreat. The Retreat provides computers with broadband access, a sitting room with audio-visual equipment and a teaching area for small groups and volunteer based tutoring of English. **Max and Jacky Merkenschlager** have been volunteering with LCC for 10 years and are using digital storytelling as a way of sharing some of the extraordinary stories they have gathered over this time – to date they have recorded many oral histories and have been tireless advocates for the rights of new arrivals to their community.

Lower Murray Nungas Club Started in 1974 to provide support to local Aboriginal people. It began as a drop-in centre for young people and had close connections with the local Ngarrindjeri Football Club. The Nungas Club is used for a range of functions, including vocational education, catering committee, Aboriginal foster care worker based at centre, family support worker also based at centre, drop-in centre for local community and also a cultural resource centre. It has a childcare centre, health centre and gym. The gym is run by local identity Mac Hayes- Amazing talent! Who also teaches boxing. He looks after the Spirited Men's group with Aboriginal men (Aboriginal sobriety group) and is a member of the Christian Bokie Group Longriders.

Headspace A newly established youth drop in centre and mental health support agency located in the heritage listed train station in Murray Bridge. Train goes through once a day. An extraordinary building and a service still finding its place in town as it offers counselling and psychiatrists as well as youth activities. Federal funded, open 18 months, runs 'I can' program with alternative learning for students disengaged with school. Bands rehearse there every Wednesday night

Community Cops Community Constable Greg Smith (Deadly) is one of two Indigenous community liaisons stationed in Murray Bridge. Greg used to be a truckie and has been in Murray Bridge for about 18 years. He is a great connection.

The Murray Mallee General Practice Network A “not for profit”, non-government, that facilitates community access to health care across a range of areas. MMGPN’s base in Murray Bridge was established in 1995 and was key in establishing Headspace, the Lower Murray Nungas Club healthcare program, upgrading local hospital services, providing drought support and founding the health care arm of the Migrant Resource Centre in 2008. MMGPN is a hub for doctors, nurses, managers and advocates, providing some of the most innovative health care solutions in the state. *A Country Practice* certainly has come a long way... **Steve Sumner** (Legend) is in charge of **Indigenous Health policy** at MMGPN. He knows everybody and was the driving force behind the Indigenous Health Centre that he used to run. He also coaches the local footy team and is likely to stand for a position on Council this year.

Murray Bridge Speedway Racing by the River! Founded in 1958, The Speedway is one of Australia’s oldest and a centre of life and culture in the Bridge. Located on ‘the other side’ of the river, the Speedway features spectacular action, views and characters. Not much has changed in 50 years www.murraybridgespeedway.com. We are planning to set up a photo booth in the speedway.

Mobilong Prison, just out of town. Is in the middle of expansion with a New Offenders facility, which will make the prison the largest in South Australia. Large Indigenous population - 357 Male offenders. Low security work outside jail.

Regional Centre for Culture 2010 aka Ripples. The second RCC in South Australia is Murray Bridge (the first was Port Augusta). A year long program arts and culture will be brought to Murray Bridge including the revitalisation of the Town Hall and theatre.

Death of the Market Garden The second and third generation post war European arrivals to Murray Bridge carved out a place as market gardeners selling their produce to nearby Adelaide. The empty decaying glasshouses that feature on the landscape around Murray Bridge are testament to the impact of the recent drought and unrelenting water restrictions. The mostly European

gardeners are now hoping that the urban boom of Murray Bridge comes sooner, rather than later so that their now worthless land becomes a golden egg.

The Abattoirs T&R enterprises are one of the Murray's biggest and oldest employers. With over 1000 workers employed in the abattoirs and feed factories in Murray Bridge. T&R is the lifeblood of employment in the town and provides new arrivals and itinerant workers with a stable income as long as they can take the conditions of work. Also sponsors workers on special visa from China.

Skate Park and skate shop BMX/ Skater/ Scooter fiends. Where Murray Bridge youth hang.

Interesting Characters (not mentioned in story possibilities)

Juan Yang- Chinese new settler and poet- escaped from her parents (under lock n key) and an arranged marriage, married an Australian-Chinese man and came to Murray Bridge

Peter Smith- artist/playwright. Has been doing some developmental/experimental collaborative work with artists brought in for the Ripples year. Suffers ME, which has been very isolating and debilitating for him.

Ray Bettcher- local pastor. Founded the Christian Family Centre with high numbers of disadvantaged families and kids. Very strong youth group and music programme.

Kevin Kropinyeri Jr- an inspiring Ngarrindjeri artist and comedian who went from being a very angry young man with a long record to a national success.

Baona- Korean woman who travelled to Australia as part of her degree in tourism Management but in order to stay in Australia has had to take work at T& R meat processing plant.

Uncle Bruce Carter- Aboriginal elder who lived at Hume Reserve in the days of the fringe camps

Grantley Hughes is in Murray Bridge Players. Arrived in Murray Bridge a couple of years ago and loves it. Loves all kinds of cats including Cats the musical and often dresses as a cat.

Ngarrindjeri Boys – young Indigenous rap group, rapping about culture and society in the area.

Web links

<http://www.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm> Murray Bridge local Council site

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Murray_Bridge Murray Bridge on Wikipedia

<http://www.ripplesmurraybridge.com/> Murray Bridge Regional Centre for Culture 2010: Ripples, Country Arts SA.

Raukkan in brief

Raukkan Community, on the lower reaches of the Murray River, has been a traditional cultural, spiritual and economic centre for the Ngarrendjeri people for many thousands of years. Raukkan is 165km from Adelaide, and 40km from Murray Bridge on the shores of Lake Alexandrina. A history of Federal, State government and local Council demarcation disputes means that Raukkan is still only accessible by dirt road and a ferry operating 24/7 to carry road traffic the short distance across the channel between Lake Albert and Lake Alexandrina. At the ferry crossing, pumps are now operating 24/7 taking water from Lake Alexandrina into Lake Albert in a (vain?) attempt to keep the lake from acidification. The pH level of Lake Albert was recently measured as 1.93. This is extremely acidic and dangerous.

The first European into the area was Captain Charles Sturt assigned to solve the great mystery of why so many rivers flowed westward from the Great Dividing

Range (often known as the question of whether Australia had an 'inland sea'. He rowed a whale boat down the Murrumbidgee and reached Lake Alexandrina, at the mouth of the Murray river, on 9 February, 1830.

Raukkan was renamed Point McLeay Mission in 1859 by the Aborigines' Friends Association - AFA (and reverted to Raukkan again in 1982).

The Mission was started by George Taplin who is a celebrated figure in Ngarrendjeri history – as we were told a number of times during our time in Raukkan, “colonisation was going to happen – we’re just glad that Taplin was the man that came”.

Taplin's enlightened (for the time) engagement with Ngarrendjeri resulted in the publication of two historically important books *The Nyarrenyeri* (1870) and *The Native Tribes of South Australia* published in 1879, the year of Taplin's death. Taplin worked closely with a number of Ngarrendjeri people and migrants from other areas such as James Unaipon. Unaipon is widely seen by academics as the unaccredited co-author of *The Native Tribes of South Australia*. Taplin died when James' son David Unaipon was only 7 years old but the legacy of Taplin's missionary work lived on in young David's strong faith and his extraordinary achievements. Unaipon is now pictured on the Australian \$50 note (along with the local church) and remembered as a preacher and inventor of great note.

Taplin's work on translating the bible into Ngarrendjeri and his detailed studies of the Ngarrendjeri language has created a resource still in use at the local Raukkan School 150 years later. 2009 marked 150 years since the establishment of the town of the Point McLeay Mission and 2010 will see the 150th anniversary of Raukkan School: http://www.raukkanab.sa.edu.au/htmls/bodyabout_us.htm.

Taplin's son was the second head of Point McLeay mission and introduced wool washing as an industry to the community. This story is featured in the Film Australia *Federation* series episode 2 with a large selection of historic photos from the 1880 and 1890s. However Frederick was not as 'morally upstanding' as his father and died in a mysterious fire in 1889 in Adelaide after being brought

before the AFA to defend himself on yet another charge of sexually assaulting a Ngarrendjeri woman.

Thus the Ngarrendjeri's experience of the mission life is very different to many other Indigenous cultures and is evidenced by the strong Christianity of the current Raukkan community.

In 1974 Point McLeay was handed back to the Ngarrindjeri people, who continue to administer it and the surrounding farmlands themselves. The community of around 160 – 190 people are now keen to articulate both their own vision of the past and the future. They did have a dairy farm but like others in their region, lack of water meant they could not continue. On the road into Raukkan, 18 of 20 Dairy Farms have closed down in the last 3 years.

The leaders of Raukkan are an inspiring group and have a clear vision of their future. The presence of the Big Stories project in Raukkan will have clear benefits to both the community and the project. We will employ *local content producers* already identified by Clyde and Nick Crowther will run a web mentoring program throughout the residency.

Web links

David Unaipon

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/David_Unaipon

<http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120339b.htm>

James Unaipon

<http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/AS10470b.htm>

About the Ngarrindjeri

<http://ngarrindjeri.jay019.com>

<http://ngarrindjeri.jay019.com/history/timeline.php>

Taplin's notes on the Ngarrendjeri at the State Library :

http://www.slsa.sa.gov.au/murray/content/aboriginalAustralians/life/Narrinyeri_i.htm

Story Themes and Possibilities

Raukkan spiritual home of Ngarrendjeri (stories of the past and a vision of the future)

Education School's 150th and School Days stories from the community. Raukkan has recently introduced a Ngarrindjeri language program in its community school to great success.

Restoration of George Taplin's house

Funeral a fortnight Death in Ngarrendjeri community and the effect on Raukkan community when so many return to be buried in their spiritual home.

Women's Community Choir, Music was always a big part of the community. All children who went to Raukkan School learnt an instrument, there used to be a Glee Club.

Trouble Downstream Lake Alexandrina and what will become of the mouth of the Murray? Raukkan Natural Resource Management project (2007 - 2010) will rehabilitate at least 4.5 square kilometres of land in the area, while protecting culturally sensitive sites. The land lies within a Ramsar-wetland of international importance. Through their *Working on Country* contract, five Indigenous workers provide a range of environmental services, including; revegetating large areas of the wetlands and surrounding land, providing long-term control of environmental weeds re-snagging the wetlands and lake edge with trees for fish habitat, stabilising and revegetating eroding dunes, reinstating historical water flow connections, ongoing monitoring of flora, fauna and water quality, protecting culturally sensitive sites and practicing traditional cultural land management activities.

About the Microsite

Ban Lung, Cambodia in brief

Ban Lung is the provincial capital of Ratanakiri Province in Cambodia's mountainous and remote northeastern corner, which borders Vietnam and Laos. It is about 600kms from Phnom Penh and has a population of 17,000 and growing. The red-earth wide roads suggest an outback town but this is a relatively lively commercial centre. It has been the capital of the Province since the Khmer Rouge fell in 1979.

In *Big Stories*, Ban Lung will feature as our 'international template story'. It has a natural connection to Murray Bridge and Raukkan: ***Contested Water***.

Ratanakiri is a multi-ethnic province, with local communities of various Indigenous groups collectively known as *Khmer Loeu* (this has been interpreted as a derogatory term, but is still in common use). The Indigenous groups each have their own ethnic language, with a very small proportion speaking Khmer. Ethnic minority groups are around 70% of the population. They rely on primary agricultural activities - shifting cultivation of vegetables and herbs, raising a few chickens and pigs and sometimes grazing cattle in the forest. They collect non-timber forest products as their main food source (although this is decreasing due to deforestation) and carry out a variety of off-farm activities for exchange. Many come to Ban Lung Market using it as a central trading base. So Ban Lung is in many ways a service town for farmers, similar to Murray Bridge. And like Murray Bridge, it is now on a path of development and rapid transition although the changes here are even more rapid. The town sits at the intersection of cultures, history, environment and development. It is dealing with the conflicting impulses of mining and logging boom and tourists looking for a remote adventure. For Westerners it is advertised as *the edge of Cambodia's wilderness*, the last bastion of the 'wild east'.

For Murray Bridge and Raukkan, the health of the Murray and the lakes are crucial to these communities. For Ban Lung, it is the picturesque volcanic crater lake, *Yeak Laom* on the edge of town. The lake is famous throughout Cambodia,

and the people of Yeak Laom have always regarded it as a sacred place dug by a giant spirit. Building and the cutting of trees around the shore was traditionally forbidden. However in the 1960s and in the 1990s these laws were disregarded and resorts, karaoke bars and brothels have been built around the scenic edges. In 1997, with the support of international NGOs, the lake was handed back to the Yeak Laom community and soon after the government signed a 25-year management rights lease with the community.

However in the last few years, the community has lost significant swathes of land in dubious government land concessions. With the rapid expansion of Ban Lung town, Provincial Authorities are now reviewing this management lease. A mountain area nearby, Youl Mountain, has been given as a concession to a company rumored to be owned by one of the Provincial Governors. Plans presented to the community in early 2010 have included a road around their lake and other private tourism infrastructure. A concession in a neighboring area suggests plans for a “cable car from one place to another place” – “another place” is likely to be this lake. The lake is set to become a battleground for conflicting interests just like the River Murray.

Story Themes and Possibilities

Sustainability changing environment due to climate change, population growth, environmental damage by both traditional agricultural practice and development within the Province and ‘upstream’ development has meant that people in Ratanakiri face an uncertain future as their own traditional agriculture is no longer sustainable. Land Grabbing coerced sales, illegal concessions and land selling is rife

Trouble Downstream –Yeak Loam Lake is currently known for its ‘crystal clear waters’, but the waters of the lake have experienced significant pollution. Dry season droughts since 2003 in Ratanakiri have disrupted traditional cycles of agriculture and caused widespread drinking water shortages exacerbated by nearby mining. The construction of the Yali Falls Dam in 1993 in Vietnam, has had far-reaching negative consequences for communities like Ban Lung living downstream. The effect has been rapid water level changes, reduction of fish

spawning grounds, increases in bank erosion and a loss of food sources along the river. As with the Murray, people downstream wear the consequences of upstream activity, although it could be argued that the innovative inter-national management practice of the Mekong River puts the interstate squabbling around the Murray River to shame.

Health The area is known for malaria. It has one hospital servicing the whole Province (based in Ban Lung), It has one of the highest rates of child mortality in Asia and 50% of children under 5 are malnourished.

Education Since early 2000s the Cambodian government has attempted to deliver bilingual education programs in Ratanakiri. These have been extremely successful, although are limited to five minority language groups.

Changing Youth The predominant religion of the Indigenous people of Ban Lung is Animism. Animist traditions influence nearly all family and village activities. These traditions are strongly linked to the forests, which are governed by spirits (called *Arachs*) who reside in sacred parts of the forests and guide elders and their communities in their daily lives. In and around Ban Lung a major social division is brewing as young Indigenous people turn away from their religion believing that their elders and their religion is not going to protect them

Production Methodology

Big Stories will produce a 'microsite' around Ban Lung to develop an international prototype of the Big Stories project. Ideally we see Big Stories as a project that can be easily accessed by towns around the world – feeding into a large-scale online archive of thematically connected stories and ideas around the experience of life in a small town. With Producer Martin Potter based part time in Cambodia this is a great opportunity to explore this potential. The strategic building of community alliances has been integral to the success of Big Stories. To be able to replicate and build this in an international context is the true test of its ability to connect around the world.

The Big Stories Team has discussed production methodologies with Australian producer Jocelyn Pederick who spent 3 years in Ratanakiri and founded an Indigenous media group – *Forest Mountain Voices* - facilitating the community to create award-winning documentaries around issues impacting on their lives. Jocelyn has suggested participants and potential partnerships.

Bophana is Cambodia's Audio Visual Archive with a mission is to collect archive of Cambodia's history and present. Bophana will provide access to rare archive of Ratanakiri and Ban Lung.

Sopha is Khmer project co-coordinator of the UNESCO Indigenous radio programs, based in Ratanakiri. Sopha is a passionate media worker and advocate and will be a *local content producer* for Big Stories.

Website Creation

Interface

We will need to stay with an interface structure that is largely similar to *Big Stories 1*. This means we will have grids of thumbnails, collections and threads of films and photo series.

Requirements

Design new interfaces for Murray Bridge, Raukkan and Ban Lung.

Refine/rethink timelines for threads. Would we lose much if these were consistent not unique per thread?

Using HTML 5 we will have to do away with the Flash animations at the start of threads. We can replace these with nice tight photo series, perhaps with handwriting on the images to differentiate them.

At the minimum we can differentiate the grids by rounding the corners of the thumbnails and optionally making them rectangular. Could there be a grid with only one row that takes the full height of the screen? Like Gaza Sderot but straight. <http://gaza-sderot.arte.tv/en/#/faces/>

In order to produce a world-class interface within our budget we will have to try and keep it simple. While we might change the dimensions of the grid to be rectangular we can't make the grids more variable so for instance one item might take up four squares in a grid. We also need to make assets easy to produce to cut down on production time. The CMS will help with this in automating the creation of different sized videos and photo thumbnails. In *Big Stories 1* we had a lot of handwriting scanned in and displayed in the interface. Perhaps this is too time consuming.

Use HTML5

Choosing to develop the site with HTML5 is something of a strategic decision. Version 5 is the latest version of the HTML language. With HTML5 much of the animation and effects commonly created with Flash can be achieved but where Flash is considered by many to be an annoyance and an outdated technology, HTML5 is considered to be the future of web development. HTML5 is such a new language that only about 20% of our audience will be able to view the site

currently, although this is projected to be above 30% by the time this project is completed. There are several good reasons why we're choosing to develop a site for only 20% of our audience.

Firstly, 100% of our audience will be able to see the site, as we will have 2 versions of the site. The HTML5 version will be the deluxe version but there will also be an HTML4 version. This will not have the visual effects of the HTML5 site but will look very similar, have all the same content and be an engaging and polished site in it's own right. Building two versions of a site is quite a common undertaking for a project like this. Previously we would create a Flash version with an HTML alternative to fulfill our requirements to make the site accessible to all users including those with disabilities. We did this for Big Stories 1 with a kind of Flash/HTML hybrid site. Choosing to do the same thing with HTML5 and HTML4 will be simpler than using Flash and HTML4. The CMS will be able to serve HTML 5 + 4 easily and the two versions are quite similar.

Secondly we should expect to receive significant web industry exposure for building the site with HTML5. It is still a new and somewhat novel medium and Big Stories 2 may be the first project of it's kind built with the language. The browsers that can display HTML5 are recent versions of Safari, Chrome and Firefox. The people who use these browsers are the trendsetters and opinion makers of the Internet. With a well-designed and executed interface, this exposure could be huge and would be very valuable free marketing.

Videos

We will continue to use H264 video playback and adopt the HTML5 video tag. Video will work similarly to Big Stories 1.

Photo Series

This is the most underdone part of the old site and needs to be totally redeveloped. We won't have the budget to develop CMS functionality to create photo series like <http://reimagines.com.au/>. A photo series with similar transitions but only showing a single image a time would be achievable and look very polished.

Requirements

Slideshows of images

Explore what is possible with transitions in css3 beyond fading and sliding

How will text be integrated into this? Is text set in images?

A soundtrack will play in the background

Each slide could have different timing

Can the slideshow be paused? Click forward and backward through the slides?

Add context to the content

How can we provide more context to what people are seeing?

We can add infographics or text to films and slideshows

We can add page of content to the site in a similar way to the credits page on the BS1 site

Can text information be included in the grid somehow?

Connecting stories across towns

Creating threads that stretch across towns with common themes will provide an extra dimension to the site and help add contrast to the site alongside showing common ground between our characters. This should be simple enough to implement in the CMS but there are interface design questions that need to be resolved:

What does a thread look like when it spans across towns?

If MB design is blue where PA is brown, how does the interface change with the films?

Blogging

Blogging the process and experience of *Big Stories 2* is a more compelling (and viable) concept than for *Big Stories 1*. We have a much clearer plan from the beginning and can document and show this as we go. Content is going to be debuted at different times over the period of the production so we will have stuff we can share with the world before the entire site launches. Filmmakers, producers and community participants should all be involved in this process.

Retrofitting *Big Stories 1*

Ideally we would import all the *Big Stories 1* content into the new CMS. The main reason for doing this is so that we can include original stories in any cross-town threads. Additionally, BS1 would then benefit from any improvements in the interface etc.

Content Management System

Multiple Formats

We will be developing an HTML 5 interface for Big Stories 2. This is an exciting challenge and we expect to push the interface quite far in the direction of 'flashy' interface animations and effects. HTML 5 is not a widely adopted standard yet and the site will thus only be viewable on the latest web browsers. In the past it was quite common to have both Flash and HTML versions of a website to cater for different browser capabilities. We will have to take this same approach with Big Stories 2, having both an HTML 5 and a simpler HTML 4 version of the site. It is a benefit of using a CMS that we can more easily display the content in two different layouts and this will be less of an expense than having Flash and HTML versions.

