

# **YOUTH AND SUSTAINABILITY: SOCIAL CAPITAL, SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP AND YOUTH CIVIC ENGAGEMENT AS BUILDING BLOCKS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES - A CASE STUDY OF THE HEADQUARTERS YOUTH FACILITY**

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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

Our lifestyle choices are reflected in the encompassing social, economic and environmental aspects of urban living. However globalization and the consequential focus on competition, economic growth and development at the expense of other important factors such as community development, creativity, cultural planning, civic engagement and social connectedness can in fact undermine attempts at sustainable development. The mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness produce results such as better schools, faster economic development, lower crime rates and even more effective government are multiple and complex. A framework for understanding the mechanisms is one that rests on the concept of social capital.

Sustainability in all its activities and applications requires the development of sustainable communities. This paper seeks to define the main building blocks for this process, social capital, social entrepreneurship and civic engagement, and to relate them to youth, particularly through its application in the Headquarters project. Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995). Social entrepreneurs work within communities attempting to bring people together to unlock the potential for mutual self-help and collaborative problem solving by recognizing the opportunities for using under-utilised assets. In doing so they help communities to build up their social capital of trust, relationships and confidence, which generates a lasting capacity within communities to address and resolve issues that concern them (Leadbeater, 2002).

Networks of civic engagement foster robust norms of generalized reciprocity: I'll do this for you now, in the expectation that down the road you or someone else will return the favor. The networks facilitate coordination and communication and amplify information about the trustworthiness of other individuals (Putnam, 1993). There is a strong correlation between social trust and civic engagement. Specifically, the greater the density of associational memberships in a society, the more trusting its citizens are. Most importantly, trust and engagement are two facets of the same underlying factor, namely, the development of social capital that is a prerequisite for effective co-

operation and social harmony as well as economic advancement and sustainable development (Putnam, 1995).

The paper takes a particular focus on youth and highlights their importance in sustainable human development and exemplifies the relevance and significance of establishing programs and facilities that give them a sense of worth and place in urban communities. An aspect of this is integrating youth into development projects to establish more livable communities and to build on social capital principles. It emphasizes the need for youth, community and government working together in partnership to bring about changes, and support risk-taking ventures that set out to build a better society both now and in the future. It supports the need for other social capital building exercises and creative community development – civic creativity – that incorporates cultural planning both locally and nationally.

To reverse the generational downturn in civic engagement and social capital will not be simple. The challenge to those concerned about dwindling social capital is to embrace the technological and social changes that have brought so much good in recent years, while finding new ways to create social-capital-rich environments for young people in spite of, and ideally because, of these changes (Putnam, 2001). Headquarters goal is to address the range of issues confronting young people today by providing an area which facilitates a broad range of activities – creative, cultural, access to multimedia, physical and educational (all at a reduced cost) – as well as providing personal safety and easy access via public transport. It brings together the most leading edge concepts through the core building blocks for sustainable human development in meeting the needs of urban youth and developing their role in society.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Recently there has been a shift in our attitudes concerning the way we live and the way it affects our futures. More and more people are choosing to locate in the city for employment opportunities and because cities offer diversity in social and cultural experience. Our lifestyle choices are reflected in the encompassing social, economic and environmental aspects of urban living. However globalization and the consequential focus on competition, economic growth and development at the expense of other important factors such as community development, creativity, cultural planning, civic engagement and social connectedness can in fact undermine attempts at sustainable development.

Sustainable human development is development that not only generates economic growth but also distributes its benefits equitably; that regenerates the environment rather than destroying it; that empowers people rather than marginalizing them. It is development that gives priority to the poor, enlarging their choices and opportunities and provides for their participation in decisions that affect their lives. It is development that is pro-people, pro-nature, pro-jobs and pro-women (UNDP, 1994).

