



MILE MANAGEMENT SEMINAR: Are we supporting the local arts community?

Summary Notes: 27th September 2012, Durban Botanic Gardens

Karen van Pletsen

After outlining the role that KUMISA plays in mobilising support for the local arts community, Karen suggested that there was sometimes a **disconnect between a policy or plan and real action**. She asked for **more dialogue** to be held between musicians and city officials in order to understand their needs greater. Of real importance to her was the need for the City to **create more opportunities for live musicians** for example rather than merely employing a single deejay.

Guy Redman

Guy outlined the Department's organisational structure and expressed his concern that often we view ourselves as a municipality, not a living vibrant city that serves people put there. In order to position arts and culture in the city, there was a need to be bold and have budget allocation made for arts culture and heritage. He pleaded for a **mindset change even from our Councillors** who are decision-makers and responsible for budget allocation.

He explained his challenges in motivating for the Centre for Creative Arts to secure a grant in aid to promote the local arts. This year for the first time, four organisations did manage to secure R1m to support their activities.

The key challenge was in **terms of procurement as three quotes are required** for artists. Utilising the section 36 route is tedious and slow. The payment of artists of 50% upfront was also a challenge as the city infrastructure does not necessarily appreciate this.

Peter Rorvic

UN Report of 2008 acknowledged as key driver the role of the creative economy and more importantly this sector in developing economies. Peter suggested that more needs to be done to coordinate efforts between government departments. The first step is to develop **a clear cultural policy** which defines the aims objectives and strategies to support culture in the city.

In reflecting on the website, he noted that there was **no dedicated space** around events, heritage and culture – unlike to Joburg and other city's websites. In this regard, he suggested that more needs to be done around events tourism and more aggressive marketing.

One of the key challenges he noted was that structures were becoming strictures – the City's **procurement process was far too long and bureaucratic**. More importantly, the call-out for events and the response to the call-out seemed to come far too late. This was problematic for artists who needed time to prepare for their creative pieces. Long term planning, he argued was needed if we were to be successful.

Peter suggested that city planners need to think about the use of the **beachfront** and making it much more lively during the nights through music festivals at hotels, etc.

Toni Monty

Toni suggested that we need to have a **holistic approach: need to think more about the creative industries in general**. As the Film Office, they are focussing on making business sense of this industry. The Office conducted research in 2008 and found that there was a lack of business drivers

(producers) that create the initiatives that employ artists. Their strategy has therefore been to develop producers in the city.

There appears to be a **disconnect in the city** : the creative industries somehow seems to be at the end of the line! Most of our producers are relocating to Cape Town and Joburg and Durban has **NO incentives** to bring them back. A fifteen million dollar film project was lost earlier this year as we had no studio facility in Durban. We lost 1500 jobs in that project, which shows that we have lots of work to do. In closing she challenged us to be **BOLD** and move the industry forward.

Russel Shongwane

Russel from COOLLab, an artist think-tank suggested that whilst there is dialogue taking place, there is a void between policy-makers and artists. The issue of insufficient skills is also a key issue that is being faced. He lamented that **plans of action do not result in anything**. He suggested that we need to focus on coming up with solutions.

KEY DISCUSSION POINTS:

1. Getting eThekweni Officials on board: Need to continue dialogue beyond the MILE Management Seminar – must find a way to **co-ordinate** our actions better and **prioritise** much better. Suggestion is to have at least a **monthly coordination meeting** between key departments to take away the issue of laving decisions with only certain officials. More important however is to have a **SINGLE CHAMPION** for this cause as leadership is critical! In the same vein, it was suggested that our eThekweni officials and councillors **MUST CHANGE their MINDSET and attitudes towards the creative industry**.
2. The Priority Zone could be used as a PILOT PROJECT to test how that area can be used to mobilise the creative industries.
3. Need to be strategic in our response: three key ideas:

- a. **Political:** need to engage with leadership to prioritise this sector. Suggested that a **POLICY** be developed urgently as there are often different interpretations of existing unclear policy guidelines.
THIS IS A CRITICAL FIRST STEP and MUST BE DONE!!!
 - b. **Portal:** need a separate vehicle to co-ordinate this
 - c. **Publicity:** need to create aggressive marketing machinery to sell great projects we are doing eg Arts precinct.
4. Need to **review the current bylaws** that can enable the creative arts industry
 5. Suggestion that we need to learn from **benchmarks** that have already been set. In Joburg have set up a fund for public art that we can emulate.
 6. Suggestion that we explore the idea that Council **puts out a tender** calling for artists to respond to what our needs are.
 7. Officials urged to start **PLANNING** much earlier – this is key rather than placing blame on SCM processes.
 8. City to recognise that self-sustainability may never ever be possible, and this is not done anywhere in the world.
 9. A key constraint is that the City cannot approve licences for a live music venue. This HAS to be addressed, as planning officials are reported to support only certain music genres!
 10. Need for **AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT** in Durban as artists are not performing (e.g. Eagles, U2, Jonathan Butler have not performed). Need to understand what the reasons are for this and come up with ways of addressing these concerns.
 11. Must re-think way that we are paying small artists as the system is not working currently and is very frustrating.