Requirements

CMS should determine whether to provide HTML4 or 5 based upon browser string upon first viewing the site

CMS will provide alternative layouts in each case

Cookies will be set to continue providing this content

User will be able to override these cookies within the interface

Asset Library

The Asset Library is an area of the CMS where all the videos and photos are uploaded and stored before being included in the website.

Requirements

User can upload videos and photos into the library

User can create collections to store related files

The library will perform some processing of the uploaded files

User can browse and view uploaded content within the library

User can update and delete content within the library

Library file selector integrated into areas of the CMS such as Site Builder and Thread Builder allows users to pick videos and images for these

Video Processing

Handling some video processing on the server will be a great time saver for the production process. CMS users will upload a master video – this is a correctly encoded H264 video at a high resolution (720p?). Our video processing tools will then automatically generate all other required video sizes for faster or slower Internet connections.

The same system could also generate poster images (the still of the video that is displayed before you press play) but this might not produce a great result. Instead we should prepare the poster image during the editing process and upload this separately. Photo thumbnailing functionality will generate different sizes as required.

Requirements

Integrate Panda Stream cloud hosting into CMS Asset Library

Setup Panda to correctly process videos as required

Photo Series

In Big Stories 1 our photo series were quite simplistic and contained sometimes hundreds of images. For Big Stories 2 we will take a more curated approach and select much smaller sets that tell a stronger story with context provided by audio or written commentary.

We will not have a budget to create photo series of the complexity of <http://reimagines.com.au/> but will do something similar with just one image viewed at a time but perhaps more interesting transitions than just a slide

Requirements

Select images to make up photo series

Reorder images within each photo series

Choose transitions between images

Add descriptive text for each image

Set the time an image remains on the screen

Add a soundtrack file to go along with the photo series

Synchronising a soundtrack with image progression may be a challenge. Since we can set the duration of an image it will be up to the producer to time these correctly.

Site Builder

The Site Builder is the core functionality of the CMS. This tool enables users to create the sets of videos and photo series that make up a Big Stories website project. It is similar in concept to a standard CMS. Where you would create pages in a standard CMS and group them together in menus, we create stories and group them together in sets. Port Augusta is a set, as is Our Town.

Requirements

Create sets

Add videos and photo series to sets

Reorder the content within sets as required

Add sets to other sets

Add threads to sets

Add additional contextual information to sets

Thread Builder

The Thread Builder is a variation on the Site Builder. It enables us to create threads of content such as Men's Shed or Wami Kata.

Requirements

Create any number of threads for a site

Include single videos, video sets or photo series within a thread

Reorder the content within a thread

Include a unique timeline design with the thread.

Note: BS1 threads had an intro animation. This would be replaced with a photo series in the Flashless BS2.

Help System

Help within this system will be provided as a PDF user guide, which covers the use of all the functionality.

User System

There will be two levels of user account within the CMS.

Producers are able to create and manage all content within the system

Managers can do all producer role as well as publishing sites and creating new users

Publishing System

Managers have the ability to publish and unpublish sites (locations)

Unpublished sites can be previewed by logged in users

Marketing

Prepare a press kit

Oversee the flyer design

Take on a publicity agent to seek press and radio interviews

Be available for all media interviews

Offer feature articles to newspapers

Present a preview screening of the website to reviewers and journalists

Make an online promo for other internet sites including Screen Australia's site

The Big Stories team will undertake a transmedia distribution strategy with the aim of advancing the project across numerous different platforms and across numerous target, niche audiences.

Using innovative online technologies and documentary filmmaking Big Stories will draw a broad spectrum of viewers from across the globe with a focus on building a strong momentum for the project within Australia and through peer networks online and in the documentary industry.

Big Stories aims to open the eyes of new audiences to the challenges of our increasingly urban world, using, in part, a grass-roots production and distribution approach to foster inter-community connectivity between the filmmakers, communities and their audiences.

The Big Stories Company operates on the principle that the rise of internet communication tools gives new opportunities for communities and filmmakers to tackle social issues, archive memory and experience and share stories with a pro-active, while entertaining approach. Big Stories is a project that embodies these beliefs.

The Big Stories distribution strategy will be dedicated to building a strong Australian audience online and offline and an international audience online that are interested in our key themes and ideas of regional communities, their history, stories and culture, Australian stories and culture, participatory media, online documentaries, health – particularly in regional areas, water, Indigenous media and culture. The themes and ideas will be more targeted and defined as the project evolves.

Media partnerships will be explored with web and print publications that have a strong online presence, and are aligned with cutting - edge technology, and focused on connected demographics. Examples of potential media/ screen partners include the Fairfax Publishing (owner of most regional papers in Australia), ABC online rural and radio, National Film Board of Canada, Screen Development Agencies in Australia (and internationally – e.g. Bay Area Video Coalition) and online magazines such as GOOD, Vibe, Slate, Vice and Wired magazines.

Marketing and PR through third-party and social networking sites such as Facebook, Youtube, Dailymotion, Vimeo, Blip, and Twitter will boost both local and international targeted distribution efforts.

The web documentaries itself will be distributed on partner websites in participating countries. This model has been used very successfully by Honkytonk Films to effectively syndicate their website within a country.

The diversity of content produced over course of the residency has found numerous other distribution opportunities in our past experience. We will again be engaging in a strong transmedia distribution strategy outside of online networks, partnerships and links.

Other Distribution strategies

1. Community screenings:

Community launch

Public space installations

Event based screenings in community possibly October 24th 150th anniversary

Mobile screenings (eg at the Speedway etc)

DVD and web archive at local council, library and schools

DVD screenings to community groups – e.g. organisations, council, schools

Microcinemas/ events as part of Ripples Regional Centre for Culture and ongoing regional touring programs in partnership with Country Arts SA

Films screened at local cinema prior to mainstream film

Community exchange screenings in other participating communities

2. Public screenings

Film festivals including Launch as part of the AIDC in 2011, and build on goodwill and previous success at IDFA and Sheffield Docfest to again be selected for these festivals. Aim to be a standalone feature at SXSW Interactive Festival (we were showcased there in 2010 as part of the IDFA Doclab showcase) and will aim for prestige online and documentary festivals such as the Webby Awards and Hot Docs. We aim to produce small amounts of linear content suitable for presentation at niche festivals. See below for possible targeted film festivals.

Conferences are potential areas of interest – documentary and media, regional, indigenous, youth, health, social and community services, online, community and participatory media – presentation can take the form of DVD or archived website.

3. Educational and Organisational Distribution

Targeted DVD distribution and sales through educational distributors such as Ronin or Marcom or independent sales as per Big Stories 1

4. Broadcast Media

Radio documentaries – potential re-versioning digital stories and documentary content for

News – radio, print and television around events and website

Possible interstitial series on Australian broadcast and cable television (e.g. Australia Network)

Linear documentary for broadcast (Australia and possible international sales)

Online distribution opportunities of isolated Indigenous content or links

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/-/human-rights-video/>

<http://comminit.com>

<http://hub.witness.org/IndigenousMedia>

<http://www.indigenousportal.com/Video/>

<http://tv.oneworld.net/>

<http://www.indymedia.org/en/index.shtml>

Human Rights and Indigenous Film Festivals

<http://www.hrw.org/en/iff>

<http://www.humanrightsfilmfest.net.nz/>

<http://patoisfilmfest.org/>

<http://oneworldmedia.org.uk/> or <http://www.oneworld.cz/2010/>

<http://humanrightsfilmfestival.ca/>

<http://www.potatoscone.com/doc8/index.html>

<http://www.amnestyusa.org/events/amnesty-film-festival/page.do?id=1091616>

(check the links at the bottom to other human rights film festivals as well).

Indigenous Film Festivals

<http://www.imaginenative.org/>

<http://www.ggiff.com/>

http://www.alaskanative.net/en/main_nav/plan_visit/calendar_events/indigenous_wff/

Sites of Inspiration

Collaborative and community engaged Projects that offer inspiration in terms of content, interface and ideology for this project include;

NFB *The benchmark for online documentary delivery.*

GDP: <http://gdp.nfb.ca/index> / <http://gdp.nfb.ca/map>

Waterlife: <http://waterlife.nfb.ca/>

High Rise: <http://highrise.nfb.ca/>

Filmmaker in Residence: <http://filmmakerinresidence.nfb.ca/>

HONKY TONK *a French based Web Company that is developing a distinctive style around online documentary production that blends their intersecting interests across print journalism, documentary and web design.*

The Big Issues: www.honkytonk.fr/index.php/thebigissue/: *online documentary on the obesity epidemic in the West.*

Journey To The End of Coal: <http://www.honkytonk.fr/index.php/webdoc/>:

Journey to the End of Coal/ Delivered in partnership with the newspaper Le Monde – the project was serialized over 4 weekends in Le Monde with over 1 million viewers in this time.

PULITZER CENTRE FOR JOURNALISM

<http://www.livehopelove.com/#/home/> : *commissioned by the Pulitzer Centre See: <http://pulitzergateway.org> for another interesting website from PCR*

A dynamic magazine style of interaction.

JONATHON HARRIS

The work of Jonathon Harris: www.number27.org (We Feel Fine -

<http://www.wefeelfine.org/> ; Sptnk - <http://sptnk.org/>; The Whale Hunt –

<http://thewhalehunt.org/>)

We Feel Fine and Whale Hunt were key in the Big Stories development ideas last time.

Harris is a visionary of the web and creating opportunities for user generated meaning within a site (see: Sptnk).

MEDIASTORM www.mediastorm.org - online photojournalism site using simple rollovers and high quality photojournalism.

Austin Lynch's **The Interview Project** (<http://interviewproject.davidlynch.com>) - a mapped journey across the US introduced by David Lynch, shot by his son and presented in a very simple format.

Yann Bertrands **6 Billion Others** <http://www.6milliardsdautres.org/index.php> - a giant mosaic of stories from across the world.

Colours Magazine (The Sea) <http://lab.colors magazine.com/> - themed user generated content stylishly presented.

The Documentary Project <http://www.thedocumentaryproject.org/> - the website is the archive of a 3 year collaborative media project working with refugees (youth) in NY.

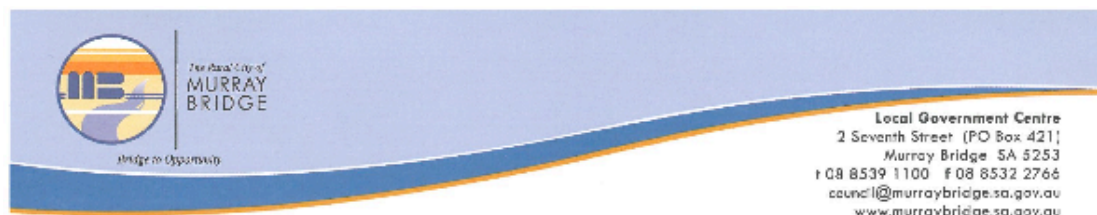
Behind the Veil <http://www.theglobeandmail.com/news/world/behind-the-veil/> - The Globe and Mail and New York Times are at the vanguard of online

Pictory Mag: <http://www.pictorymag.com/archive/> - great archive of well presented photo essays.

Letters of Support

1. Murray Bridge Council
2. Raukkan Community Council
3. MRC
4. Country Arts SA
5. Max and Jacqui Merckenschlager
6. Freerange Future web budget

Appendix 1: *Big Stories* Production Proposal to Screen Australia. May 2010



4th May 2010

Attention: Producers Big Stories 2
Anna Grieve, Martin Potter, Nick Crowther
c/o Freerange Future
PO Box 8321, Station Arcade
Adelaide SA 5000

Dear Anna, Martin and Nick,

Re: Big Stories 2 coming to Murray Bridge

On behalf of the Rural City of Murray Bridge I am extremely pleased that Murray Bridge and Raukkan have been selected for the next series of the Big Stories project.

As the Host of the 2010 Regional Centre of Culture in South Australia, the Rural City of Murray Bridge is excited about the potential of this partnership. Murray Bridge has taken up the challenge to embrace a year long cultural program reflecting the unique aspirations of the community. Telling the stories of the region and providing opportunities for world - class arts experiences, learning new skills and creating new partnerships. After having viewed your website at www.bigstories.com.au featuring Port Augusta we can see clearly how Big Stories fits into our plans for this year and how this partnership can create many mutual benefits.

I have sent you a range of people and program that will assist you during research and look forward to further discussion to confirm how we can facilitate the Big Stories project. We are particularly interested in how our proposed community communication project, *Telling The Bridge* can be connected with your site.

We wish to contribute to your programme by allocating staff support through Bridget Briscoe, (Ripples Community Engagement Coordinator) and Di Gordon (Arts and Community Cultural Development Officer), who will be your main points of contact.

We also wish to provide you with temporary production office space in the Murray Bridge Ripples office with Bridget and free promotion of the Big Stories project through our Ripples marketing strategy in partnership with the Murray Valley Standard newspaper.

Please be in touch as soon as your production is financed so we can make the most of planning Big Stories coming to Murray Bridge.

With regards,

Mayor Allan Arbon
Rural City of Murray Bridge

Visitor Information Centre	Works Depot	Public Library	Regional Gallery	Lerwin Nursing Home	Youth Centre
3 South Terrace	21 Hindmarsh Road	Mobilong House	27 Sixth Street	67 Joyce Street	3-5 Railway Terrace
MURRAY BRIDGE	MURRAY BRIDGE	MURRAY BRIDGE	MURRAY BRIDGE	MURRAY BRIDGE	MURRAY BRIDGE
☎ 08 8539 1142	☎ 08 8539 1160	☎ 08 8539 1175	☎ 08 8531 2606	☎ 08 8539 1185	☎ 08 8531 2122
☎ 08 8532 5288	☎ 08 8532 0170	☎ 08 8532 1622	☎ 08 8531 2606	☎ 08 8531 1655	☎ 08 8531 2426



Attention Producers *Big Stories 2*
Anna Grieve afgrieve@gmail.com , Martin Potter, Nick Crowther
c/o Freerange Future
Freerange Future
PO box 8321, station arcade
Adelaide SA 5000
Contact ph 0409249341 (Anna Grieve)

Dear Anna, Martin and Nick,

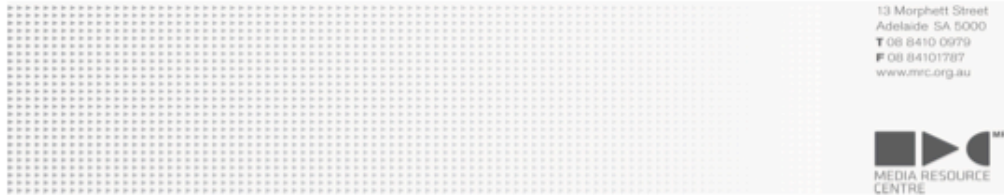
Re: Big Stories 2 coming to Raukkan

We are extremely pleased that Raukkan has been included with Murray Bridge in your proposed *Big Stories* and are very excited about the potential of this partnership. After having viewed your website at www.bigstories.com.au featuring Port Augusta we can see clearly how *Big Stories* fits into our plans for community development and how this partnership can create many benefits.

Raukkan is a vibrant Indigenous community with a long and extraordinary history. Raukkan means "meeting place" and this is the spiritual home for Ngarrindjeri people. It was always known as Raukkan by Ngarrindjeri but known as Point McLeay by Europeans for many years and reverted back to traditional name in the last ten years. The Raukkan Community Council are the landholders for the Raukkan Community and are responsible for maintaining social order and community infrastructure; providing services; pursuing social and economic developments; and promoting customary practices, maintaining culture and preserving heritage. Pride in the Ngarrindjeri language is strong in our community and our language is taught in the local primary school.

Last year we celebrated Raukkan's 150th anniversary as a community and this year it is the 150th anniversary of our school. We will be holding a special event on October 24 to commemorate this occasion.

We are particularly interested in the idea of bringing a digital story telling workshop to Raukkan so that *Big Stories* Filmmakers and Webmakers will provide additional training opportunities to three of our young people who have some media experience but are seeking further skills in this area. We



Anna Grieve

38 Hill Street

HAWTHORN VIC 3122

Dear Anna,

I refer to your recent discussions with the MRC in relation to your application for funding from Screen Australia for a second iteration of the Big Stories, Small Towns project (**BSST2**).

The purpose of this letter is to confirm that the MRC is enthusiastic about BSST2 and its intention to be involved in it.

I understand that if your application for funding from Screen Australia is successful, you intend to establish a production company and that you, Martin Potter and Nick Crowther will be directors of that company (**Production Company**). I understand that it is your intention for the Screen Australia funding to be provided to the Production Company.

I confirm that the MRC and the Production Company intend to enter into an agreement to facilitate the production of BSST2, once funding has been approved by Screen Australia. That agreement will take into account the use of the relevant elements from BSST1 and establish a framework for the production of BSST2. Whilst the precise terms of that agreement are yet to be formalised and agreed, I am pleased to note that at this stage, it seems clear that we share a common vision for the progression of BSST2 and how we can work together to make the project a success. I also confirm that it is our intention to finalise such an agreement within the next month.

The MRC looks forward to progressing this exciting project with you.

Yours faithfully

Gail Kovatseff

Director



Anna Grieve, Martin Potter, Nick Crowther - Producers *Big Stories 2*
c/o Freerange Future
PO Box 8321, Station Arcade, Adelaide SA 5000

Dear Anna, Martin and Nick,

Re: *Big Stories 2* in Murray Bridge and Raukkan

We are delighted that Murray Bridge and the Ngarrindjeri community of Raukkan have been selected for the next *Big Stories* as part of Murray Bridge's 2010 Regional Centre of Culture program, *Ripples*.

The concept that underpins the Regional Centre of Culture program is the stimulus effect of a diversity of approaches to arts and culture in a regional centre which leave a lasting of the understanding of the role that arts and culture can play in a strong, inclusive and resourceful community.

One of our key objectives for *Ripples* 2010 is to uncover the stories and secrets of this place, to find the resonances between the stories of the present and the stories of the past and to develop both an interest in telling these stories and the right media in which to tell them, so that the stories can be heard not only to the people who live there but also those who come to visit.

The Regional Centre of Culture places great emphasis on positive experiences through arts participation and skill development and with the spotlight firmly trained on the arts in Murray Bridge in 2010, we know that *Ripples* will not only provide wonderful opportunities for the community to tell their stories and instill in them the fun, excitement and challenges that involvement in a project such as this provides, but also ensure that the project receives wide community recognition.

After our involvement in the previous *Big Stories* project in the previous Regional Centre of Culture in Port Augusta we can see clearly how *Big Stories* fits into our plans for *Ripples* and how this partnership can create many mutual benefits.

Country Arts SA has engaged in an extensive consultation process within the community and has formed an Aboriginal Steering Group – Kungan Ngarrindjeri Yunnan (Listen Ngarrindjeri Speak) - who make sure that the program includes the Ngarrindjeri people and more broadly. This Steering Group could provide valuable support for the implementation of the project in Raukkan.

We are committed to providing \$12,000 to the Media Resource Centre SA to produce Digital Storytelling workshops that will be specifically targeted at developing local community media skills to enhance the *Big Stories* project.

We are also happy for you to make your temporary production office in our Murray Bridge *Ripples* office and look forward to discussing how we can further facilitate your project in Murray Bridge.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Jo Pike', written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jo Pike
Senior Project Officer, Regional Centre of Culture Program, Country Arts SA

Attention Producers Big Stories 2
Anna Grieve afgrieve@gmail.com , Martin Potter, Nick Crowther
c/o Freerange Future
PO Box 8321, station arcade
Adelaide SA 5000

7th May 2010

Dear Anna, Martin and Nick,

We write regarding our preliminary discussions on your online project Big Stories. We are extremely pleased that Murray Bridge (and Raukkan) has been selected for the next Big Stories.

After having viewed your website at www.bigstories.com.au featuring Port Augusta we can see clearly how Big Stories fits into the work we are already doing in the New Settler community of Murray Bridge. It also connects with the work that we have done on the Home Project, a collaborative artwork developed by internationally respected artist Craig Walsh in partnership with artists and local Murray Bridge community, and presented as part of Digital Odyssey, a Museum of Contemporary Art touring Project <http://www.digitalodyssey.com.au/>

We have spent many years working with New Settlers in our community and we ourselves have been gathering audio and video stories, from early beginnings as teachers at Murray Bridge High School in the mid-nineteen eighties, organizing students to record and transcribe the stories of selected senior citizens in our community and overseeing the production of a students' video story involving role-playing by themselves, local police officers and school staff as part of the 'Police-Schools Program' (of which we were both coordinators), and more recently interviewing and arranging interviews by others of Chinese, Afghan, Bhutan, Turkish and Sudan-born New Settlers of Murray Bridge, and recording their stories.

We are happy to be part of the Big Stories project as we believe that there are amazing stories within our community just waiting to be told.