Researchers in fields such as education, urban poverty, unemployment, crime and drug abuse abatement, and even health have found that successful outcomes are more likely in civically engaged communities. The mechanisms through which civic engagement and social connectedness produce results such as better schools, faster economic development, lower crime rates and even more effective government are

multiple and complex. A framework for understanding the mechanisms is one that rests on the concept of social capital. Social capital refers to features of social organization such as networks, norms and social trust that facilitate coordination and cooperation for mutual benefit (Putnam, 1995).

This project takes a particular focus on youth and how they are an important factor in sustainable human development and exemplifies the relevance and importance of establishing programs and facilities that give them a sense of worth and place in urban communities. The project looks at the development of a youth centre in Leederville, an inner Perth suburb, which is a joint initiative between young people, State and Local Government and community organisations. Headquarters youth facility is an innovative project that takes a proactive stance against the problems facing today's youth in the urban setting. The youth centre is a working example in the current topical fields of building social capital, social entrepreneurship, and creative community development, urban youth and public spaces. Headquarters is a good example of social entrepreneurship, where the key instigators Ian Matthews and Liz Pattison have helped unlock a potential that had been overlooked or underestimated by the public and private sector. In doing so they have opened an avenue to build up young people's social capital of trust, relationships and confidence.



Figure one: skate ramps at Headquarters Youth centre

## **THE HEADQUARTERS YOUTH CENTRE**

Headquarters Skate Park, youth and leisure centre in Leederville began as an idea in 1996 to establish a facility that serves to meet the needs of young urban people and provide them with a safe environment after concerns were raised by Liz Pattison's daughter and her friends. Liz is a strategic planner by profession and has worked with Local governments in the past as well as being a Heirisson Rotary Club member. Liz has connections with SKAWA (Skateboarding Association of Western Australia Inc) through her daughter and was subsequently introduced to Ian Matthews. Ian is a member and mentor of SKAWA with a background in working for Mission Australia and Premier and Cabinet for the previous government and now is employed full-time by Headquarters as manager.

### *INTERCEPT SURVEYS AND FINDING SOLUTIONS*

Young people across Australia have expressed concerns about feeling alienated and unwelcome in public places but have been given no alternatives to shopping malls and the central business district to meet and hangout. During initial discussions with Liz and Ian, who investigated the possibility of funding from the organization for the venture in 1997. The Lotteries Commission of Western Australia requested surveys to be conducted; members of SKAWA carried these out. The Youth surveys were devised after discussions with senior staff of the City of Perth, SKAWA, and the three key instigators, and included questions in relation to youth needs. The survey's objectives were to identify:

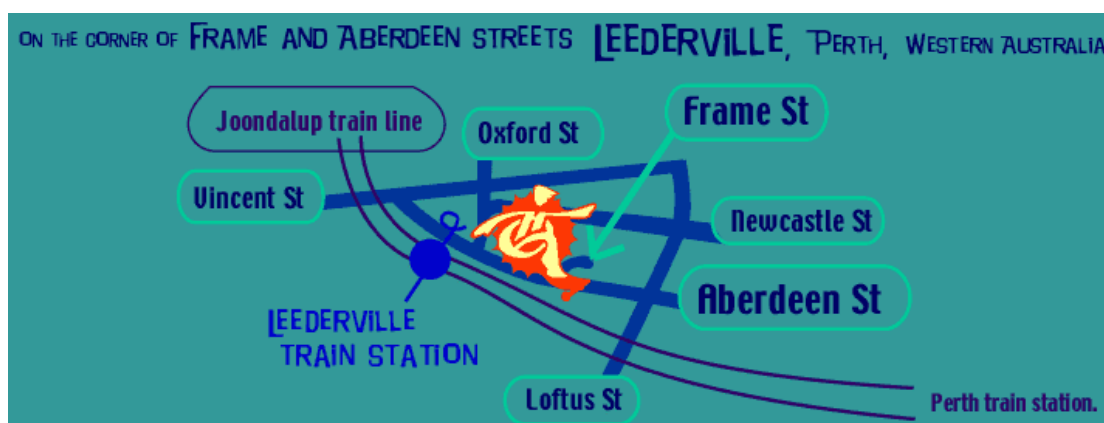
1. Demographic information about young people in the City of Perth and Northbridge (jointly referred to as the City)
2. Young peoples views and expectations of the City
3. Young people's needs in relation to youth facilities in the City
4. Specific needs and interests in relation to skateboarding, BMX and inline skating.