With regards,

Max and Jacqui Merckenschlager
RSD 2077 CALOOTE SA 5254
maxandjacqui@bigpond.com
www.scriptsongs.com

CHAPMAN RIVER,
KANGAROO ISLAND S.A.



office: level 2, 5 leigh street
adelaide sa 5000
postal: po box 8321 station arcade
adelaide sa 5000
phone: 08 7127 4269
email: office@freerangefuture.com
www.freerangefuture.com

Friday, 7 May 2010

To whom it may concern,

Freerange Future have developed a thorough quote totaling \$50,370 for undertaking all the interactive aspects of the Big Stories 2 project. The costs we have provided cover the public website, the backend CMS, the Raukkan mentoring/workshop programme and the Interactive Producer fees. Any software licenses required or ancillary costs incurred in undertaking the quoted work will be borne by Freerange Future.

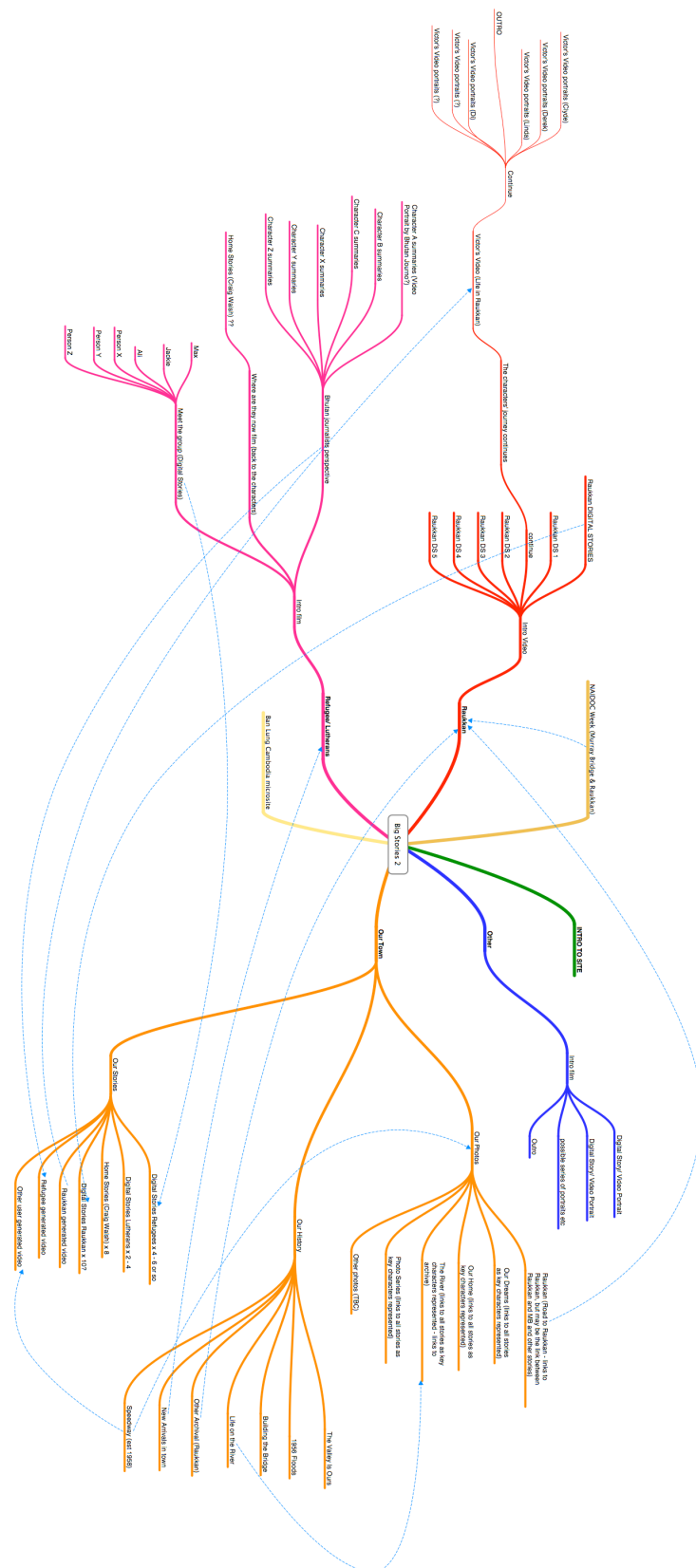
Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Crowther', written in a cursive style.

Nick Crowther

Director

Mind Map Big Stories 2



Contact list for Murray Bridge and Raukkan

Youth

Murraylands Headspace

3-5 Railway Terrace, Murray Bridge Ph: 8531 2122

Skate Board Shop and Skate Park key locations. See Gail who runs the skate shop

History

Peter Harden (MB Historical Society) or better still, Ken Wells

PO Box 1297

Murray Bridge

Contact Michelle or Simone

Ph: 85323396

President: Ken Wells 8532 2669

Secretary: Peter Harden 8532 3396

Treasurer: Maureen Stones 8531 1761

Meet at the Murray Bridge Town Hall on the 2nd Tuesday of each month commencing at 7.30 pm.

Don Smith (MB International Photography Club)

Ph: 85326183

Colin Barrett (member MB Photography Club and club renegade!)

Home: 8532-2895

Email: barrettcolin325@gmail.com

Brian Smyth (local film footage)

Company: Car-n-Camping

Email: brisym@lm.net.au

Ann Hughes Secretary/Treasurer/Publicity Officer Knows about video archives and old people in the town

Friends of the Murray Bridge Library

murraybridgefol@australiamail.com

Ph: 8539 1175 / 8532 1133

Also Peggy Bennett at the Murray Bridge Library

Murray Bridge and Raukkan Production contacts

Community Constable Greg Smith (Deadly). Key connect between Indigenous community and Police force.

Mobile: 0409818355

He is best friends with Steve Sumner (Legend) who works at The Murray Mallee General Practice Network

MMGPN - 64 Adelaide Rd, PO Box 292, Murray Bridge SA 5253

Ph: 8531 1303 Fax: 8531 1427 Email: steves@mmgpn.org.au

Di Gordon will be our key Council liaison and is incredibly well connected with the community.

Arts and Community Cultural Development Officer

Rural City of Murray Bridge and Country Arts SA

Ph: 8539 1127

Mobile: 0488 691 193 Fax: 8532 2766

Email: D.Gordon@murraybridge.sa.gov.au

Website: <http://www.murraybridge.sa.gov.au/>

Bridget Briscoe works with Di and runs Ripples office in Murray Bridge where production will be based

Bridget Briscoe

Ripples Community Engagement Coordinator

Ph: 8532 4179

Email: bridget.briscoe@countryarts.org.au

Address: 16 Sixth Street, Murray Bridge

Raukkan Community Council

1 Seymour St, Raukkan 5259

Executive Officer: Derek Walker

Ph: 85740064

Clyde Rigney Snr Key contact for Big Stories Residency in Raukkan.

Email: clyder@internode.on.net

Cathy Ruggerio owner of Uccello café (best café in town) has a daughter Emma who is filmmaker and would like to be work on Big Stories 2 in production. Cathy and her family have lived in Murray Bridge a long time. Her family is one of the last Italian families who have large-scale glasshouses.

Ph: 8531 3069

Address: Uccello Cafe - Murray Bridge 31a Seventh Street Murray Bridge

Max and Jacqui Merckenschlager Former teachers and local poets. Won many poetry awards. Work with new settler community recording/ filming their stories.

maxandjacqui@bigpond.com

Mobile: 0428878163

www.scriptsongs.com

Mac Hayes runs the Gym for the Lower Murray Nungas Club

Ph: 0408457406

Email: mac@lmnc.com.au

Grantley Hughes

Email: meeookat@hotmail.com

Speedway Murray Bridge Speedway

Ph: 8532 1150

Mobilong Prison, out of town.

Ph: 85328911

Contact: 25 Franklin Street Adelaide SA 5000 · GPO Box 1747 · Adelaide SA

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Appendix 2: *Remote Transmissions*. February 2007.

REMOTE TRANSMISSIONS: OUTLINE FOR FILM AUSTRALIA

Until now our personal stories have been shared only with our family and friends, but our process is about collecting all these invisible histories together...about assembling the jigsaw that is the bigger story of our time, the story that defines who we are.

Daniel Meadows, Creative Director of CAPTURE WALES

The BBC Cymru Wales Digital Storytelling Project:

www.bbc.co.uk/capturewales

The **Remote Transmissions** project is a digital media project aimed at mid-level screen practitioners that will extend upon the MRC's current program of slated regional activities in 2008 in Port Augusta around the Port Augusta Regional Centre for Culture.

One team of filmmakers will receive a cash budget of \$40 000, extensive in-kind support from the MRC (to the value of \$20 000) and access to the Film Australia archive to deliver innovative stories through the **Remote Transmissions** online portal (www.remotetransmissions.com.au).

The project will be constituted of a residency period in Port Augusta of no less than 3 months and will result in the production of at least five digital documentaries by the filmmakers in residence, a significant archival component with archive being provided by Film Australia and a substantial community created content development component.

Community content will be sourced via pre-existing projects as well as two dedicated workshops to be run within the **Remote Transmissions** project budget.

BACKGROUND

The Media Resource Centre (MRC) is planning a number of linked projects as part of the Port Augusta Regional Centre for Culture (PARCC) 2008 program,

which will make local stories central to the yearlong celebrations. These projects will allow locals to both tell their own stories in their own voices and to become sufficiently skilled to work alongside professional filmmakers to tell local stories to a national broadcast standard. It will also allow them to assist others in telling their oral stories which will be distributed via the web.

The **Remote Transmissions** project will be entirely based in Port Augusta and surrounds.

The Port Augusta projects to be undertaken by the Media Resource Centre include:

1. **Filmmakers Boot Camp** where up to 30 local participants will attend 5 days of FREE workshops that explore what it is to make a short digital film: from idea to cinema screen. Each group is given the challenge of making a film that reflects on the theme of *“What Living in Port Augusta Means To Me”*. (Planned dates: 7 - 11 July 2007).
2. **Migration, Myths & Identity – a digital storytelling project** will provide access, support and the opportunity for individuals and communities to tell their stories in their own voice. It will draw on the Digital Storytelling technique, a global phenomena of which the MRC is an SA leader. Up to five of the committed participants of the Boot Camp, in an attachment capacity, will work with professional filmmaking MRC staff to undertake the filming of the oral histories. Planned for May 2008. (DELIVERED).
3. The ongoing **SA Short Screen Awards regional tour** which will return to Port Augusta and surrounding areas to showcase the best of SASSA in May and again in September with two separate programs.
4. A number of other regional projects are currently in planning across the Regional Digital Screen Network that exists across SA.

The **Remote Transmissions** project will leverage off these projects and myriad other planned events occurring around Port Augusta Regional Centre for Culture (PARCC) to allow selected projects the chance to create a high quality, interactive digital media project of any form that is inspired by the stories and events from Pt Augusta and surrounds.

Projects could be any combination of user generated content, linear screen content, professionally produced online, mobile or screen based content. The only limit to the scope and nature of the projects will be the imaginations of the practitioners.

The other MRC projects will effectively allow for a period to establish strong local community, arts and government support networks and to build awareness of a final stage of the process with filmmakers selected heavily involved in engaging with community to increase the integrity, relevance and insight of their final works.

The stories will be shown as part of the PARCC film festival, SA Short Screen Awards (and regional tour) distributed through the SA wide Regional Digital Screen Network, through local councils and libraries and through the main online portal of the remote transmissions website. This website will effectively create a mini-archive of all the stories told as well as charting the creative process of the artists involved – especially the 2 final projects selected which will have their development tracked online.

In order to further develop **Remote Transmissions** the Media Resource Centre will partner with Country Arts SA in coordinating a series of digital storytelling workshops.

The completed works will be showcased within each community where they are produced, and uploaded and promoted via the **Remote Transmissions** website.

Further regional screening possibilities will be pursued through the Media Resource Centre's regional tour of the SA Short Screen Awards 2008 - 2009 and Big Screen (Australian Film Commission). These regional programs are very keen to showcase local South Australian content as part of their screening program.

There is also a potential to showcase this work at the National Regional Arts Conference in Alice Springs in September 2008 as completed or work in progress.

Projects that may offer a template for inspiration include:

- Capture Wales: www.bbc.co.uk/capturewales

Appendix 2: Remote Transmissions. February 2007

- The Memory Grid: www.acmi.net.au/digital_stories.htm
- National Film Board of Canada Filmmaker in Residence program:
www.nfb.ca/filmmakerinresidence/
- The Murmur Project: www.murmurtoronto.ca
- Learning To Love You More: www.learningtoloveyoumore.com

Appendix 3: Digital Storytelling Overview. September 2008.

Information provided for Digital Storytelling workshops

The following information is provided to all participants in the Media Resource Centre digital storytelling workshops as a guide for preparing prior to the workshop.

OVERVIEW

We all have stories about the events, people, and places in our lives. In a group process, the sharing of these stories connects people in special ways.

People often come to a digital storytelling workshop feeling insecure about their writing, about the technology, about their design sensibility. Many of the stories we show as examples in the workshops are directly connected to the images that one collects in a life's journey. But our primary concern is encouraging thoughtful and emotionally direct writing.

With that in mind we've prepared a few hints to help you start thinking about how to start...

WHAT IS DIGITAL STORYTELLING?

Digital Stories are short, personal, multimedia tales, told from the heart. Anyone can make them and publish them on screens anywhere. They have the potential to be a very democratic kind of storytelling.

There's a strictness to the construction of a Digital Story: Two hundred and fifty words (or so), a dozen or so pictures, and two minutes is about the right length. These strictures, we find, make for elegance. Digital Stories are a bit like sonnets in this respect, multimedia sonnets from the people (only it's probably better when they don't rhyme).

YOUR STORY

Your story can be about anything! Love, work, hopes, fears, the past, even the future.

The most important thing is that it is your story, your point of view – if there's something that sticks in your mind, something you feel strongly about, a place you love (or hate!) then that could be the basis of your digital story.

Think about what images and sounds you can use – photos, objects etc to illustrate your story – and bring these to the workshop.

FINDING YOUR STORY

There are many ways to explore and develop narrative. This approach is a clear and simple guide to 1st person autobiographical writing and provides a good preparation process for the development of first draft scripts for the workshop.

The following seven components help to make a good digital story:

The seven elements that guide us to creating a Digital Story;

1. The point of a story: point of view
2. A dramatic question
3. Emotional content
4. The gift of your voice
5. The power of the sound track
6. Economy
7. Pacing

Point of the story: point of view

What makes a story a story? A story is a narrative, a tale, a report or, an account. Most importantly, it is told to make a point.

By the *point of the story*, we are primarily addressing this issue of defining **what** you, as a storyteller, are trying to communicate within your story.

Because every part of the story can service this point, it becomes imperative to define this goal in order to direct the editing process. In thinking about the *point of a story*, we should also be considering the reason for the story. Why this story, now, for this group of people?

For most storytellers couching the story in the first person point of view, either throughout the story or as a frame for the story allows us to hear the story in a more personal context. Taking the stance of a 3rd person approach to narrative often formalises the language and distances the storyteller and audience.

The dramatic question:

Simply making a point doesn't necessarily keep people's attention throughout a story. We need to establish a central desire in the beginning in such a way that the satisfaction or denial of that desire must be resolved in order for the story to end.

The dramatic theory for the purposes of short format narrative is simply identifying "*the dramatic question*". Sophisticated story making distinguishes itself by burying the presentation of the *dramatic question*, like the realization, in ways that do not call attention to the underlying structure.

Emotional content:

A story that deals directly with the fundamental emotional paradigms – of death and our sense of loss, of love and loneliness, of confidence and vulnerability, of acceptance and rejection – will most likely reach into our consciousness.

It is important to consider events, people and places in a personal story as a reflection that provides an insight into how we feel about the subject matter. A chronology of dates and a list of event information never give us real insight into the emotional content of first person autobiographical writing. Writing about how events, people and places make you feel creates a more powerful story.

Gift of the voice:

In digital storytelling the participant is encouraged to record a voiceover. Using our own voice creates an intimacy for our stories.

In a story we are listening for an organic rhythmic pattern that allows us to float into reverie. In the place of reverie we have a complex interaction between following the story and allowing the associative memories of the story to wash over us.

When we write our story the language should be conversational, personal and easy to read aloud and find its own rhythm. The style of writing should reflect the storytellers own voice.

A good tip is to test your draft script by reading it aloud to ensure you translate the work from written to spoken form.

When we record our voice it is important to deliver the script in an informal style with a natural authentic emotional quality. As you record your voiceover imagine you are talking to someone you know.

The power of the sound track & sound:

Music adds powerfully to the intensity of the storytelling. Music can play on our perception of the story or the visual information.

Sound effects are also popular in film and video because they add to the sound design of the piece beyond the mix of music and voice.

A design of ambient sounds or appropriate noises can add complexity to your narrative. So think about music and bring some music along to use.

Economy:

Most people do not realize that the story they have to tell can be effectively illustrated with a small number of images and video, and a very short script.

1x A4 page double-spaced is a good basis for a script. A shorter script allows you to add pauses for music, sound effects & image transitions, so the overall duration will always be longer than a straight read of one A4 page.

A short story is easier to compile in 2 days and still allows you enough time to refine your piece. Very few stories are effective when they are too long. In the context of this workshop we are requesting that participants aim for a short story of 150 words.

Pacing:

Often the most transparent feature of a story is how it is paced. Pacing is considered by many to be the true secret of successful storytelling. The rhythm of a story determines much of what sustains an audience's interest. Changing pace, even in a short digital story, is very effective.

It is important to understand pacing and create room in your story to change the pace of it. We can use effects, images, music, sound or even silence to change pace.

Writing Checklist

- Don't forget your draft story should only be around 250 words for the workshop.
- Check you have not approached the writing in a formal way – test this by reading this aloud.
- Can you sum up the point of the story in one sentence?
- Are you clear for whom you are writing the story for?
- Have you considered your own style of personal writing or storytelling?

Checklist for images

- Bring between 20-30 photos/ images related to your story
- Ensure you also have personal photos of yourself and your family. These photos are important as a back up regardless of your topic.
- You may want to take stock images of your work, home, neighbourhood to have just in case.

SCHEDULE: 9am – 5pm each day.

Day One Includes an overview of the history and practice of Digital Storytelling and some examples of previous stories. A group self-assessment of the skills required for creating digital stories and an exploration of the story circle feedback process with 250 word scripts created by participants.

Day Two Will continue with the script feedback process as well as introduce the softwares used in digital storytelling. Participants will finalise their scripts, begin recording voiceovers and commence preparation of their images.

Day Three Participants will finalise edit of their work, which will be screened to the workshop group as well as any friends and family the group wishes to invite.

MORE INFORMATION FOR THE VERY COMMITTED...

General Information about Digital Storytelling

The movements of cultural democracy and community arts activism inspired the Digital Storytelling Workshop practice in the 1990s. Digital Storytelling is committed to storytelling and emphasizes the listening; the exchange and the solemnity of passage that re-invests storytelling with the meaning it deserves. It is not about developing a feature film, entire family history or a novel. While these processes are related, digital storytelling is a process of creating little stories from our memories. Put together these stories may represent a larger narrative however they are really meant as a singular expression created for numerous presentation contexts.

The approach to this particular process of Digital Storytelling is really like an extension of everyday storytelling. Creating media within this conversational context can change the way we think about media in general. Much of what we help people create is not standalone broadcast media, but in the context of a conversation it can be extraordinarily powerful.

With video and audio production now achieving a home user accessibility and affordability people can use these forms to tell their own stories and reconnect with the potential of storytelling. In our observation the idea of digital storytelling has resonated with many people because it speaks to an undeniable need to constantly explain our identities to each other.

Digital Storytelling Methodology

Participants in the workshop arrive with an enormous range of skills and life experiences and need to be treated as individuals both in relation to the style of their story and its production. Many people feel inadequate when working with computers and media that can make them feel slightly vulnerable. The style and approach to storytelling should not be dictatorial but rather participants should be provided with simple guides to assist them with the process.

There are two key strands within a workshop – the sharing of stories and addressing technology. The Digital Storytelling Program has demonstrated how project based learning within the context of personal storytelling can greatly accelerate the learning process of multimedia technologies. The technology is not the focus, it is just a tool – the focus is on emotionally honest and insightful storytelling.

Digital Storytelling is not a therapeutic encounter however it would be irresponsible if we did not recognize the emotional consequences of this work. The very intimate nature of the program and the risks the participants take in exploring their personal issues and life experiences can be very emotional. Participants and facilitators must be capable of honouring the autobiographical stories shared. A story (and a participant) can transform when given sensitive and appropriate feedback.

A few links to keep you going...

Center for Digital Storytelling

<http://www.storycenter.org/>

Based in Berkeley, California. Pioneers of digital storytelling. The model they created is what we will follow.