A comprehensive intercept survey of 600 young people (mainly aged between 12 and 25) was conducted both in Perth city centre and the suburbs. Its four major categories were similar to those issues found in the eastern states concerning urban youth:

- Nothing to do (lack of facilities, cost of entertainment, boredom)
- Personal safety (intimidating groups, fears for safety, violence)
- Lack of public open space amenable to youth (hassled by police, security guards, transit police, negative attitudes of shopkeepers and other members of the public in the city, no place to meet)
- Transport (inadequate public transport service, lack of taxis, parking problems)

The types of activities young people suggested for the city ranged across a broad spectrum from high energy pursuits to youth arts and culture, with a strong emphasis on skateboarding, a cheap café, urban (graffiti) arts, arts workshops, music, photography, and sport and recreation facilities.

## HEADQUARTERS LOCATION AND GOALS



**Figure 2: Headquarters logo, address and surrounding streets**

Armed with this information the team began its search for a suitable site to meet these issues and after several years of negotiating and planning the current site was approved. The site is located at Frame Court in Leederville, within a 200 capacity car park owned by the Town of Vincent; there are no residences in the immediate vicinity and the site is 250 metres from the Leederville train station and close to bus transport. Headquarters is adjoining the Water Authority Building who has allowed some of their gardens to be transformed into permaculture areas and the plan is to use some of the produce in the headquarters café with the aim to be more sustainable. The students from Perth Modern School under the guidance of Neil Bodel have carried out the work, and there are future plans to include “work for the dole” participants in a training capacity. The permaculture theme has been expanded to include the Leederville police station and other western suburban police stations.

Headquarters goal is to address the range of issues confronting young people today by providing an area which facilitates a broad range of activities – creative, cultural, access to multimedia, physical and educational (all at a reduced cost) – as well as providing personal safety and easy access via public transport. It includes youth development and youth service links focused on training and skills development, employment, legal assistance, welfare and health. It brings together the most leading edge concepts in meeting the needs of urban youth and developing their role in society. Liz and Ian tend to agree with the point that reliance on future connections supported by covenant and trust, rather than by formal contract, appears to lead to technically superior outcomes than the sub-optimal outcomes that result from the maximization of short-run self-interest (Massam, 1996).

Young people will run the facility, for young people, in a trust style arrangement between the young people and a governing council consisting of adults from local government, the business community and service organisations – the Headquarters Board. The Board has responsibility for ensuring that Headquarters complies with all legal and community responsibilities and set strategic direction in consultation with the Management team and works on policy after taking guidance from the team. The Management team consists of mainly young people and is responsible for the overseeing of day-to-day operations of the centre. Important aspects of the centre are to build a better society both now and in the future. It supports the need for other

social capital building exercises and creative community development that also incorporates cultural planning both locally and nationally.

## **SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH STRATEGIES**

### **SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND YOUTH**

Sustainability in all its activities and applications requires the development of sustainable communities (Newman and Kenworthy, 1999). This paper seeks to define the main building blocks for this process and to relate it to youth particularly through its application in the Headquarters project. Encouraging youth development and participation, Headquarters provides young people with opportunities for positive community involvement, which can help them to learn and understand how their community works, what they can contribute and how their involvement can lead to them play a valued and fulfilling role within their local community. These are all valuable life skills that enable young people to participate actively thereby contributing to a stronger civil society (Hubble and Tibballs, 2001).

Places such as Headquarters can be described as ‘schools for citizenship’ in that they are places that offer opportunities for the acquisition and development of basic skills of public life such as public speaking, addressing problems, and acquiring social and organizational skills (Evans and Boyte, 1992). Three core building blocks for civic creativity, and sustainable community development and youth, are outlined: social capital, social entrepreneurship and civic engagement. Each is applied to Headquarters as a means of showing its application to youth in general.

#### ***BUILDING BLOCK 1: SOCIAL CAPITAL***

The building of social capital is linked into community development and the need for alternative ways of doing things. Robert Putnam (2000) and Mark Latham (1997) have both written papers on the fact that stocks of social capital, such as trust, norms, and networks, tend to be self-reinforcing and cumulative. Successful collaboration in one endeavor builds connections and trust that in turn facilitate future collaborations in other unrelated tasks. Establishing Headquarters is an innovative example of how this process can work with mentoring and creative license and therefore bring benefits to whole community through the building of social capital. Like other forms of capital, social capital is productive, making possible the achievement of certain ends that would not be attainable in its absence. Social capital is a resource whose supply increases rather than decreases through use and which becomes depleted if not used.

Society needs to take a serious look at ways to increase the incentives for creating youth-orientated social capital and to remove the disincentives such as the mismatch between what is expected of young people and the institutions that exist to help them fulfill their promise. The Leederville youth centre is such a venture with its many roles and features to build social capital networks and civic engagement in both the community and the young people who use the facility. To reverse the generational downturn in civic engagement and social capital will not be simple. The challenge to those concerned about dwindling social capital is to embrace the technological and social changes that have brought so much good in recent years, while finding new

ways to create social-capital-rich environments for young people in spite of, and ideally because, of these changes (Putnam, 2001).

The centre is not so much about competition but fostering cooperation and developing social trust and intergenerational bridging and bonding. Social trust can be seen as a core precondition for the accomplishment of social democracy. Interpersonal trust enables an appropriate balance between what would otherwise be the competing motivations of self-interest and altruism. Altruism is best explained as caring for the well being of others and self-interest then knows that these feelings and actions will be reciprocated (Latham, 1997).

There has been growing interest in community development as a potential for providing a more viable and sustainable basis for the meeting of human needs and for interaction with the environment. Jim Ife (1998) states that community work is basically a creative exercise, and therefore impossible to prescribe. However he goes on to say that establishing theoretical understanding and a sense of vision, and examining the nature of practice, can lead to positive, informed, creative, critical and reflective community work. An example of this is the unique and innovative establishment of the Headquarters Youth Centre in an inner urban setting normally devoid of youth facilities.

## *BUILDING BLOCK 2: SOCIAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP*

Entrepreneurs discover and then realise the opportunities to create value and improve well being, by meeting unmet needs or finding a better way to deliver a product or service. They are good at both exploring for these opportunities and making good their promise. Entrepreneurship is a process that fundamentally involves a team of people, who combine their skills, know-how and resources to take a venture from an idea to a reality; such people are Liz and Ian. The entrepreneurial leader, in Headquarters case Ian, orchestrates this dynamic combination of different talents and resources. The most impressive entrepreneurs are driven by a vision of creating a new product or introducing a new process rather than the pursuit of profit. They are usually people with ideas and a purpose in search of assets and resources that will make a difference (Leadbeater, 2002).

Social entrepreneurs usually work with the voluntary and community sector. While civic entrepreneurs work on generating more value from public assets, social entrepreneurs often have no assets at the beginning to work with. They help people and communities unlock potential which may have been overlooked or underestimated both by the private and public sector (Latham, 2001). Social entrepreneurs work within communities attempting to bring people together to unlock the potential for mutual self-help and collaborative problem solving by recognizing the opportunities for using under-utilised assets. In doing so they help communities to build up their social capital of trust, relationships and confidence, which generates a lasting capacity within communities to address and resolve issues that concern them (Leadbeater, 2002). This is a key factor in youth and sustainability. Capacity building is vital, ensuring that these communities nurture future generations of 'social entrepreneurs' and continue to spawn creative ideas, an engaged citizenry, and passionate leaders long after the 'founding entrepreneurs have gone.