Capture Wales

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/capturewales/>

the first broadcast digital storytelling project that has evolved into a deep online community with over 1000 stories created over 5 years.

© Media Resource Centre 2006. Developed in conjunction with the Centre for Digital Storytelling

Appendix 4: *Big Stories* Brief. June 2008.

Big Stories, Small Towns

Producing local stories with global reach

Brief for Filmmakers for the Port Augusta project

Project timeline: August – November (Port Augusta residency component)

Key partners: Film Australia, Media Resource Centre, SA Film Corporation

Project Producer is Martin Potter, MRC

Project Executive Producer is Anna Grieve, Film Australia

Brief: To outline vision for the **Big Stories Small Towns** project.

Overview:

The project is a digital media project that will extend upon the MRC's current program of slated regional activities in 2008 in Port Augusta around the Port Augusta Regional Centre for Culture.

Inspired partly by the NFB's Filmmaker in Residence Program and others as indicated in the urls at the end of this document, this project will be a media rich website that brings range of digital story telling approaches from ONE regional community in South Australia, Port Augusta.

One team of two multi-skilled filmmakers will receive a cash budget of \$36 000, extensive in-kind support from the MRC (to the value of \$20 000) and access to relevant Film Australia archive on Port Augusta to deliver innovative digital stories through the **Big Stories Small Towns** online portal (www.bigstories.com.au or www.bigstoriessmalltowns.com.au).

Free Range Future has been commissioned to produce the website that will be hosted at the MRC with a direct link from Film Australia. Free Range will work to

the MRC Producer working with the selected filmmaking team to create a media rich, innovative website that will be the main showcase of the project and connect to other websites related to Port Augusta.

The project will feature a filmmaking residency period in Port Augusta of no less than 10 weeks. This residency will result in the production of a number of short digital documentaries (DigiDocs) featuring Port Augusta and community (past and present) along with other digital materials (photos, blogs etc) created during the residency period. A number of story possibilities in key locations in the Port Augusta community have been identified as a result of projects and research to date. During their own initial research phase and working with the MRC Producer, the filmmaking team will use this research along with other Port Augusta story possibilities they identify to create a proposal for project development during the residency.

While the project has specific and staged outcomes to be delivered for online during the residency, the featured content will rely on the imagination and community involvement of the filmmaking team - **Big Stories, Small Towns** will weave together the filmmakers' documentaries, gems from the Film Australia archive and the community created content within a interactive destination that inspires viewers to explore and experience Port Augusta and it's stories.

In thinking about the form of the project and how it exists online consider physical attributes of the stories; scale, time, boundaries, and how these related themes could be represented in the online presence.

Consider how this is more than a collection of video, audio and photography. How can we navigate through stories and along common threads? Do we have to lead the viewer or can they be empowered to find their own patterns, and meaning, through the interfaces we provide?

The final interactive project needn't be something that has a premiere, and is unveiled complete. The Filmmakers in Residence process is in itself an evolving

story and a part of the bigger picture. Can you document this process for all to see, as you experience it? Could the archival content and curated community content grow in a similar manner?

The cash component (to the value of \$36 000) of the residency will cover all travel, living expenses and a wage for two filmmakers for the duration of the residency. Accommodation will be organised by the MRC.

An additional cash budget of \$10 000 will be provided to filmmakers to support the production of DigiDocs – this will cover any additional production materials, music, sound mix or online requirements.

All materials generated for the site must have rights cleared for use.

All filmmakers will be provided with the following equipment from the MRC:

- 3 x iMacs with Final Cut Pro, Photoshop and other production and design programs
- 1 x Sony Z1P camera kit (tripod, microphone, headphones etc)
- 1 x 500 GB hard drive
- MiniDV stock
- DVD stock

Other in-kind equipment can be secured on a project-by-project basis with the MRC (eg lights, additional cameras, edit suites etc).

Community content will be sourced via pre-existing MRC projects as well as two dedicated workshops in Port Augusta to be run within the **Big Stories Small Towns** project by the filmmakers in residence and MRC producer and additional filmmakers. The budget for these workshops will be managed outside of residency and DigiDoc budgets.

Outcomes:

- Innovative media rich online site featuring work of filmmakers in residence, community produced work and linkages to Connecting Australia website and Port Augusta
- Blog photo and text during the period of residency
- Online documentary for website featuring digital materials produced during period of residency
- Short form linear Digi Docs to be streamed on website and available for download
- Skills development of filmmakers and community participants
- Model of community engagement and participation that will be re-visited in other regional and remote areas in Australia.

BIG STORIES SMALL TOWNS

PORT AUGUSTA STORY POSSIBILITIES

Established in 1854, Port Augusta is a great location - an outback town of 15,000. There is an interesting blog about the town by Peter Castaldi http://bigscreen.afc.gov.au/tour_blog/blog16.aspx when he ran the Big Screen programs through it in 2005. It was known as the “King of the Crossroads”, was a big shipping port until 1973 and the Ghan railway goes through the town on the way to Perth. Railways used to be the major employer. It has a large indigenous population as well as all the pressures of being a feeder town for the massive mining operations to its north and big sustainability issues around water.

Port Augusta has a population of 13,857 persons usually resident. 50.6% were males and 49.4% were female. Of the total population 16.6% (2,303) were Indigenous persons, compared with 2.35 Indigenous persons in Australia. (2006 quick census data ABS stats). Median age for Non Indigenous 36 years for Indigenous 23 years

A number of story possibilities in key locations in community have been identified as a result of projects and research to date:

- **Port Augusta Hospital**, an 82 acute bed hospital and outreach services in a range of disciplines. The Port Augusta hospital also services the sparsely populated Flinders and Far North area of South Australia; therefore the approximate population serviced by the Port Augusta Hospital is around 20,000.
- **Pika Wiya Health Service** is an Incorporated Aboriginal Medical Service offering a culturally appropriate service to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, addressing preventative, promote and curative aspects of health.
- **The Royal Flying Doctor Service** is based in Port Augusta and provides emergency medical services as well as routine clinics to people in remote and isolated areas of South Australia.
- Aged Care facilities include **Wami Kata Aged Care Hostel**. A largely Aboriginal Old Folks Home

- **The Men's Shed** was one of the first Shed's in Australia. It provides a shared shed for retired, pensioned or unemployed men (generally older) to do wood and metal work for the community.
- **Northern Power Station** – (Turn off Highway One at Port Augusta Truck Stop) Power Station produces 500 megawatts of electricity by two generators. The Power Stations produce approximately 40% of South Australia's electricity.
- **Aquaculture** - is an expanding industry, and it is expected over the next few years that the Yellowtail Industry will match the already lucrative Tuna Industry.
- **Rail Industry** – Port Augusta was the rail crossroads of Australia from the late 19th century and has a rich history of people and archival material.
- **Port Paterson Desalination Plant** – currently in development by Acquasol.

Collaborative and community engaged content Projects that offer a template for inspiration for this project include:

- National Film Board of Canada Filmmaker in Residence program: www.nfb.ca/filmmakerinresidence/
- Capture Wales: www.bbc.co.uk/capturewales
- The Memory Grid: www.acmi.net.au/digital_stories.htm
- The Murmur Project: www.murmurtoronto.ca
- Learning To Love You More: www.learningtoloveyoumore.com

Appendix 5: *Big Stories* 1 and 2 Funding Structures. May 2013.

FIRST ITERATION FUNDING

The Production Grant Agreement of Screen Australia for funding *Big Stories 1* was as follows:

1. Finance Plan	Type of	Amount
South Australian Film Corporation	Grant/Licence	\$ 38,500
Film Australia	Grant	\$100,00
Film Australia (in-kind: archive and executive producer)	Equity	\$ 40,000
Media Resource Centre (in-kind equipment, facilities and staff)	Equity	\$ 40,000
Total (Cash and in-kind)		\$218,500

The project was commissioned as an online project through Film Australia's National Interest Program (NIP).¹ The MRC matched the in-kind investment of Film Australia, providing video equipment and facilities and administrative support to \$40,000 bringing the total production budget to \$138,500 in cash and \$80,000 in-kind.

Additional financial support would later come from Country Arts SA and Port Augusta Council for workshop and exhibition activities that flowed from the primary residency activity totalling \$23,000, with a further \$2,000 for marketing and distribution from Film Australia on delivery of the Project bringing the final cash budget to \$163,500.

Total budget for *Big Stories 1* was \$243,500.

¹ The in-kind support came through provision of an executive producer, administrative support and access to Film Australia archival material

SECOND ITERATION FUNDING

The Production Grant Agreement of Screen Australia for funding *Big Stories* 2 was as follows:

1. Finance Plan	Type of investment	Amount	100%
Screen Australia Devt	Grant/Licence	\$ 19,500	8.86%
Screen Australia Production	Grant	\$158,528	72.05%
MRC (through S.A. Film Corporation and Country Arts S.A.)	Equity	\$ 42,000	19.09%
Total		\$220,028	100.00%

¹

The MRC investment of \$42,000 consisted of two cash components from the South Australian Film Corporation and Country Arts South Australia. The South Australian Film Corporation's cash component was \$25,000, of which \$5,180 was retained by the MRC for the purposes of subsidizing an attachment to the Project, administration and support with marketing and distribution costs in relation to the Project. Thus \$19,820 was paid to the Project. Country Arts South Australia contributed \$12,000. The remaining \$5,000 was an equity investment of the MRC provided through equipment, facilities and administration support.

¹ Production Grant Agreement between Screen Australia and the Big Stories Company Pty. Ltd, 2010. The following notes were made on the submitted budget:

- The MRC would contract with Country Arts S.A. to supply to Big Stories Company \$12,000 investment for Community Digital workshops and the MRC will support workshops with an additional in-kind of \$5,000 computer hire.
- An SAFC grant of \$25,000 for the production of Big Stories, would be paid directly to the MRC. The MRC will supply to Big Stories Company cash investment of \$19,820 retaining \$5,180 expended on MRC attachment and launch.¹
- This constitutes a disbursement from the MRC to the project of \$42,000 (\$31,820 cash, \$10,180 in-kind).

In addition we received \$3,100 from the Murray Bridge Council for an exhibition in the Murray Bridge Regional Gallery.

An Australian Post Graduate Award (APA) and my personal contributions to the Project totaled \$25,000, bringing the total cash budget to \$237,948 and proposed in-kind support to \$10,180.

Total budget for *Big Stories* 2 was \$248,128.

Appendix 6: *Big Stories* Development Proposal to Screen Australia.

February 2010.

This proposal: Big Stories 2

Multi-platform project title: Big Stories, Small Towns

www.bigstories.com.au Tagline: Local Stories, Global Impact.

One liner: A collaborative, online documentary project that gathers local stories for a global audience.

One Para: Big Stories, Small Towns is a multiplatform project and a unique model of community engagement and participation through media - an opportunity for the rich repository of local stories found in and around small towns to be told with global impact. Big Stories, Small Towns is an online, grassroots and collaborative documentary. The project speaks particularly to community solutions to isolation, caring for the elderly, racial divisions and opportunities for young people growing up in small towns.

One page: Big Stories, Small Towns is a multiplatform project and a unique model of community engagement and participation through media - an opportunity for the rich repository of local stories found in and around small towns to be told with global impact. Big Stories, Small Towns is an online, grassroots and collaborative documentary. The project speaks particularly to community solutions to isolation, caring for the elderly, racial divisions and opportunities for young people growing up in small towns. The key to Big Stories is close collaboration with communities. The aim is to shine a light on locals who care for the people around them and in the process developing an extraordinary archive of memories and experience.

In the first Big Stories completed early 2009, award-winning documentary makers Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchawala lived in Port Augusta, South Australia for several months - making films with the locals to create an inspiring portrait of the town. The

project was shaped through extensive consultation and the resulting very personal and heartwarming stories revealed what the community knows as its hidden truths.

Three observational films formed the backbone of the Big Stories website, but the site also gives the community itself an opportunity to speak with their own voices, through photo series and digital stories. In addition, it presents the history of the town of Port Augusta through a handful of short archive films. Together it is a collection of small stories to create a bigger and broader picture of Australia's fifth largest city.

Big Stories 2 will focus on the town of Murray Bridge in South Australia. This time we will draw on a range of filmmakers and locals from Indigenous and non-Indigenous backgrounds to gather the diverse range of stories about this town.

The project takes its philosophical inspiration from the award winning Filmmaker-in-Residence production of Canada's National Film Board and in particular their new multi media multi year project – High Rise <http://highrise.nfb.ca/prologue/>. In the production phase of the second stage we will build the Big Stories platform to create the possibility of a truly global collaborative documentary.

PROPOSAL

Big Stories Small Towns www.bigstories.com.au was a collaborative media rich website featuring filmmakers-in-residence working in partnership with the community of Port Augusta, South Australia in 2008/09. As a model project it has been internationally acclaimed as 'one of the best examples of an online documentary project in the world' (Hussein Currimbhoy, Programmer, Sheffield Doc/Fest).

This proposal is for the development of the second stage of the project, Big Stories 2 (BS2). It will feature the town of Murray Bridge, South Australia and the production of a Big Stories Platform that will allow the project to replicate across the country – and the globe.

In our experience working across small towns in Australia, Cambodia and Tanzania, local communities support many innovative and resourceful ideas and extraordinary stories that are ready for collaborative engagement in the online space. Based on our experience with the first Big Stories, the project speaks particularly to community solutions to issues around isolation, caring for the

elderly, racial divisions and the opportunities for young people growing up in small towns.

We successfully completed the first stage of this project: www.bigstories.com.au in 2009. It has been widely acclaimed as an innovative online film project and a true Australian first. It was launched during the Adelaide Film Festival and featured as part of the Australian International Documentary Conference, invited to IDFA Doco Lab 2009 and Docfest (Sheffield) as well as a number of international festivals including Zagreb and SXSW Interactive Festival in Austin Texas.

We are now seeking development funding for the second stage of the project to be produced in late 2010. The development funding will allow us to do both the 'on the ground research' and preparation for BS2 based in Murray Bridge and further investigate the development of a CMS that brings the filmmakers and our audience deeper into the interactive process. Our funding partners for BS2 are proposed as Screen Australia, Country Arts South Australia, and the South Australian Film Corporation. Our production partner will be the Media Resource Centre of South Australia.

During the development of this second stage we aim to investigate the development of this project as an international co-production – including identification of possible towns, local partners, funding mechanisms and clear strategies for the creation and delivery of the international prototype.

As Big Stories is an online and grassroots documentary project, the primary mechanism for distribution is online and within the communities of small towns. We aim to increase the broadcast outcomes in this next stage in order to drive traffic to the central Big Stories online community. Video documentaries produced by the resident filmmakers in the first stage of the project were successfully released non-theatrically after demand from the health sector for our stories featuring Indigenous aged care. The national public free to air network in Australia; ABC has also expressed interest in featuring Big Stories within their online and radio spaces.

Our main aim is to create an online documentary that increases community and intercommunity engagement and interaction. Based on our experience to date, the best methods of distribution relate to each community 'adopting' the project as their own.

Our intention during production of the second stage proposal is to create a template or 'bible' for building the project so that it can grow as a broad based collaborative international project. We want to explore strategies to expand our audience and help them create their own journeys through an interconnected archive of memory and life experience in small towns across the world. Our vision is that they will be able to follow their own threads of stories across locations and cultures, threads that resonate with them and threads that they can share with others. User generated meaning that creates an expanding social dialogue and community.

The first Big Stories contained 3 observational documentaries, 50 short films and 1000 photos – a mix of curated user generated content, archive and films by the filmmakers in residence. The project enables audiences to experience the lives of others, break down long held racial divisions and explore alternative forms of community-based care. The project extended to the community with a multi modal engagement process across digital storytelling and filmmaking workshops, photo voice projects, open access to equipment and public exhibitions, screenings and forums of community generated content.

Through the process of making;-extraordinary experiences were created that were collaborative and community-based. With this project we can place media creation into the hands of small town communities as pathways to social action.

The second stage of the project will introduce more opportunity for interactivity both in terms of making *and* navigating through uploading, tagging, mapping, remaking and sharing content beyond the residency period.

Ultimately we have a vision of creating 500 films from around the globe and 10,000 photos. While there are curated threads woven through the original site, future audiences will need tools to help find their own meaning and share this with their communities. This will make the project truly transferable to other regional centres in Australia, and across the globe.

As an alternative, participatory and socially relevant model Big Stories - Port Augusta achieved enormous support and engagement across a range of disparate groups from screen culture agencies to NGOs and from retired railway workers to young Indigenous fathers. The possibility with this next stage of the project is to engage audiences that have not been traditionally engaged with the online space and connect their small town experiences internationally.

Broadband Internet allows easy access to this interactive archive and database of community stories. The primary platforms for delivery of the whole project are those that can serve a large volume of video interactively. Broadband Internet is the most pervasive.

Kiosks within (for example) local libraries, schools and town halls will play an important role in rural or poorly connected communities. In addition to featuring the project to date and the life stories of other members of this community (or other small towns), users might be able to upload their own stories or provide their own answers to a few generic but pertinent questions (with a few simple digital tools and a basic wizard).

Photographic exhibitions in visible public spaces (e.g. shopping centres, empty shop fronts, outdoor advertising sites and government buildings) of the local towns (as was done with the “My Dream” part of *Big Stories* in the town of Port Augusta) will also encourage direct engagement and a re-imagining of public space.

The stories produced through the *Big Stories* process are also suitable for distribution on DVD, Broadcast TV and Radio. With continued thematic focus on small town ‘characters’ that are integral parts of mechanisms for care in a community we will build a diverse range of linear media content of interest to a broad audience. The *BIG STORIES* celebrate people who work in their *SMALL TOWNS* at very grassroots level supporting the health and wellbeing of their community. They are character driven stories told with a transmedia perspective – photos, videos, audio and text form a diverse insight to community dynamics and offer users multiple modes of engagement whilst developing the core narrative of the small town experience. Broadcast media is an important component to drive users to the online community to encourage and extend engagement. DVDs are also key to facilitating non-broadcast distribution and engagement.

Location Murray Bridge, South Australia

It is proposed that Big Stories 2 take place in Murray Bridge. Initial research indicates that the town has the cultural breadth to produce strong story threads.

Like Port Augusta in 2008, Murray Bridge in 2010 will be the location of South Australia's Regional Centre of Culture. This year is about bringing 'The Arts' to the regions, but it also a time ripe for exploring the lives of locals, as they are encouraged to engage with their cultural history and aspirations.

Although only an hour's drive from the CBD of Adelaide, Murray Bridge is a microcosm of a number of the challenges and dilemmas facing much of regional Australia as well as, in some cases, metropolitan Australia. Adding to this is its absolute proximity to some of Australia most pressing environmental stories.

- Murray Bridge is located on the iconic Murray River at the gateway to both the devastated Coorong and the Southern Mallee, another vulnerable ecological system.
- The town has a pop of 20,000 (set to double in the next ten years). Nearly 11% of the population were born overseas. Murray Bridge hosts a New Settler Program to assist refugees and migrants from Afghan, China and Africa. It has also a very aged population – one in five of its residents are over sixty.
- It is one of the centres of the Ngarrindjeri people. Around 4.5% of Murray Bridge's population is Indigenous. It is the location of the Pomberuk Cultural Centre, as well as many regional social services for the Indigenous community.
- It has a diversifying economic base: developing alongside its pastoral and market gardening history is a semi-industrial hub of dairy milk production, small engineering firms and a major supermarket distribution point. It also has the beginnings of a mining industry.
- A number of the hallmarks of a regional centre survive to this day – there is still an active horse racing park and speedway. Less usual is that an international standard conservation, national and zoological bio-park of 1000 hectares, Monarto Zoo, is located near Murray Bridge
- There is also a regional prison on the outskirts. Mobilong Prison at Murray Bridge. Mobilong accommodates medium and low security prisoners with

the emphasis on education. The prison is laid out in campus style with several accommodation units of cells. During the day prisoners are allowed open movement inside the grounds to attend education, work or programs. They have a big bakery.

With full production funding the Big Stories bible and CMS will allow other towns to join the Big Stories community and produce their own stories without requiring the production team on site. With a three-year implementation plan across at least 8 new sites (towns), internationally. This would bring the number of small towns to 10 including the Australian town already produced (Port Augusta) and to be produced in 2010 (Murray Bridge).

The resulting Big Stories site would be quite different to what exists at www.bigstories.com.au presently, both in scale and functionality. With such a wealth of content, users would need tools to help them navigate and share stories, and threads would weave across towns and the world. The comparative analyses of small town experiences through the Big Stories lens will create numerous non-web based opportunities for further engagement. Full funding would enable us to refine the functionality of the site to manage the scale of content and to take full advantage of the additional distribution opportunities that such a wealth of content would present.

Process and Timeline

The original core Big Stories production team will be the Producer of the next stage of this project. The filmmakers-in-residence (Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchawala) from Port Augusta will continue to be involved in an advisory capacity and will provide assistance as required however they can't make a full time commitment to the next stage. The core team will work in collaboration with the town of Murray Bridge facilitated by production partner MRC and partners Country Arts SA, SAFC and SA. During the development stage of the project, the exact status of each partner's agreement will be determined and formalised along with further partnerships being explored. eg ABC local radio and other platforms across the ABC network.

Timeline– 2010

March to May.

- Development, finalising of production proposal. Production Team will engage a researcher to explore Murray Bridge in more detail to provide an outline of story leads and contacts. Country Arts SA, which is currently strongly involved in the area, will support this process.
- Project Brief Development. Previous filmmakers-in-residence (Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchawala) interviewed as part of this development.
- A list compiled of possible SA Filmmakers invited to apply for BS2 Selection panel includes SA and SAFC.

June to Sept

- A Digital Storytelling Project run by the selected filmmakers and MRC will be set up in Murray Bridge as part of a process to introduce the filmmakers to Murray Bridge and interested members of the community who want to make digital stories of their own lives. The workshop will forge many connections and bigger story possibilities
- Production financed to commence Filmmakers' Residencies in Murray Bridge (although filmmakers may commute given one hour proximity to Adelaide)
- Simultaneously production commences on CMS platform

Sept to Jan

- Post Production

Feb 2011 Launch – AIDC

Partnerships

Screen Australia National Documentary Program (Majority Investor) in the second stage of the project.

Media Resource Centre

As one of the two key partners for the original Big Stories, the MRC will continue to provide resourcing via filmmaker training, digital story telling workshops, gear hire and post facilities. As one of the originating partners the MRC will retain an active interest in the Big Stories 'brand'.

Based on the involvement of the MRC:

The South Australian Film Corporation has confirmed conditional support for a second imprint of the project to the value of \$40,000 cash.

Country Arts SA is keen to become a partner of the project, indicating it will could around \$12,000 to support a digital storytelling element to the project. These digital stories contribute both to the layering of the website and the filmmakers building of local relationships and networks.

Media Resource Centre (SA) Key Production Partner

Director Gail Kovatseff. Gail has been the director of MRC since 2007 and was the key player in the development and financing of Big Stories 1. She and the MRC will continue to play a key role in the production of Big Stories 2 and the further roll out of the project. The MRC is one of the longest established members of the Screen Development Australia (SDA) national network, founded in 1974. MRC provides training, production opportunities, screenings, professional advice, networking opportunities to foster the creation of exciting, unique and engaging content across all screens. The MRC is an incorporated NGO.

Country Arts South Australia - (Investor and Regional Partner)

Senior Project Officer Jo Pike. Jo was a passionate supporter of the first iteration of the Big Stories project and will again be involved in connecting the project to the Murray Bridge community in 2010. Country Arts SA is a dynamic and innovative organisation committed to the growth of sustainable regional communities. Country Arts SA aims to ensure that regional South Australians

have access to arts and cultural development opportunities that enrich their lives and contribute to their well-being. Country Arts SA is a South Australian Government Statutory Authority.

South Australian Film Corporation (Investor) Digital Media Project Officer Kate Jarrett is currently overseeing the SAFC's involvement in this project. The SA Film Corporations' Digital Media Production Support Program supported the first version of *Big Stories*, *Small Towns* and was the first investor in the program. They have again confirmed interest currently being sought in writing in supporting a second iteration of the project.

COMMUNITY PARTNERS

The Port Augusta experience was defined by successful partnerships with community organisations. We partnered with NGOs and community based organisations (CBO) including Indigenous media organisation Umeewarra Media (NGO), Wami Kata Old Folks Home, Males In Black (CBO) and the Men's Shed (CBO). We partnered with Indigenous Arts Festival Yarnbella and the Pt Augusta Re-Imagines Regional Centre for Culture. We also collaborated with local media organisations such as the Transcontinental News and other local broadcasters and we worked with Pt Augusta City Council and pre-existing arts events to further the impact of the stories and ensure sustainable outcomes for both participants and produced work. These broad local partnerships are part of a model that we would articulate within the bible, part of partnerships that we would identify within new sites and a philosophy of community engagement that we would encourage is continued within future *Big Stories* projects.

During this development stage we intend to secure additional partnerships within the town of Murray Bridge, SA. The **Pomberuk Aboriginal Cultural Center** will be approached during this stage of development to become a key community partner.

INTERNATIONAL PARTNERS

In terms of international partners we will look to a variety of organisations servicing regional based community needs and trying to connect up regional and small town communities to online and interactive technologies as part of myriad

endeavors to diminish the digital divide. We will also aim to work with health and planning and population agencies with experience and grassroots connections into communities as well as overarching ideas that can 'manage up' grassroots ideas and stories to policymakers and planners.

To this end in terms of population and planning we have begun research and discussions with:

United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) – the UNFPA produces the State of the World Population (SWP) report, a key research document in framing our approach. The SWP report has charted trends around urbanization, noting that by 2030, the towns and cities of the developing world will make up 81 per cent of urban humanity. Although the upward and outward growth of mega-cities receives much attention, conditions in smaller urban areas call for even greater consideration as, contrary to general belief, the bulk of urban population growth is likely to be in smaller towns. We believe that the information and stories that we will collect over the course of the Big Stories project will be important case studies, putting a face to significant global issues.

We have met with representatives from UNDP, UNESCO and UNFPA in Cambodia and hope to further our discussions with representatives in identified countries as we progress the Big Stories project. **Bay Area Video Coalition (BAVC)- San** Francisco based BAVC runs the Producer's Institute, an intensive two-week residency lab to develop large-scale online documentary and community media projects. Projects within the Institute are showcased to international funding organisations with a focus on 'third sector' funders. Big Stories has applied to the Institute for 2010.

Indigenous Participation

Murray Bridge has a strong Indigenous population. It is proposed that at least two of the selected filmmakers and many participants from the town will be Indigenous contributors to the project. The selection of filmmakers will be done in conjunction with the SAFC and representatives from the Indigenous Branch of Screen Australia. All protocols will be strictly followed including ICIP rights as appropriate.

Big Stories Team

The core Big Stories production team is the same people as on the first Big Stories, Producer: Anna Grieve, Director Martin Potter and Interactive Producer, Nick Crowther. Other SA filmmakers will be selected to join the team during the production phase.

The Filmmaker-in-Residence team Big Stories 1 **Jeni Lee and Sieh Mcawala** will remain involved in BS 2 in advisory capacity. For BS2 in Murray Bridge, a number of SA Filmmakers will be invited to apply (as they did for the first Big Stories) and will interviewed by a panel that includes SA and SAFC representatives. The team envisages that there could be more than 2 filmmakers this time and that Indigenous filmmakers will be represented in the majority. Residence periods will be shorter than Port Augusta and given distance from Adelaide some filmmakers may commute.

Supervising Director and Producer MARTIN POTTER

For 12 years Creative Director, Co-Producer and Facilitator Martin Potter has been creating documentary, drama, music video, moving image and commercials for broadcast, online, installation and festivals.

In 1998 he founded Plexus Films (www.plexusfilms.com.au), producing, editing and directing commercials, music videos, drama and documentary including the 21 part documentary series for ABC Asia Pacific Working Lives and the winner of Business SA's Innovation Award English For Living, an online project with China Online and Chariot Internet, before selling the business in 2006.

He was Head of Production, Development and Programs at the Media Resource Centre (www.mrc.org.au) and was E.P. of over 300 documentaries, films, animations and games including the multi award winning I Can See Queerly Now series, SA Screen Awards Best Documentary A Fighting Chance for SBS and Al Jazeera and Beyond Beliefs, winner of the One World Media Award, at One World Media Festival, (oneworldmedia.org.uk) and the Silver Screen Award at the US International Film & Video Festival.

He developed and implemented award winning digital, regional, seniors, youth and indigenous media programs including the Ruby Award winning Seniors on Screen program. He established the digital storytelling program as a core part of

the MRC's programs, delivering monthly workshops from 2006 - 2009 and a train the trainer program and handbook.

Since 2004 Martin has facilitated digital storytelling programs, enabling hundreds of people to tell their stories in their voice through programs such as Usmobcom.au and Dococom.com.

In 2008 he produced *Big Stories, Small Towns*.

In 2009 he produced *Youth Today*, a UNICEF supported program in Cambodia, created by young Cambodians. The program went on to win the International Day of Children's Broadcasting Award (Asia) in 2009 and was selected for the International Festival of Television, Barcelona. Young Reporters from the program also received scholarships, awards and commissions to work and study in France, U.S.A., Indonesia, Thailand and Cambodia. See www.youtube.com/user/scycambodia.

He is currently producing projects in Cambodia with the National Film Board of Canada (*High Rise* – a global, collaborative online documentary) and French Based online company HonkyTonk Productions (*Boomtown Babylon*, with French director Vincent Moon).

Producer ANNA GRIEVE

Executive Producer Anna Grieve has over 25 years experience as an independent producer/director/writer and from 2001 - 2009 was Executive Producer at Film Australia and Screen Australia responsible for many hours of broadcast documentaries.

Her production covers all genres of documentary with a particular focus on drama documentary and interactive online. She was responsible for Screen Australia Digital Learning featuring 21 broadband websites and the award winning Digital Resource Finder serving over 15 hours of rights cleared video clips to the education sector.

Her credits as Executive Producer include the innovative online documentary, *Big Stories, Small Towns*, the 2007 NFB/Film Australia co-production anthology series of 10 *MobiDocs: Confessions* finalists in the MIPCOM Mobile and Internet TV Awards, the first Australian documentary in competition at Sundance, *Dhakiyarr vs the King* and the Logie award winning *Who Killed Dr Bogle & Mrs*

Chandler? It was the highest rating documentary ever on ABC TV attracting 1.8 million viewers (41% audience share) and the highest rating documentary across the networks in 2006.

Interactive Producer NICK CROWTHER Freerange Future

Interactive Producer Nick Crowther is the director of the award winning studio Freerange Future. He has been working in interactive development for over a decade. In 2005 he was the lead interactive developer on UsMob, the world's first multi-path interactive broadband TV series. This work included pioneering use of Flash video, game development and a lot of panorama interfaces. UsMob received an AIMIA award as the best learning interactive in Australia in 2005.

In 2009 he was the interactive producer on the highly acclaimed *Big Stories*, *Small Towns*, a role he is reprising with *Big Stories*, *Small Towns 2*. Also in 2009 he lead development of ShoGo, the online hub for performing arts in South Australia and helped the Rainbow Family Tree create an online community for GLBT digital storytelling workshops. Nick has just completed production on DocExchange, a social network for documentary filmmakers, commissioned by the Australian International Documentary Conference.

Freerange Future has experience in the use and development of Content Management Systems. In the past they have used a large number of traditional CMS' and blogging tools including Wordpress, Textpattern, Expression Engine, Browser CMS, Radiant, Mephisto, Blogger, Moveable Type, Typo, Contribute and Joomla, developing custom modules and plugins for many of these. The limitation of these systems for real custom development has led to the development of their own open-source CMS called Gluttonberg. The Gluttonberg CMS is traditional in the sense that it is used for websites serving page based content but is different in heavily integrating Javascript and AJAX to load content in a much more seamless way. Their motivation for developing it was to make a system that could power unique design based websites. This experience and work on cross-media interactives such as *Big Stories*, *Small Towns: Port Augusta*, *UsMob*, *Trainer Kids* and the Regional Centre of Culture site gives Freerange a strong understanding of how to architect a CMS for video, photography and sound.

Sample Media

<http://bigstories.com.au>

The first Big Stories, Small Towns project

<http://re-imagines.com.au/>

Another project produced by Nick Crowther focussing on Port Augusta in 2008. Functionality developed for this project will be included in future Big Stories.

www.mrc.org.au

Major production partner, The Media Resource Centre

www.freerangefuture.com

Nick Crowther's company

www.usmob.com.au

Pioneering broadband TV series and digital storytelling workshops developed in 2005 by a team including Martin Potter and Nick Crowther

Additional Information for application General Eligibility

Re: incorporated company

The applicant, Anna Grieve is currently operating under an ABN. It is intended that a production company will be formed with other principals, Martin Potter and Nick Crowther to produce BS2. This production company will be incorporated during the development stage of BS2.

Re: Right to carry out the proposal

The original Big Stories Small Towns was a co production of the former Film Australia's National Interest Program and the Media Resource Centre of SA and thus © currently resides with Screen Australia and the MRC. The MRC was the applicant that secured additional production monies from the SAFC and Country Arts SA. It is intended during this development stage that a formal partnership or licensing agreement (with wording acceptable to SA) will be prepared with MRC and SAFC to allow for the production of BS2. Director of the MRC, Gail Kovatseff has indicated that the MRC will have no problem with a non-exclusive licence for Big Stories 2.

Gail has indicated that the MRC will provide written support from the SAFC and Country Arts SA for the production of BS2.

Further information ABOUT THE BIG STORIES PLATFORM

If Big Stories is to build momentum, grow and even become self-sustaining, we need to reduce the complexity and repetitiveness of building the websites that showcase the films and other content created by the filmmakers- in - residence and the town communities.

We already have a framework for the display of content, used in Port Augusta. This could use a little refinement but is nevertheless a proven system for the online telling of multi-threaded stories. The difficulty with simply reusing this framework for the second stage of BS2 is that approximately half of the digital budget of Port Augusta was used purely in production, preparing all the assets used in the project. Even if we re-use the framework we would still have to undertake significant repetitive work for the second stage.

A Content Management System (CMS) platform developed in this stage would be suitable for the ongoing rollout of the Big Stories Project not just for the second proposed town of Murray Bridge, SA but for the future towns we envisage joining us on the project. The Big Stories CMS would significantly reduce the barrier of entry for other towns/filmmakers to produce collaborative broad scope digital documentary projects as part of the Big Stories 'brand'. Such a platform would enable filmmakers to create and build their Big Stories project without the requirement of a team of web developers. While web assistance (mentoring, liaison) would be provided, the CMS would allow partners to upload their own material. This platform will focus on building meaning around collection of assets, rather than, as it is as present, around linking between web pages.

How the Platform will work

The platform itself would be a single, centrally hosted website (big-stories.com) that is used to both view published Big Stories, and to create new Big Stories. The content management functionality (secured behind a password login and site admin) could create and disable collaborator accounts as necessary.

In some ways the platform will look and feel a lot like other CMS. There will be a library containing all the assets uploaded to the system. There will be a user system with permissions to provide different levels of access for different users. There will be a content structure, a 'tree' of content analogous to the page structure of a typical CMS.

The *important* difference is the content: videos, pictures and sounds will be the central content components of the system.

Content Management

The fundamental focus for all content management systems is of course to manage content. As the Big Stories platform is meant to manage videos, pictures and sound, it should provide tools to help users manage these types of content.

As video files are very large we don't want to focus on transcoding from large video formats to H264, the video standard we use for web. Final Cut Pro and other video editing packages can export H264 easily, and since it's a highly compressed format it can be quickly uploaded into the platform. The platform would be utilised to re-encode the uploaded videos into smaller versions for viewers with slow connections.

The platform would generate thumbnails for all the photos uploaded to the system and even to crop and adjust the photos. We are working on a photo manipulation library incorporated into the platform.

Discussion and Approval System

One of the 'takeaway' experiences of Port Augusta was how dispersed teams can collaborate online on video projects. The Backpack software was used as a team intranet. Calendars and discussions within this system allowed the filmmakers living in the community to work closely with the Adelaide and Melbourne based team members. Some form of Backpack style functionality into the platform i.e. some type of discussion system would be extremely useful for collaborating throughout a production from the development to the videos being uploaded since these are such large assets.

With a protocol system content created for Big Stories would be approved for publication by the Big Stories senior team before going live. As such a

permissions system would be implemented with different roles. The Big Stories admin role would have permission to publish projects for public viewing but other types of collaborators wouldn't.

Underlying Content Delivery Platform

The size of video means that it is a costly online medium. With Port Augusta we've so far managed with a bulk hosting account that has a huge bandwidth allowance but as the number of projects hosted on the Big Stories platform and their popularity increases we will need serious infrastructure and to keep ongoing costs manageable. The platform should be engineered to support multiple content delivery platforms, including standard hosting, cloud hosting and content delivery networks such as Akamai.

Public Interface

Port Augusta is based around a number of thumbnail grids representing collections of films or photos. Each thumbnail in the grid links to a film, a slideshow or another grid. The initial development of the platform would retain the same grid metaphor. Different graphics could be used for backgrounds, timelines, buttons, etc but the overall metaphor and structure would remain. Once the platform is developed, perhaps part of the budget for future Big Stories could be used to develop further interface types for the stories.

Platform Workflow

As the platform matures, production teams will need minimal input from developers to create a Big Stories project. A project workflow could follow this path:

Big Stories platform calls (and is approached by) interested towns/filmmakers-in residence.

A team is formed, composed of filmmakers, producer(s) and a graphic designer.

All team members participate in a workshop to learn how to use the platform, about filmmaking for online delivery and about the spirit of Big Stories. As well as 'hands on' involvement the team members receive the Big Stories 'bible' that

includes a detailed reference for production of content, uploading and ongoing use of the platform.

Joint signing of a 'template' contractual agreement (also developed during this stage of Big Stories 2) which takes account of editorial guidelines and approach, copyright and licensing requirements, location permissions etc for web publishing in Big Stories.

The team and their respective town produce a range of media for their stories.

As content is created it is added to the platform but without publication. This can be done regularly as 'work in progress' in the process of resolving the story content and approach and moving towards the resolution of the narrative story telling threads. The platform is a tool to assist the team makes sense of how the content they're producing can be pieced together. Big Stories senior team will provide any feedback or comment via 'Backpack' notice board online.

Big Stories admins' and executive producers can provide support from within the platform and approve content for launch.

Delivered Big Stories projects can be launched at the click of a button and published within the Big Stories site. At publication their story will be linked and featured on the home page

How Big Stories Could Grow

At its simplest Big Stories is based on collections and threads. These are sets of videos, audio and photos that are either ordered (threads) or not ordered (collections). In Port Augusta these sets were determined by the filmmakers and are 'baked' into the structure of the site. With the flexibility of the platform we can display content in a multitude of ways, giving the viewer tools to make their own sense of the stories and to involve other people in their enjoyment of the stories.

Tags

Tags would apply another level of understanding to the project. Each asset could be tagged with the people, themes, locations, date even emotions portrayed, then they could be viewed and understood in many different combinations not immediately intended or even envisaged by the filmmakers and producers. Such

a system of tagging used in the haunting Whale Hunt by Jonathan Harris and is really effective as a way to explore a huge collection of assets in smaller chunks. Also look at the website, www.wefeelfine.org/ which allows a variety of ways of displaying shared emotions

Social Features

With Port Augusta we provided a feature to let viewers embed their favourite films in their own website or blog, similar to a You Tube video. At the end of the video a call-to-action encourages the viewer to explore Big Stories threads further. This feature has proved to be popular and has driven some traffic to the site. With a Big Stories platform, further social features will drive more traffic to the site. This should include ways to easily share the stories on social networks, particularly Facebook and Twitter and Flickr.

Viewer Curation

Viewer Curation is another potential social feature. If a viewer of the site is able to make their own sets with the use of tags or by manual selection, we could go further and let them save these sets of videos and photos within the platform and be given a link to share the set with other viewers. The stories that are told this way would have particular resonance with their curators.

Better Photo Essays

The display of photos in Port Augusta was quite simple. Each collection of up to several hundred images was played in a chronological slide show. Freerange Future has since developed a site for Port Augusta Re-imagines, the 2008 South Australian Regional Centre of Culture. This site is based entirely on photo essays and has a total runtime of around one hour and twenty minutes. It is a much more complicated work with multiple sound tracks, complex tiling animation of photos and a multi-path architecture. Like Port Augusta the content for this was all produced manually. Freerange Future owns, and would be happy to invest the code base for this slideshow functionality to the Big Stories project for a minimal cost. As part of Big Stories it could be incorporated into the platform and similar slideshows could be quickly created for new Big Stories.

Different Types of Collaboration

Building this CMS platform within the production of BS2 is intended to escalate Big Stories to another level of collaboration in the future. While we are proposing to in fact simplify the process of developing a Big Stories project we are keeping the model of production and its underlying philosophy unchanged: a small group of filmmakers collaborating with a community to tell and assist the community tell their own stories.

Local Stories, Global impact.

However as it becomes simpler to be part of Big Stories, the platform will expand to have many more contributors. User-contributed content could be loaded from small towns across the globe

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

5. Case Studies

Big Stories 2



CASE STUDY 3: BIG STORIES 2

1. Introduction

Big Stories is a collaborative, multiplatform documentary project that gathers local stories for a global audience. Stories are generated with and by local community members using a range of digital story telling methods and presented via a media rich website.