Social entrepreneurs have to channel their drive to get things done with a wider political framework, which ensures they bring their clients, funders and constituents with them. Entrepreneurs must be good at sensing and articulating opportunities to meet needs more effectively through innovations and novel approaches. They must bring together the different professions, disciplines and departments that need to cooperate to work on a complex problem, and win political support, from political leaders and voters, to try out and develop innovative approaches. Local and national politicians play a critical role in articulating the case for innovation and creative planning; policymakers create the regulatory framework and rules which determine whether managers have the latitude to take risks and adopt novel approaches (Leadbeater, 2002). Without recognising these important factors Headquarters would not have got further than the idea stage and the formation of an equitable partnership between the Town of Vincent and other key players in the project would not have evolved.



**Figure 4: Headquarters peripheral walls displaying urban street art and security rails**

### *BUILDING BLOCK 3: CIVIC ENGAGEMENT*

Civic engagement leads to the building of social capital and can be led by social entrepreneurs. There is evidence that redirection in civic engagement is needed especially in youth who are the foundations of our future communities. What has caused the decline in social capital and civic engagement that has touched all of us? Research has indicated that the single most important cause of the decline in social capital is an irreversible demographic shift resulting in a decline and slowing down of the more civic-minded generations (Putnam, 2001).

The far less civic generations of Baby Boomers and Baby Busters are taking their place combined with other profound and durable social changes that have magnified the generational impact. Entertainment television and playing computer games have become primary sources of information and relaxation, crowding out more sociable

leisure-time activities. More women are employed in the formal workforce, opening new doors for them but also sapping the neighborhood and voluntary organisations that relied heavily upon unpaid female leadership. In these global times with economic focus, working professionals with civic leadership skills are forced to skip civic engagements and social events because of the long hours and weekends they have to work to remain competitive. The sorts of casual interactions on which in the past have built social capitalism and civic-mindedness have all but been eliminated due to the proliferation of suburbs and their car-focused culture and the absence of community space and the resultant distancing of neighbours (Putnam, 2001).

Adult society has a predisposition to overlook young people, except when they get into trouble. Young people want what everyone else wants – affiliation, community, solidarity, respect, success, and opportunity. How those needs are met is up to us as a society and has both long and short-term ramifications. The nature of the social capital available to young people influences: how well they learn, even the odds that they will attend college, commit crimes, and the likelihood that they will do drugs or will commit suicide. Young people and their well being is a strong indicator of the long-term health of our communities. Headquarters has the potential to foster and nurture the needs of a broad spectrum of young people because it is not narrowly categorized to a specific target group of young people with special needs or problems; it can be seen as a preventative model for all youth.

Young people are based in three types of communities: school, extracurricular groups (such as religious communities, clubs and sports leagues, and informal communities of friends), and the family. In these communities young people meet and associate with the most important people in their lives – parents, siblings, teachers, friends, mentors, and coaches. Young people will learn what is expected of them and what to expect from others, especially adults, from these places. All three communities create and depend on social capital and depend upon it, as does Headquarters youth centre. Schools for example teach about public affairs and provide a springboard for volunteering in the community; at the same time the school's performance concerning the education and civic functions is dependant the involvement and cooperation of parents and community organizations (Putnam, 2001).

Like their parents young people are tuning out of civic affairs and have become much less likely to trust other people, support charities, attend community meetings, attend houses of worship, and keep up with public affairs. There are many theories for why the younger generation has dropped out of civic life: the rise in entertainment technology; the selfish values allegedly perpetuated by their parents; and the drive to pursue private pursuits; and so forth. We cannot ignore the fact that young people are a reflection of society now and in the future. Young people are far less likely to seek and find social capital in informal settings of the family home and neighborhoods and the major forms of family togetherness are in decline. The average teenager probably spends more time alone than with family or friends resulting is social isolation (Putnam, 2001).

Networks of civic engagement foster robust norms of generalized reciprocity: I'll do this for you now, in the expectation that down the road you or someone else will return the favor. A society that relies on generalized reciprocity is more efficient than a distrustful society. Trust tends to lubricate social life and therefore has benefits to

society as a whole. Networks of civic engagement facilitate coordination and communication and amplify information about the trustworthiness of other individuals (Putnam, 1993). There is a strong correlation between social trust and civic engagement. Specifically, the greater the density of associational memberships in a society, the more trusting its citizens are. Most importantly, trust and engagement are two facets of the same underlying factor, namely, the development of social capital that is a prerequisite for effective co-operation and social harmony as well as economic advancement and sustainable development (Putnam, 1995).