Inspired by programs such as the National Film Board of Canada's Filmmaker-in-Residence Program, the first Big Stories – Small Towns was initiated as part of the Port Augusta Regional Centre of Culture program in 2008. For three months the documentary film makers conducted extensive community consultation to gather stories that reflected the life of the town and its people. Digital storytelling workshops and participatory media/art programs were run as a way of generating community content and engagement. Each digital storytelling workshop generated about 10 short, structured films, working with an integrated format, yet allowing for individual creativity and community participation. The overall result was a heartwarming and engaging portrait of Port Augusta. Local media, Council, community groups and individuals became inspired by the project and have continued to find innovative ways to share their stories.

2. Project Description

Big Stories 2 was launched in 2010, including a focus on the Murray Bridge and Raukkan communities in regional South Australia as part of the Ripples Murray Bridge program. The project involved a period of scoping in the community to identify the possibilities and opportunities to engage with people and establishing contacts. This was followed by the two film makers being embedded in the community, using a range of techniques to research and gather stories. These included making contact with people already producing content, running structured digital storytelling workshops, collaborating with existing projects, interviewing people to generate stories and mentoring local people to produce their own stories. The resulting Big Stories, Small Towns web documentary had its first public screening at the Mercury Cinema in March 2011 as part of the Bigpond Adelaide Film Festival. The community launch of the digital stories collected in Murray Bridge and Raukkan was held in the Murray Bridge Regional Gallery in May 2011.

3. Project participants and personnel

Producers: Anna Grieve and Martin Potter
Interactive Producer: Nick Crowther
Filmmakers in Residence: Jeni Lee and Sieh Mchwahala
Community members in Murray Bridge and Raukkan
Partners: Big Stories (Independent Company); Screen Australia; Country Arts SA; SA Film Corporation; Media Resource Centre.

4. Project Aims

Big Stories draws on a number of traditions in documentary photography and film: as a way of recording everyday life, depicting the unfolding of social life in narrative form, and as a reflexive interplay between 'subjects' and documentary makers. At the heart of its approach is an understanding of the power of the narrative form as a way of connecting with an audience, sharing particular experiences and creating new perspectives.

Big Stories explicitly aims to *'provide an opportunity for the rich repository of local stories found in and around small towns to be told with global impact'*.

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

The lead filmmakers and producers sought to achieve this in Murray Bridge and Raukkan through 'facilitated filmmaking and community media interventions' which:

- Introduce people to high quality media content
- Engage community members in telling their stories
- Deliver workshops in digital storytelling targeted to a small number of people (local content producers) to support skills development
- Take advantage of the nature of the media to provide access to local stories as part of the 'social tapestry' that is the community.

Digital media have enabled new ways of telling and sharing stories about people's lives and the places where they live, allowing for experimentation with how to convey what someone feels is important. For this reason it is widely used in diverse contexts among people from different cultural backgrounds and for a range of purposes. These include participatory approaches in community development, health promotion and social inclusion initiatives, typically using a workshop format and focusing on enabling people's voices and experiences to be heard on their own terms. Big Stories uses a variety of approaches which combine the role of documentary maker in driving the story as well as a more thoroughgoing participatory mode in which community people gain greater control over the story content and how it is told.

Within this diversity, the work is underpinned by the integrity of the process and the openness and sensitivity of the creative team. The guiding principles of Big Stories (inspired by Katerina Cizek and the National Film Board of Canada's Filmmaker-in-Residence Project) were defined as follows:

- *'The community is our key partner - work closely with them, but respect each other's expertise and independence.'*
- *The filmmaker's role is to experiment and adapt documentary forms to the original idea. Break stereotypes. Push the boundaries of what documentary means.*
- *The Big Stories project is not a local PR department. Use documentary and media to participate rather than just to observe and to record.*
- *Use whatever medium suits – video, photography, web, cell phones or just pen and paper, it can all be documentary.*
- *Work through the ethics, privacy and consent process with the community before beginning and adapt the project accordingly. Sometimes it means changing the whole approach – or even dropping it. That's the cost of being ethical.*
- *Always tell a good story.*
- *Track the process, the results and spend time disseminating what we learn with multiple communities: professionals, academics, filmmakers, media, general public, advocates, critics and students.*
- *Support the community in distribution and outreach. Spend 20% of the time making it and 80% of the time getting it out into the world.*
- *Just showing it is not necessarily a goal unto itself. Work with the partners to harness the project's momentum to effect real participation and real engagement.'*

The nature of a project like Big Stories is very open and unstructured. It starts from an understanding of the intrinsic value of telling and documenting stories about the lives of ordinary people with their involvement. The orientation of this kind of documentary film making is towards flexibility and responsiveness, allowing for unexpected opportunities to arise.

5. Evaluation methods

There were three broad purposes of the evaluation:

- To ascertain the extent to which the 'outputs' of the project aligned with the team's expectations;
- To gauge the quality of the experience of participating in the project and the perceived value for the community from the varied perspectives of those involved, and
- To gauge community members' responses to the digital stories.

The open form of the Big Stories as outlined means that while the 'output' or product is defined (ie 'digital stories'), the more instrumental outcomes – that is, the effects on people's lives and on the community – are less clearly spelt out in advance. This called for evaluation questions that were also broad and open. Similarly the data sources and methods reflected the evolutionary form of the project and the fluid group of participants who are involved in diverse ways including telling stories to camera, providing photographs, attending the digital storytelling workshop, giving interviews and producing film content. With a few exceptions (workshop participants, film makers), this situation does not lend itself to the use of standardised data collection tools but rather calls for less structured approaches. The 'snowball sampling' and flexible methods used mirror the opportunistic project methodology.

It is notable that the vehicle of engagement itself offers an additional opportunity for data collection in this project. It is not unusual for works of art to be treated as a form of research data – for example the songs composed and performed as part of the Ngarrindjeri Mimir Kykulan project, or the drawings created by the students as part of the Big Draw project, may be the subject of analysis in terms of what they represent or symbolise about the artist's life and culture. In this case, however, the web stories represent unusually direct access to the quality of the experience from the perspective of participants. Not only is documentation itself regularly used as an important source of evaluation data, but also debates about the blurred boundaries between social research and art in relation to visual media reinforce the idea that the digital stories are amenable to analysis for evaluation purposes. Although the opportunity to tap this potential is limited by the scope of this short case study, reference will be made to these sources where relevant.

A further limitation should be noted regarding access to project participants for feedback. There were critical moments in the course of this project for gathering such feedback: principally, shortly after participation in the creative component (telling stories or producing content), and later post-production when participants had had a chance to visit the collected stories on the website. For various reasons, including the 'mobility' of some participants and changing contact details, consistent follow-up was restricted. Hence some participants were only contacted at one or other of these moments and so their responses depend partly on timing.

Qualitative methods were used to gather information as follows.

Workshop participants

A feedback survey was emailed to workshop participants comprising questions about their experience using standard tool T2 (see Attachment 1). Questions invited their views on the value of the workshop for themselves as individuals and for the community.

'Story telling' participants

Unstructured interviews were conducted with a number of community members whose stories are represented on the website, including content producers. These were contacted using a

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

snowball effect wherein the film makers provided telephone numbers for key contact people in the various groups with whom they had interacted. Some of these people participated in an interview themselves, while others offered to provide an introduction to prospective interviewees who were then followed up by telephone. In one case a participant preferred to provide feedback in writing. The interviews were unstructured and centred on two broad questions: 'Can you tell me about your involvement in the Big Stories filming project?' and 'Did you find it valuable for yourself and/or for the community?'. Prompts were used to draw out further information related to the Ripples Murray Bridge three main goal areas.

Murray Bridge Regional Gallery Launch and Exhibition

Feedback was sought from visitors to the exhibition using the standard feedback Tool T3 (see Attachment 1). In addition, at the launch of the exhibition visitors were asked to provide immediate feedback via a 'quick response' technique by choosing from a list of 8 descriptors which one/s best described their response. Each visitor was provided with three 'dots' to attach to a board to indicate their chosen response/s. A 'vox pop' technique was also employed to capture immediate responses to the exhibition from visitors.

Producers, interactive producer, filmmakers

Individual informal interviews were conducted with each of the project team members early on in the project to gather information about process and an indication of their expectations. These involved face-to-face meetings with three of the team and telephone conversations with two. After the launch they were invited to complete an Artist and Producers survey using standard Tool T4 (see Attachment 1).

Website content

The digital stories collected on the website as well as the comments exchanged on the Facebook page provide insights into the experience of all involved in the project in Murray Bridge and Raukkan. As indicated above, to the extent that the stories convey information about the process as well as the degree and quality of participation, they offer another source of evaluation data.

6. Evaluation findings

The summary below is based on feedback from the following sources:

Workshop participants: 4 completed surveys (out of 7 participants)

'Storytelling' participants: 13 interviews (includes one written)

These include representation from the following groups:

Raukkan Community

Longriders Motorcycle club

'New settlers' in Murray Bridge (including 'the Farm')

Friends of the Murray Bridge Library

Visitors to the Exhibition: 11 responses to survey; 159 'dot' chart responses (representing 53 people) and 'vox pop' interviews with 7 people at the community launch.

Project team members: team members opted to give a single collective response to the survey.

Website: observation of levels and quality of participation.

The findings are presented in three parts corresponding to the purposes of the evaluation and the different tools used to collect data about each one. Firstly the achievements of the project

in relation to the stated aims are summarised (6.1). As explained these represent ‘outputs’ of the project – or ‘what they did’. This is followed by a summary of feedback from the above sources – or ‘what people said’ – about the value of participating in the project, for themselves and for the wider community. This is presented thematically under the three broad goal areas of Ripples Murray Bridge (6.2). Finally a summary of community responses to the digital stories is presented (6.3).

6.1 Facilitated filmmaking and community media interventions – ‘outputs’

▪ *Introduce people to high quality media content*

An underlying purpose of the project was to introduce different audiences and groups to high quality media content. The digital stories on the website are evidence of the great range of opportunities that were created. While it is difficult to demonstrate people’s reception of these opportunities in terms of individual on-line activity, the public or community screenings show achievements in terms of, for example:

- Bigpond Adelaide Film Festival screening attended by large numbers of community members
- Exhibition of digital stories in Murray Bridge Regional Gallery
- Featured at Australian International Documentary Conference
- ‘Dreams’ series displayed on Council and Rotary LED board
- 2 screen installation for the Ripples Murray bridge office window
- Screenings of work in progress and film made with students for Raukkan Community School 150th celebrations.

▪ *Engage community members in telling their stories*

The digital stories collected on the website are indicative of the large numbers of people from a variety of backgrounds and ages who were engaged in the project. Overall it is estimated:

- More than 200 community members in Murray Bridge shared stories
- Approximately 57 community members in Raukkan were involved.

The type of engagement was variable, depending on whether producing content, sharing oral histories and photographs for instance. The context demanded intensive or extensive commitment, for instance as part of the longer term residency at Raukkan school, or the more fleeting interactions with workers on the Farm.

Four elements developed as the main threads in Murray Bridge:

- Documentary and media project with the Longriders Motorcycle Club (approx 40 people)
- Filmmaker led portraits of ‘new settlers’ or ‘new arrivals’ in ‘the Bridge’ (15 people)
- Digital history project with the Friends of the Murray Bridge Library (27 people)
- Digital Storytelling 3-day workshop that facilitated local people in creating short autobiographical films (7 people).

Raukkan community members were engaged in a variety of ways, in particular the Community Council (5), the Farm (3), the School (20) and local elders (9) and through supporting 3 young people to create documentaries.

▪ *Deliver workshops in digital storytelling targeted to a small number of people (local content producers) to support skills development*

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

A three-day filmmaking workshop held in Murray Bridge attracted 7 participants. Several participants thought that the group was disappointingly small but those who did attend reported a high level of satisfaction which may not have been the case with a larger group.

Although not delivered in this format, the support for 3 young people in Raukkan was similar in purpose though more sustained and broad in scope.

▪ **Take advantage of the nature of the media to provide access to local stories as part of the 'social tapestry' that is the community**

There are two aspects to the question of how the nature of the media facilitated sharing of stories. Firstly, the project built on the work in Port Augusta and the website has been upgraded to accommodate both the new and original stories. Building the site with HTML5 has enabled users of smart phones and tablets such as the iPad to view the site, something not possible with the typical Flash based online documentary sites. A Content Distribution Network, a service that stores the video for the site on super fast servers in America, Europe and Asia has been used in order to stream videos to all users as fast as possible. The Facebook page has also enabled the process of the development phase to be tracked. In other words the technical capabilities allow access to a wide audience with ease and immediacy.

The following summary of visitors to the site between January 1st and May 31st 2011 is a measure of the extent to which this access has been achieved.

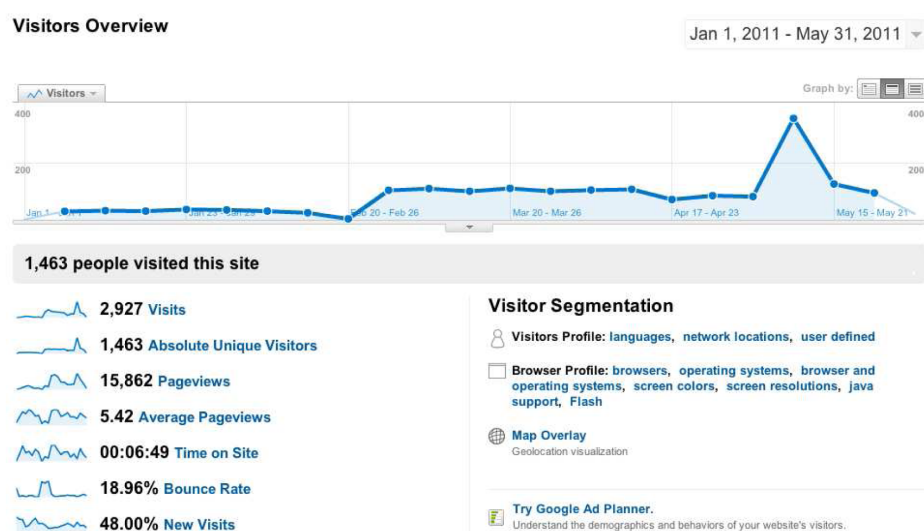


Figure 6: Visitors to the Big Stories website January to May inclusive 2011.

Figure 6 shows that over 5 months there have been nearly 3,000 visits representing 1463 different visitors. Visitors spent an average of nearly 7 minutes each on the site, which coupled with the low 'bounce rate' of 19% suggests that 4 out of 5 people are spending a reasonable amount of time exploring the site content.

The second aspect relates to the ways in which the stories are presented on the website in order to capture the rich 'social tapestry'. The stories are accessible individually but also

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

grouped according to place (Port Augusta, Raukkan, Murray Bridge), type (filmmaker, community made, archival, photo gallery), story thread (eg Longriders) and theme (eg love, work, dreams etc). It is possible to visit them one by one or as part of one of these categories. This effect of this design is to evoke a powerful sense of place (the river, its banks, the farm, the community school), of the changing seasons and environments, and the lives that give shape to and are shaped by the spaces, from the past to the present. Simultaneously, the stories highlight the individuality and sharp contrasts between the lives lived in these places over time. In this respect it offers insights to both the poignancy of particular experiences and the complexity of intertwined social relations.

6.2 Workshop participant feedback

A total of four completed surveys were received from 2 males and 2 females. Reasons for becoming involved in the workshops included:

‘To learn new skills and involve myself in a project with others.’

To assist in researching family history and to show others that ‘genealogy was a valuable pastime’.

‘...this was an opportunity to be involved in the medium of the moment. I was also interested in learning the skills and meeting community members I would not ordinarily have the opportunity to meet.’

Participants were asked their views about the value of the workshop by indicating their agreement or disagreement with a series of statements that reflected the objectives of Ripples Murray Bridge. The following summary of the responses suggests that there was a high level of agreement among respondents that the objectives were achieved:

Statement about being involved	Agree strongly	Agree	Not sure	Disagree	Disagree strongly
I enjoyed being involved	4				
It was a new experience for me	2	2			
I had the chance to express myself	4				
I met people who are different from me	1	3			
It was better than I expected	1	3			
I learnt new skills	4				
It was a positive experience overall	4				
I felt proud of being part of it	2	2			
I made new friends		3	1		
It made me feel good about myself	2	2			
Projects like this are good for the community	3	1			
I would like to attend other Ripples events	2	2			

Table 11: Summary of feedback by participants about the value of the Big Stories workshops

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

All respondents agreed strongly that they enjoyed being involved and had the chance to express themselves, learnt new skills and found the overall experience positive. All of the other statements drew general agreement with the exception of one ambivalent response to making new friends. Respondents were asked to say in their own words what they found the most valuable thing about attending the workshops. The following is a summary of the responses:

'I achieved something very foreign to my general activities that I would have thought impossible to have ever achieved and this provided a great sense of satisfaction.'

'The patient and understanding assistance and guidance received from Martin and his helpers was outstanding. Thank you!!'

'I enjoyed hearing other people's stories and helping them to distil and develop them as a group. I think the group dynamic and diversity of participants, stories and products were great! The tutors were excellent in their skill levels both technical and interpersonal.'

'I learnt new skills and have gone on with them to create new projects as well as passing the information on to others in the photography club. I really enjoyed working with Martin Potter as he is skilled at getting people involved.'

All respondents were asked to offer additional comments in their own words. It is noteworthy that at the time of completing the survey 2 of the 4 respondents had viewed the digital stories on the website. The following is a summary of responses:

'I found it quite inspirational – particularly via those who were running the workshop. I think it is a great opportunity to start articulating the story of the whole community.'

'We are continuing in its footsteps and that of the Home project with an ongoing home project through our organisation Lutheran Community Care. We...are working to engage people from diverse cultural backgrounds and age groups.'

'As I said before, it was a great workshop we all enjoyed and came away knowing we had achieved something. It also gave us a chance to meet others with different skills and ideas, which is not always possible in Murray Bridge as people tend to do 'their own thing'.'

'In my opinion the activity could have been more widely promoted...more participants could perhaps be achieved if future communities were invited to view previous works, thereby seeing the potential and value of involvement.'

'When I first saw the editorial in the newspaper, I thought the workshops would be filled by IT experts and didn't even consider applying...'

'I would love to see other workshops along these lines happening here and in other country towns to develop creative passions.'

'I have already told many friends and acquaintances about the workshop and would certainly recommend the experience to anyone....'

'...workshops such as this could have enormous value in the Tourism Industry.'

6.3 Storytelling participant feedback

For the reasons described above the medium of engagement in this project, that is, 'digital storytelling', is unusual in several respects. For many participants – with the exception of the content producers (including workshop participants in 6.2 above), and possibly a few of the key contacts in the local groups and organisations – the full extent of their involvement was telling a story about themselves to camera. This meant that they did not have a ready vantage point from which to reflect on the project as a whole. This may explain why, when

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

asked for feedback, there was a tendency for informants to confine their responses to the particular – that is, how they were initially contacted and what their story was about – rather than reflecting on the meaning of the experience or the value of ‘storytelling’ per se. In fact, a number of participants contacted prior to the launch did not appear to have any sense of Big Stories as a project and reported that they did not know what happened to their stories after the initial ‘telling’, for example:

‘It was good, but I’m not sure if they’re using my story - do you know?’

‘I was expecting to hear back from them, so I don’t know what happens next.’

Following the launch of the exhibition, which encapsulated the breadth and depth of the project, this pattern was expected to change once people had a chance to view their participation in context. Interestingly it remained the case that informants tended to be more interested in the significance of their story and its need to be told. This is not reported here as a failing of the project, but rather as an observation about the effects of the approach adopted. For example, it was observed at the launch that a good number of the project participants in attendance seemed most attracted to viewing the stories in which they had been involved. For some this may reflect the fact that this was the first time they had had access to the stories on the screen. But it may also indicate a sense of ownership and pride in their involvement as expressed by one participant:

‘I didn’t think my life was important, not really, not compared to others. All these years I thought it was just ordinary. Now I can see it is important for people to know how it was, how we had it hard.’

A stronger sense of the project as a whole and its impact was gleaned from the key contact people for the main groups involved, however, as represented in the feedback below.

6.3.1 Arts and cultural development

Creating new opportunities to be involved

At the community level, hosting a digital storytelling project on this scale was undeniably new for the region. For many of the individual participants it offered new opportunities.

‘Personally for me it was a great challenge. I never expected a ‘bright idea’ to go this far.’

As shown above, content producers participating in the workshops all highlighted ways in which they were either introduced to new creative techniques or extended their existing skills and knowledge. The project enabled a group of young people with an interest in media but little or no experience to become content producers, able to create their own stories, films and websites and gain work experience.

The project cast a wide net to include community members who were potentially or actually marginalised from mainstream media and those who had little or no experience of digital storytelling or the web. This is evident from the diverse groups with which the film makers engaged, including for example, some of the oldest citizens in Murray Bridge, as well as portraits of some of its newest arrivals. For others, while the media was not entirely new, they discovered different tools or techniques:

‘For me, no [not new]. I’ve been involved in [similar] but using the digital recorder was new.’

Several participants commented on the fact that even though many did not take up the chance to learn skills in producing media content, they were nevertheless exposed to a new experience:

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

'Most of our lot did not get involved in film making. They [film makers] gave out cameras but not many took it up. Most were happier just sharing stories and things. And for them it was a first time in many ways.'

Supporting emerging artists

A major focus of the project was making connections with community members who were developing artistically and assisting them to enhance their work, either by learning new skills or by incorporating the use of new media.

Examples include:

- Older emerging artists involved in the Murray Bridge International Photography Club were supported to extend their practice from stills into digital stories, photo essays and online presentation as well as exploring new ways of working and collaboration.
- The Friends of the Library team collaborated on The Oldies digital histories project, using the media and developing new skills to create a variety of outcomes; in recognition of this work they were awarded the Eric Flynn Award for Library Services.
- Some of the people who engaged in the digital storytelling workshops were supported to continue developing their work, particularly in still photography. For example a local photographer and illustrator created a digital story and showed his photographs in public for the first time; another is now working with the 'Home Project' at Lutheran Community Care to create films with new arrivals to Murray Bridge.
- Members of the Raukkan community were supported to produce their own documentary on the Raukkan Football team playing in the grand final. Images of the winning goal (to Raukkan) subsequently appeared on U-tube to great community acclaim.

Typical comments from participants included:

'It was really rewarding for us, filming and editing. We got lots of support to do that.

It gave me the confidence to try new things. They were very patient and really supportive.'

New spaces or venues for the arts in the community

The nature of the project meant that stories were gathered in context and so the film makers worked all over the region, wherever the stories emerged: from the farm to the school, from the streets of the Town to the river banks and so on. Each of these sites became a focus in itself with the capacity to change perceptions of where arts and cultural experiences belong. This was especially evident in the Raukkan collection which is as much about 'placemaking' as about the individual lives depicted:

'Just to see the streets and houses in that light was interesting – I think people might be surprised that so much is going on here. It really changes what you expect from the place and from the people.'

The work produced was screened in some well-used venues such as community halls but also in surprising sites including the Dreams' material on Digital LED display outside the Murray Bridge Council and at the entrance to the Town, and the 2 screen installation work 'Headless' for the Ripples window.

New audiences for existing artists

A number of local artists who have exhibited work before were involved in the workshop and also involved in collaborations resulting in new work being produced. The Big Stories team had the opportunity to extend their learning from the Port Augusta experience and adapt it to suit a new community. More than 15 experienced artists were creatively involved in the project over a period of nearly 12 months.

The team reported:

‘For all of us involved in the project as experienced artists/art workers we have found this an inspiring project to work on and it has been an extraordinary development opportunity for us working with new collaborators and in a new context.’

6.3.2 Community capacity building

The Big Stories methodology is intrinsically collaborative, based around scoping the opportunities that exist to engage with other groups, building on and enhancing current practice, and the notion of developing capacities among local people to continue and expand the work. Linking with other initiatives in Ripples Murray Bridge such as Craig Walsh’s Digital Odyssey enabled the projects to reinforce the impact of each others’ work during the Regional Centre of Culture year. Similarly the cooperative work with the Photography Club and the Friends of the Library has left a tangible legacy of skills and enthusiasm.

History and heritage

Working with groups to archive and document images and stories with historical significance was a major thread in this project, evident in the work on the ‘Now and Then’ project with the local historian, the Friends of the Library initiative, and also at Raukkan. Many of the stories are about changes over time, capturing the rich cultural heritage of the region:

‘That aspect really helped us to celebrate the school’s 150th – that is an important event when you think about it.’

‘... this needs to be captured before it becomes lost history. ...all of the people interviewed were so supportive of the project.’

Local and regional issues

One of the strengths of digital storytelling is its capacity to raise awareness about issues that are of interest or concern, and to open up debate. It is recognised as an effective way for ‘voiceless’ groups in the community to express their ideas in an engaging forum. This effect was conspicuous throughout the project, highlighting themes such as:

- water and the degradation of the Murray River system
- the growth of the town centre
- new settlement and the changing face of the region
- ageing and wellbeing
- the proposed ‘bikie laws’, for example:
- People have their own agendas – it was good to see she didn’t just want to show the stereotype. Not everyone who wears a leather jacket is a gun-toting-drug-dealing-grandma-basher!
- Perceptions of racism, for example:

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

This is more than just a documentary approach. It can really tell about people's lives. We have a responsibility to let people know, to educate whitefellas about Aboriginal lives and if they are less ignorant maybe we can break down racism. I feel a responsibility to advocate for that.

Community pride

Some informants reported an increased sense of pride in the region as a result of having it profiled on the web in this way:

'It was a good exercise for the whole community to be involved in, no doubt about that – all good in its entirety.'

'This kind of project gives a greater understanding of what we are about as a region. And we are doing good stuff together in regional Australia, we are doing ok.'

'This is a great project – they should keep doing it for another 10 years to get all the real stories out there.'

'Yes, provided there is good publicity about the project [website]. It shows Murray Bridge community has much to offer.'

The ways in which the project had generated a stronger sense of identity within participating groups was noted by some informants:

'It fits well with Aboriginal ways of being and passing on knowledge through stories, so that worked well. It is very powerful. People really responded.'

'Our people found it really enjoyable and that is good. We had lots of people attending and getting involved.'

'It was a really big deal for such a small community.'

'This is the power of stories: they can strengthen and define communities, break down stereotypes and myths.'

The great diversity of perspectives represented in the stories, based on culture, age, gender for instance, and the capacity for this to increase mutual understanding, was observed:

'It was amazing what people shared – Indian workers singing love songs!'

'Such a mixture of people here but that is Australia's strength after all.'

'Each cameo produced a clear understanding of the person's life and experiences from the information given... and they are all so different, you really do get a sense of that. They did a really good job showing that.'

'From the smallest to the largest, each has their own story. And when you add them together like that...it is really striking.'

Regarding the impact of the website on collective identity, there were some questions raised about how the community might be perceived by 'outsiders' and the impressions they would gain:

‘We need to wait until others see our stories/photos on-line to really know its impact... it will be interesting...’

‘Some of the stories have been really important for the individual who is telling the story to get it out. That is one thing. And the story may be interesting for others to see and hear about their life of hardship. But the stories do not necessarily reflect the experience of the whole community and yet people who watch get a perception of the community. So we are trying to think carefully: what kind of message does it give about the community? ...our job is to respect everyone’s opinion. We have a responsibility to work towards a positive way forward, another direction for our community. Some of the stories are a celebration of the things we can achieve and that is good. We are still working it through with the team, it is progressing.’

6.3.3 Individual health and wellbeing

Some of the examples cited above show that the experience of story telling has had important effects in terms of individuals’ sense of identity (eg ‘I didn’t think my life was important, not really, not compared to others’). This echoes the well-established application of storytelling in a variety of therapeutic settings as a result of its association with improved mental health. Several themes emerged from participants’ recollections of the experience of sharing stories.

Storytelling as an intensely enjoyable process

‘It was brilliant – so easy and chatty.’

‘The [film makers] were ‘the best’ to work with – they really bring out the best in the stories.’

‘We enjoyed our relationship a lot and we trust that other people will get something out of it too.’

Building trust – creating a ‘safe’ environment

‘We were media shy (or media savvy!) at first. But then when everyone realised what it was about – that they wanted real stories not just media tricks – there was a real connection.’

‘They left it open and there was no pressure to be involved. So people felt in control. One woman didn’t want her face on film so they showed her hands instead and heard her voice.’

‘They told us they would show the final cut and we knew they were clever enough to leave out the crap and honest enough to show us what they had got.’

Feeling special

‘They left the farm on a really high note. Everyone felt important being asked for their thoughts and opinions. They felt special – call it vanity if you like but there you are.’

‘The way they went about it – was just really respectful.’

‘More than just a doco’

‘It was interesting how they went about it. So much more than documentary making, more like a counselling approach, taking time to understand things from people’s perspectives.’

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

'They were the best doco makers and had a real ability to get stories out of people. You could see this kind of thing as intrusive but they just got around that with a gentle and easy style. The whole thing was just outstanding.'

Key contacts in the various groups had the chance to observe the significance of storytelling for participants in this project:

'Stories are an important part of how we work anyway. One guy told his story and it was very powerful, and healing. It is doing more than just telling a yarn – speaking about struggle and pain then moving on.'

'He said he just found himself talking and it all came out. When his family saw the film it was very emotional for them.'

'Through telling about what I do a number of things have become clear for me. I live and work in several different worlds and I'm more reflective about that, more aware of what motivates me. I'm in a unique position in that I am privileged to be accepted and can have an influence in these worlds.'

'There is something about telling your story to camera – telling it with a witness.'

'The camera makes people feel it is anonymous, that they can say anything. Then afterwards they remember that it may have a huge audience.'

'These are stories of people's lives, of their hopes and dreams, and the strength and courage they show. This is powerful stuff.'

The Big Stories producers also reflected on the ethical responsibilities associated with eliciting people's stories:

'This is not about making promotional material – we are looking for truthful, real stories, and we always have what we think would be 'good for them' in mind.'

'They choose whether to get involved in the film maker role. It is collaborative, but in the end we still have to get a job done.'

'There is the issue of ownership – film making is observational and they own their stories.'

'We present the work back to participants at each stage of the post production process for feedback and review. The process of production involves ongoing re-negotiation of the role of subject/participant and producer.'

Bearing in mind the potentially powerful effect, there were a couple of examples where participants had been left feeling ambivalent about their involvement. It is not possible to judge whether this could or should have been avoided, but it is important to acknowledge that such initiatives cannot be guaranteed to result in positive reactions on the part of everyone involved.

'I think it needs to aim higher and make it powerful and artistic not just ordinary. It is easy to satisfy some people but I am picky. So it should be done properly, it needs to be beautiful. I want people to be impressed, not go home and forget about it.'

'I felt let down and I didn't know where they got to with my story. You give them your stories but... it is sad that you never see them again. No one called back.'

6.4 Summary of community responses to the digital stories

6.4.1 Quick response feedback

Visitors to the Launch of the Big Stories exhibition in the Murray Bridge Regional Gallery were invited to give immediate feedback by placing a dot against the descriptor/s on the wall chart that represented their response to the works. Each person attending was given three dots and the choice of how to apply them: three dots against one descriptor; two against one and one against another; or one against three. The choices were limited in number and also biased towards the more positive end of the spectrum in light of the need for sensitivity to the presence of community members whose stories were represented. Those who wished to provide more detailed feedback were invited to use the feedback form; these instructions were delivered verbally during the opening speeches and also written beside the wall chart.

A total of 159 'dots' were applied; assuming that people followed the instructions this represents 53 people. The final distribution is shown here in descending order of frequency:

Impressed	36
Inspired	32
Informed	26
Interested	25
Amused	18
Moved	16
Surprised	4
Uncertain	2

While this is not a refined measurement, it seems clear that the most common responses were 'impressed' and 'inspired' followed by 'informed' and 'interested'. Only 2 people (or one person twice) felt uncertain about the experience.

6.4.2 Gallery visitor feedback

During the first 2 weeks of the exhibition gallery visitors were invited to complete a feedback form using the standard Tool T3. A total of 11 completed responses were received from 8 females and 3 males. Respondents indicated that they had first heard about the exhibition through the following mechanisms:

Word of mouth	4
Other	4
Local newspapers	1
Flyers/posters	1
Website/email	1

'Other' included: 'local government network', 'just passing by', 'involved in project', 'professional involvement'.

The tool includes a question using the same technique as the quick response but, given the anonymity of this method, with additional descriptors. In this case respondents were invited to choose as many as they liked. From 11 completed forms the following responses were received in descending order:

Impressed	10
Interested	8

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

Inspired	6
Informed	4
Pleased	4
Moved	4
Amazed	2
Amused	2
Surprised	0
Confronted	0
Uncertain	0
Unsatisfied	0

Once again, bearing in mind the limitations of this tool, respondents were overwhelmingly drawn to ‘impressed’, ‘interested’ and ‘inspired’. It is notable that no one selected the more ambivalent choices.

Respondents were also asked to make additional comments about their responses in their own words. The following comments were received:

‘Very human project (moving) Good quality production (impressed)’

‘Amazing the stories that were out of small towns’

‘Wish to support the program and the gallery’

‘The capacity of people to create value from suffering’

‘This is an inclusive project enabling the community – and wider – to acknowledge our common values within diversity. (I’m disappointed that the Afghani newcomers were not included – another time/focus??)’

‘More stories from low income family eg third generation ‘Centrelink’ recipients and the obstacles they overcame to have their children succeed. It does happen.’

Gallery staff also reported:

‘...many locals have come in to visit and view the project. All love it. Had a gorgeous old digger (96 and still walking and very much with it!!) come in and sit for over an hour.’

6.4.3 ‘Vox pop’ feedback

People in attendance at the launch of the exhibition were invited to offer brief comments about the exhibition and the project. The following were recorded:

‘So many stories – in one little community!’

‘Some of these stories would make you cry what people went through – and we never hear or talk about it until something like this.’

‘This is better than ‘Australian Story!’

‘It is great seeing them all collected here like this. Much easier to follow than the website – I found it [website] a bit hard to get around.’

‘This is a wonderful project. It is a pity we don’t hear more from some of the other people involved – it is always the [same ones] who are asked to stand up and talk. This gives people the idea that is what our community is about.’

‘It’s funny when you see it all together like this. You know your own story but when you see it all you see how it fits together. It’s a pity that more of the people in the stories couldn’t make it along today.’

Appendix 7: Excerpt, *Big Stories Case Study as part of Ripples Evaluation* by Christine Putland. June 2011.

‘Everyone has their memories. And it is good to sit down and tell about them. The tears roll down but it needs to be told otherwise the young ones don’t get to know.’

7. Summary of contribution to Ripples 2010 goals

This case study has shown that the Big Stories project made a significant contribution to achieving the broader program goals. In particular, feedback and observation demonstrates:

Arts and cultural development

Many opportunities were provided for community members to be introduced to high quality media content, often for the first time, while local content producers developed new skills and the capacity to extend their practice through workshop participation. These opportunities continue to bear fruit as community members are applying their skills in ongoing projects and initiatives.

Community capacity building

Through the telling of a great many stories about very different experiences, the complexity and diversity of the local communities has been captured as a series of small but vibrant snapshots. Sharing experiences in this way has led to increased awareness of different groups within the community; it has highlighted some of the extraordinary stories that exist and brought important issues out into the open. According to some community members this has sown the seeds of a stronger sense of community identity.

Individual health and wellbeing

By supporting individuals to tell their stories in creative ways, and exhibiting the products in public forums, the project has encouraged a sense of identity, pride, and feeling ‘special’. Participants generally described feeling supported and safe to share their stories, and found the experience enjoyable, rewarding and sometimes cathartic.

* * *

Appendix 8: Big Stories 2014

BIG STORIES: ASIA PACIFIC – 2014

In 2014, the Project will undergo its most substantial expansion to date.

To date Big Stories residencies are confirmed in Australia in Queenstown, Tasmania; Cowra, New South Wales; Coober Pedy, South Australia and Beaudesert, Queensland. In addition a residency has been completed in the Raja Ampat regency of Papua by Filmmaker in Residence Enrico Aditjondro working with local content producers Ina Mayor and Menas Mambrasar and Max Binur from local NGO Belantara Papua. Ina and Menas have subsequently formed a video collective Papuan Voices Balabia. As of April 2014 Enrico was editing stories produced.

One more Asia-Pacific residency is planned, but not confirmed. Extensive discussions have taken place with filmmakers in Myanmar (including a participatory video workshop in Yangon resulting in a small online documentary project: yangonnights.tumblr.com). In addition the project was presented at Asian Side of the Doc in Kuala Lumpur, 2013 and Chengdu, 2014. Discussions with filmmakers and partners in China, Malaysia, Japan, Cambodia and Indonesia are ongoing. Filmmakers and funders in other countries including East Timor, Morocco, India, Taiwan, Hong Kong and Philippines have also expressed interest in the Project.

FORMATTING OF PROCESS AND PRODUCT

The residency, images and stories produced will become increasingly formatted for ease of replication in the community and in online presentations, whilst endeavouring preserving the intent and principles of process. The website of bigstories.com.au will still be a central archive and showcase for the stories, however additional sites will increasingly play a role. Creation of *Big Stories* branded channels on video and image sharing sites such as Vimeo, Instagram and Flickr will support distribution and allow for increased context with synopses, tags and other metadata able to be applied to individual stories. Through increased engagement with social media platforms such as Facebook,

Twitter and the Big Stories blog we will finally be able to tell the stories behind the story and unpack in more detail the process of making and link this to individual stories and collections of stories.

As part of the Screen Australia Signature Documentary funding Big Stories Co. engaged Portable Studios to undertake an audience engagement process across a range of social media and to support digital distribution and outreach. This includes networking and public relations, development and distribution of a media pack for digital partnerships, setting up, marketing and maintaining social media channels, maintaining and marketing the Big Stories blog as well as analysis and reporting to refine the digital strategy over 2014. In addition Free Range Future are undertaking user interface enhancements of the bigstories.com.au website – refreshing the design and navigation as well as making the project accessible on mobile and touch screen devices.

On the following pages are two key documents presented to partners. The first is a two sided postcard to introduce the project. The second, more substantial document is a formal introduction to participating filmmakers in residence that outlines the residency process, and the formats of films and photos produced.

Big Stories, Small Towns: Asia Pacific

Introductory postcards. Asian Side of the Doc, Chengdu 2014.

					
Every community has a living memory, a collective identity woven of a thousand stories.	BIG STORIES SMALL TOWNS		每一个集体都有着鲜活的记忆所共同的编织的千万个故事	大故事 小城镇	
		An acclaimed multi-platform documentary project gathering heart warming local stories for a global audience.			著名的多平台纪录片为世界上的观众搜集最感动的本土故事
	  		  		
bigstories.com.au			bigstories.com.au		

BIG STORIES ASIA PACIFIC

Big Stories Co. is seeking to extend the Big Stories cross-platform project across the Asia Pacific



We use new technologies and collaborative processes to produce inspiring and innovative projects that explore global issues from local perspectives.

We want to work in partnership with Asia Pacific based filmmakers, local communities and villages, to shine a light on people who care for and create their community.

We're looking for partners who share our vision for
BIG STORIES
ASIA PACIFIC

CONTACT IN CHINA
CELESTE GEER
celeste3000@yahoo.com
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CONTACT IN AUSTRALIA
MARTIN POTTER
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大故事 小城镇

大故事公司在亚太地区寻求拓展大故事的平台



我们从本土文化视角出发去探究世界性的问题，使用创新的技术共同合作去创造激励人心的节目。我们寻求来自亚太地区的制片人，本地社团和村庄的合作伙伴，共同点亮一盏关心和建造家园的明灯。

北京地区联系人 **CELESTE GEER**
celeste3000@yahoo.com
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澳大利亚地区联系人 **MARTIN POTTER**
martin@bigstories.com.au
+61 (0) 458 760 579

我们正在寻求一样拥有我们大故事愿景的亚太地区合作伙伴

Big Stories, Small Towns: Asia Pacific

Briefing document for filmmakers.



**BIG
STORIES
SMALL TOWNS**

**“Every community has a memory of itself... A living memory,
an awareness of a collective identity woven of a thousand stories”**

Joe Lambert, Founder, Centre for Digital Storytelling

BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS

LOCAL STORIES, GLOBAL IMPACT

ONE LINE SYNOPSIS

Big Stories, Small Towns is a participatory, multi-platform documentary project gathering small town stories of innovation and resilience and sharing them with a global audience through the www.bigstories.com.au website.

A COMMON THEME

We shine a light on people who care for and create their community.



SYNOPSIS

Big Stories, Small Towns is a unique model of community engagement and participation.

Professional filmmakers live in a small town and work with local people to bring their stories to the screen.

Stories are made in different ways. There are a mix of photos and documentaries made by the filmmakers and by community members. Filmmakers undertake workshops, training and collaboration with local people to create some of the stories. The filmmakers produce other stories themselves with strong community consultation.

We make films 'with' not 'about' people.

Our guiding principles are defined by the core values of trust, commitment, humility, faith in the ability of others, love and critical thinking:

- *The community is our key partner - work closely with them, and respect each other's expertise and independence.*
- *Work through ethics, privacy and consent with the community and adapt accordingly.*
- *Encourage local content production through training, mentoring, community screenings, exhibitions and ongoing support.*
- *Make beautiful, inspiring, insightful and engaging stories with the community. However, it's not PR, we are not making commercials for local initiatives.*
- *Track the process and results and spend time to share what has been learnt with multiple communities in many ways – online, in the community and across different media.*
- *Use the process and stories as a catalyst for discussion, reflection and inspiration.*

THE RESIDENCY



The general process for the residency is made up of 3 stages:

1. Extensive research and partnership with local groups and individuals prior to the residency: **3 – 4 weeks.**

2. Professional filmmakers live in residence in a small town for **3 - 4 weeks.**

Filmmakers produce films and photo essays with people in the town.

Filmmakers run participatory workshops, training and mentoring according to community requirements.

3. Filmmakers return to the town to screen and exhibit stories for feedback and approval, prior to release on the Big Stories website.

Filmmakers and local content producers will be present during the screening/ event in town to offer context and to facilitate discussion. This process of screening and feedback will be documented with a view to continue to unpack the 'stories behind the story' and to offer viewers of the final town site additional context.

LOCAL CONTENT PRODUCERS

Big Stories filmmakers mentor or collaborate with a small group of local people over the duration of the residency.

We have worked with Local Content Producers aged from 18 – 80. Age and technical experience is no barrier.

Previous films and story threads made by Local Content Producers:

The Oldies, made in conjunction with Local Content Producer Ann Hughes:
<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/elders>



Two Villages, made in conjunction with Local Content Producers Ang Yung and Lam Suot working with the Lunn and Phnom village councils:
<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages>



WHAT WE MAKE:

1. MICRO-DOCS

Made by Filmmakers in Residence, these micro-documentaries are focussed on people caring for and creating their community. They form part of a longer story thread (where short stories connect together to a longer story).

Duration: 5 – 8 minutes

Examples:

The Longriders, Murray Bridge:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/longriders/film/longriders-cmc>

Recovery, Strathewen:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/recovery/film/scra-strathewen-community-renewal-association->

2. VERTICAL FILMS

A 'Decisive Moment' – these films are the record of **a single encounter, interview or event**.

It can be a video portrait, a musical performance, a community meeting, a walk into town, a conversation between friends or an oral history.

Duration: 2 – 5 mins

Examples:

The Story of Yeak Loam Lake, Banlung:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/peung-chief-of-lunn-village>

Ibrahim's Card Game, Murray Bridge:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/ibrahim>

3. DIGITAL STORIES

Digital Stories are made by community members with support from filmmakers-in-residence. They are short, personal stories combining first person narration and personal images from a single storyteller.

Duration 2 - 3 minutes.

Examples:

Malcolm, Strathewen:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/malcolm>

Brownyn, Port Augusta:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/our-stories/film/bronwyns-story>

Melva, Murray Bridge:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/elders/film/melva-baldock-1>

4. PHOTO ESSAYS

In each town we produce 6 photo essays based around the key themes of Big Stories – **dreams, love, family, work, community** and **history**.

Some examples are on the following page.

Photo essays can be from 10 - 24 images with up to 30 words for each image - preferably a first person quote, and a little bit of context.

For example (for a photo of a man at work):

"I work like a surgeon. Steady hands. It's taken me over 75 years to feel like I've finally perfected my craft." (THE QUOTE)

Simon, 96, watch repairman, Main Street, Port Augusta (THE CONTEXT)

Please also record a small piece of audio related to the photo essay if possible.

BIG STORIES PHOTO ESSAY THEMES:

DREAMS



A selection from the Dreams series - <http://www.bigstories.com.au/#/theme/Dreams>

FAMILY The 'Family' series could be simple portraits of families, or a focus on a single family with unique characters (e.g. 4 generations of fisher folks, or women in one family with changing roles clearly seen, plus girls' future).



My family always eats together here. This mat is my culture if I eat without it, the food doesn't taste as good.



I got this tape from Sudan. The song says: "Even though you are in Australia and we are here in Sudan, we are the same." It reminds me to not forget my culture. When I listen to this music it is a good feeling.

AJITH

Part of the Home series in Murray Bridge

For the Home series in Murray Bridge we asked new arrivals to the town, "Tell us about something from your old home that is important in your new home?"

LOVE Who do you love? What do you love? Why? Or you could focus on one relationship (or one persons attempt to find love).



Jenny and Jim take a dip. Queenstown, Tasmania, 2013.

COMMUNITY This could be a “One Day In Town,” or an essay about a particular community event, celebration or meeting or a shared local interest. Community is something that brings people together in the one town.



Queenstown, West Coast Shack community.

APPENDIX 8: Big Stories 2014

WORK People at work, inspired by Studs Terkel’s book “Working.” These can be “A Day in the Life” style photo essays or portraits of different workers, could be one industry, or one person and their work.



Some images from previous Work Essays (L-R): On the farm, Raukkan, The Men's Shed, Port Augusta, Wami Kata Old Folks Home, Port Augusta.

HISTORY We’ve curated old family photos series, done ‘Then and Now’ photo series in collaboration with local photographers (including re-tracing the steps of a local photographer) and an “Elders” photo series. Below are some examples:

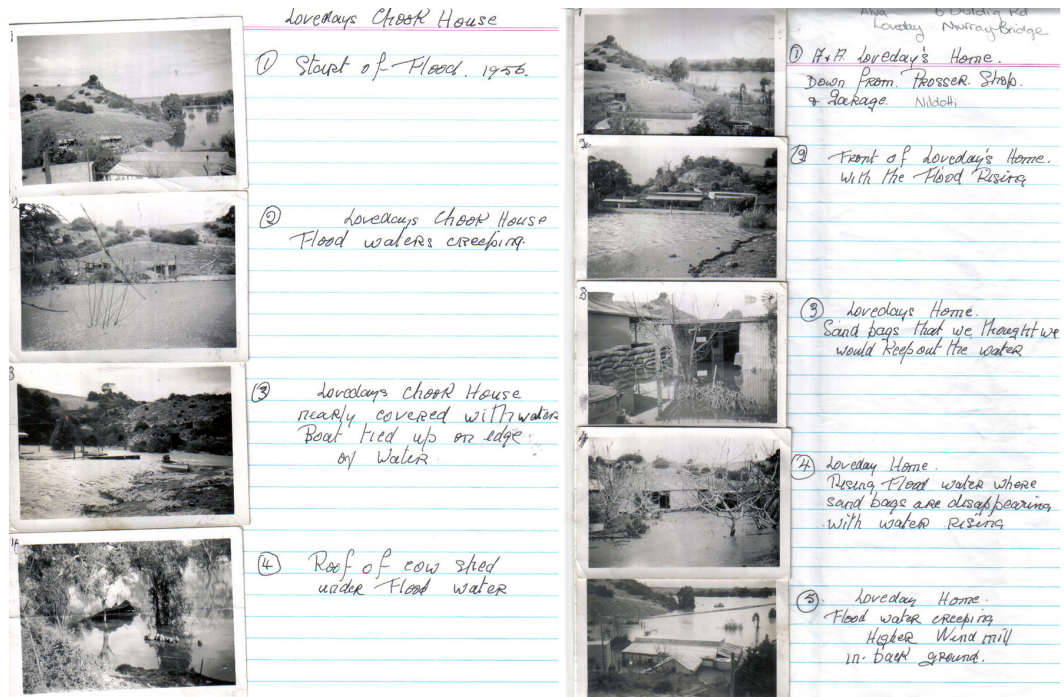


Collage of personal archival images from the Elders Project in Murray Bridge

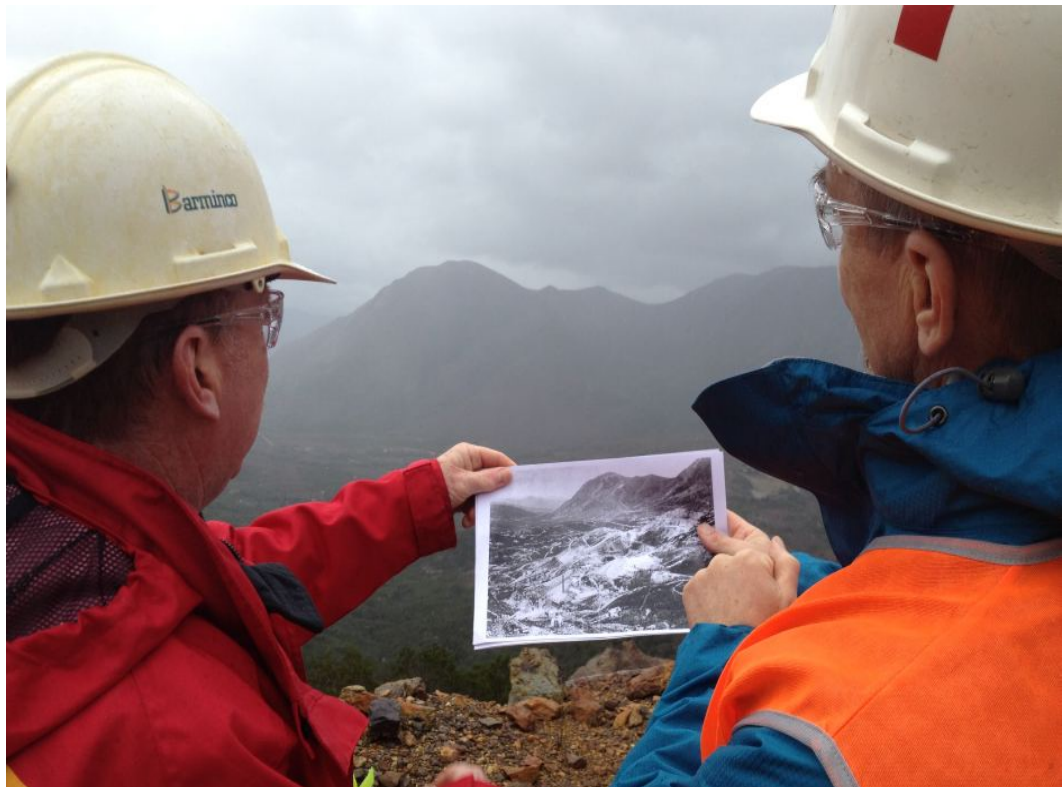


Ken Wells and Big Stories, "Side by Side" series, Murray Bridge 2011 and 1961.

HISTORY



Alva Loveday storyboard for digital story, Murray Bridge.



Queenstown, 2014. The unchanging ridge and disappearing snow. Images from 2013 and 1926.

LOCAL SCREENINGS AND EXHIBITIONS

We organise local screenings and exhibitions to showcase the work. We try to show the stories back in surprising ways.

We've held exhibitions in galleries, screenings in cafes and on the side of buildings and discussions in the school or library. This allows people to see the stories and have editorial input. It's also an opportunity for reflection and discussion around the ideas in the films.

This community screening and feedback process is an important part of what makes *Big Stories* different from most projects.



Murray Bridge Gallery, 2011



Café screening, Cambodia, 2011

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The Fogo Process Films (1968)

All films produced as part of *The Newfoundland Project* (referred to in this essay as *The Fogo Process*) for Challenge for Change, produced by the National Film Board of Canada. Accessed online through the NFB's website:

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- *Andrew Britt at Shoal Bay*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Billy Crane Moves Away*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Brian Earle on Merchants and Welfare*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Children of Fogo Island, The* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Citizen Discussions*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Dan Roberts on Fishing*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Discussion on Welfare*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Fisherman's Meeting* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Fogo Island Improvement Committee*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Fogo's Expatriates*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Founding of the Co-operative*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Introduction to Fogo Island*. (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada

- *Jim Decker Builds a Longliner.* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Jim Decker's Party.* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Joe Kinsella on Education.* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *McGraths at Home and Fishing.* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Mercer Family, The.* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *The Merchant and the Teacher* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Some Problems of Fogo.* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Songs of Chris Cobb, The.* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Story of the Up Top* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Thoughts on Fogo and Norway* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Tom Best on Co-operatives* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *Two Cabinet Ministers* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *A Wedding and a Party* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *William Wells Talks About the Island* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada
- *A Woman's Place* (1968) Dir: Colin Low. National Film Board of Canada

Other Challenge for Change Films viewed:

All films produced as part of Challenge for Change. Produced by the National Film Board of Canada.

- *The Things I Cannot Change* (1967) Dir: Tanya Ballantyne
- *VTR St-Jacques* (1969) Dir: Bonnie Sher Klein and Dorothy Henault
- *Cree Hunters of Mistassini* (1974) Dir: Boyce Richardson and Tony Iavelo
- *You Are On Indian Land* (1971) Dir: Mort Ransen
- *VTR Rosedale* (1974) Dir: Len Chatwin

Accessed online through the NFB's website: <http://www.nfb.ca/playlists/michael-brendan-thomas-waugh-ezra-winton/challenge-for-change/>

Filmmaker in Residence (2008).

Dir. Katerina Cizek, Producer Gerry Flahive. Associate Producer: Heather Frise.
Some 'special feature' films directed by Heather Frise.

The Bicycle

- *The Bicycle* 16mins31
- *The Bike* (silent short) 2min10
- *Pax Memorial* 8min15
- *Malawi Photovoice Project* (accessed via website: chapter 2)

The Interventionists

- *The Interventionists* 31min23
- *Interventionists Case Study* 7min 31

Handheld (Young Parents No Fixed Address)

- *I Was Here* 9min09
- *Unexpected: Video Bridge* 16min33
- *We're Still Here* 10min42
- *Handheld (un)conference* 10min30

Street Health Stories

- *Street Health Stories* 9min16
- *Street Health Impact* 8min30
- *Street Health Stories trailer* 1min15
- *22 Street Health mini stories* (viewed as individual stories and identified by the name of the subject of the film) 56min 25

Drawing From Life

- *Drawing From Life* 30min32
- *Animate This!* 4min25
- *Right to Response* 10min07
- *Case Study – for Facilitators* 19min34
- *Why Animation* 1min32
- *Informed Consent/ Ethics* 2min40
- *Kat on Right to Response* 2min48

7 Interventions of Filmmaker in Residence

- *7 Interventions of Filmmaker in Residence* 80min37
- *Many and Any Media: Challenge to the Documentary Genre* 8min38
- *Old School/ New School: Interview with George Stoney* 18min12
- *Genesis of FIR: Film Board, Meet Hospital* 5min45
- *The Approach: Ethics and Interventionist Media* 8min30
- *Video Bridge: Then and Now – Using Media to Mediate* 9min40
- *Trailer: for Webby Award* 2min59
- *Manifesto: Animation* 2min13
- *Manifesto Explained: Extended Version* 4min05
- *NFB Pioneers: Challenge for Change* 55min20 Dir: Christina Pochmursky
Corus Entertainment. National Film Board of Canada.

CD-Rom

- *Filmmaker In Residence Web Documentary*. (2007) Dir: Cizek, K.
National Film Board of Canada. nfb.ca/filmmakerinresidence
- *Filmmaker In Residence blog*

Support Material Accessed from DVD Box Set: CD-Rom

- User's Guide to The Interventionists
- User's Guide to Drawing From Life
- I Was Here Artist's Statement
- We Are Here Declaration of Young Parents
- Street Health Report

All films accessed from Filmmaker in Residence DVD box set, produced 2008)

Additional Films Viewed

Seeing is Believing. Wintonick, P. and Cizek, K. dir. (2003), documentary, 60 minutes. Colour. Necessary Illusions, Canada.

The Streets: A Film With The Homeless. Cross, D. (1997), documentary, 58 minutes. Colour. National Film Board of Canada and Necessary Illusions, Canada.

Indonesia: Art, Activism and Rock n Roll. Hill-Smith, C. dir. (2002), documentary, 26 minutes. Colour. The House of Red Monkey, Australia.

Jean Rouch

- *Au Pays des Mages Noirs (In the Country of Black Magic)*. Rouch, J., dir. (1946–47) Black and white. Actualites Francaises. France.
- *La Chasse à l'Hippopotame (The Hippopotamus)* Rouch, J., dir. (1947). 45 min. Colour. France.
- *Jaguar*. Rouch, J., dir. (1954–67) 110 min. Colour. Les Film de La Pleiade. France.
- *Moi, un Noir (Me, a Black)*. Rouch, J., dir. (1959) 70 min. 16mm. Colour. Les Film de La Pleiade. France.
- *Chronique d'un Été (Chronicle of a Summer)*. Rouch, Jean, dir. (1961) 85 min. Black and white. Argos. France

Online Projects, 2001 – 2010

(List of projects produced pre- Big Stories 2 launch, February 2011 that influenced Project development).

12 Canoes www.12canoes.com.au/ (2008). Online Storytelling series. Directors: Rolf de Heer, Molly Reynolds and the Yolgnu people of Ramingining Community.

6 Billion Others www.6billionothers.org (2003-ongoing). Online Documentary. Created by Yann Arthus-Bertrand, Sibylle d'Orgeval, Baptiste Rouget-Luchaire. Design Studio: GoodPlanet

A Man with a Movie Camera: Global Remake dziga.perrybard.net/ (2007-ongoing). Online Participatory Video Project. Directed by Perry Bard. Design by Steven Baun.

A Place To Think www.abc.net.au/aplacetothink (2007). Graphic History of Film Australia. Content Producer: John Hughes. Caroline Kinny-Lewis: Online Producer. Executive Producer: Anna Grieve and Ian Allen. Produced by ABC and Film Australia.

A Year on the Wing www.abc.net.au/wing/ (2002, now offline). Online Documentary. Producer/co-writer: Nell White, Writer: Meme McDonald, Director: Kate Clere and Interactive Director: Helen Vivian. Produced by Consuello Productions with assistance from the AFC, ABC New Media and Environment Australia.

Capture Wales bbc.co.uk/capturewales (2001 - 2007). Digital Storytelling Series and Online Archive. Creative Director: Daniel Meadows. Produced by BBC Wales and University of Cardiff.

Doclab www.doclab.org/ (2008 – ongoing). Aggregator Site for Online Documentaries. IDFA, Netherlands. Director of Doclab: Caspar Sonnen.

Dust On My Shoes www.abc.net.au/dustonmyshoes/ (2005). Online Documentary. Dir: Steve Thomas and Chris Warner. Produced by Roar Film as part of the AFC/ ABC Broadband Production Initiative.

Filmmaker in Residence filmmakerinresidence.nfb.ca/ (2005 – 2007). Cross-platform and Online Documentary. Director: Katerina Cizek. Producer Gerry Flahive for National Film Board of Canada.

Gaza Sderot: Life in Spite of Everything gaza-sderot.arte.tv (2008). Online Documentary. Producers and Developers: Arte.tv and Upian (France). Producers: Alma Films, Trabelsi Productions and Sapir College (Israel), Ramattan Studios (Palestine). Executive Producer: Bo Travail (France).

Global Lives Project globallives.org/ (2009-ongoing). Cross-platform Documentary. Founder, Executive Director: David Evan Harris.

HighRise: Out my Window interactive.nfb.ca/#/outmywindow. (2010). Online Documentary. Directed by Katerina Cizek. Produced by Gerry Flahive for the National Film Board of Canada.

Homeless www.abc.net.au/homeless/ (2003). Directed by Trevor Graham, Rose Hesp, Rob Wellington. Produced as part of the AFC/ ABC Broadband Production Initiative.

Homeless Nation homelessnation.org. (2003 – present). Online Project. Created by Daniel Cross. Produced by EyeSteelFilm.

Journey to the End of Coal honkytonk.fr/webdocs/journey/ (2009). Online Documentary. Directed by Samuel Bollendorff, Produced by Honkytonk Films.

Learning To Love You More www.learningtoloveyoumore.com (2002-2009). Participatory Online Project and Archive. Directors: Miranda July and Harrell Fletcher. Designer: Yuri Ono.

Life in a Day www.youtube.com/lifeinaday (2010). Directed by Kevin Macdonald. RSA Film.

Madness, Colors #47: sites.colors magazine.com/47/ (2002). Online Documentary, subsite of issue #47 of Colors Magazine. Directors: Adam Broomberg and Oliver Chanarin

Mapping Main Street www.mappingmainstreet.org/ (2009-ongoing). Online Collaborative Documentary. Created by Kara Oehler, Ann Heppermann, Jesse Shapins and James Burns.

One Day on Earth www.onedayonearth.org/ (2010). Online Documentary. Founder, Director: Kyle Ruddick.

Thanatorama www.thanatorama.com/ (2007). Online Documentary. Created by: Ana Maria de Jesus. Design Studio: Upian.

The Whale Hunt thewhalehunt.org/ (2007). Online Documentary. Director: Jonathon Harris.

The Wrong Crowd www.abc.net.au/wrongcrowd (2002) Writer, Producer Director: Debra Beattie. Produced as part of the AFC/ ABC Broadband Production Initiative.

Usmob usmob.com.au (2005 – 2006). Website, Film series and Participatory Media Workshop program. Director: David Vadiveloo. Producer: Heather Croall.

We Feel Fine www.wefeelfine.org/. Online Project. (Year of Development: 2006 –2007). Directors: Jonathon Harris, Sep Kamvar