In the light of this information then it is obvious that if young people are not encouraged to participate in civic engagement then social capital will decline even further. Urban social life will become more fragmented, compounding further the already increasing societal problems of crime, drug taking, suicide and depression. Young people experience and are marginalized because of these societal problems, along with bad media reports compounding low self-esteem and sense of not belonging is perpetuated. What are needed are more positive, multifunctional projects, such as Headquarters, to build up young peoples potential as future leaders and decision-makers in society.

## **URBAN YOUTH AND GOVERNMENT POLICY**

In recent years, research and studies, both in Australia and Internationally have been directed at finding out reasons for the social problems we are experiencing in these times of globalization and increasing urbanization. Every community has its own particular problems and there are no cookbook solutions that apply to every community. Each community needs to collaborate and work from the grass roots to build up the social capital and therefore sustainable human development. Establishing Headquarters involved a multilevel contribution to achieve the simple, shared achievable goals of the youth centre, but required a shift away from the traditional bureaucratic process to allow flexibility, risk taking, visionary and creative processes that were essential in creation of the unique project.

Cooperation between State and Local government, non-government organisations and community services and the community in general is essential in building social capital and civic engagement. The establishment of Headquarters youth centre could be considered a risky venture because of its focus on youth and especially skaters, who have a reputation for social disruption and trouble. However without the funding and involvement of the community as a whole then development of youth is left up to families and schools, and young people are forced into private public spaces such as shopping malls or to hang out on the streets.

The form and meaning of public space is not “fixed”, as both are socially as well as physically constructed and the public and private are increasingly blurred rather than distinct. Young Australians’ use of various sites (bushland, schools, creeks), transport corridors (train and bus stations, pavements), and modes of transport (trains, bikes, skateboards and scooters) are also important to consider from a public space perspective along the more traditional foci of parks, malls, streets and shopping centres (Crane and Dee, 2001). Involving young people in the design and planning of public spaces will benefit young people, their parents and other members of the community (White, 2001). Headquarters has from the onset, adopted the principle that

the centre should be what young people want their public space to be to meet their needs.

### *LOCAL GOVERNMENT*

The role of government at all levels, in building social capital and community development is dependent upon their policies and allocation of resources. Local government is unique in its role of local governance and connection with community and therefore is important in the practice of citizenship and developing community and social justice. Community development is central to Local government, with its emphasis on serving people, enhancing communities and being responsive to local needs (LGCSAA, 2001). Councils should be committed to increasing the community's capacity to generate and sustain cooperative responses to issues as demonstrated by the Town of Vincent in their response to and participation in establishing Headquarters.

In many instances attempts to include "community" and social parameters in urban planning and development processes have not incorporated meaningful involvement of those young people affected by such processes, partly because of youth perceptions about such matters. More usually the stakeholders are adult residents, business stakeholders, local elected representatives, and adult representatives from community organisations (Crane and Dee, 2001). Through centres like Headquarters and mentors like Ian, young people can develop the skills and confidence to actively participate in broader intergenerational decision-making and development processes.

### *STATE GOVERNMENT*

The success of society relies on an appropriate balance between competition and cooperation (co-opetition) in its values and institutions: competition to foster innovation and creativity, cooperation to build social trust and inclusiveness. The leading task of successful governance is to guide and foster this balance. However social trust cannot be legislated into existence the way a government can create new economic regulations and institutions. The composition of social capital relies on the habits of slow forming culture. The relationship between culture and governance reflects a two-way flow; acts of institutional change and redesign influence the habit of culture, just as culture impacts on the practice of governance. Headquarters success will facilitate funding and acceptance of other social capital building community development projects. Formal change fosters social learning and institutional reform, once the change process lifts its horizon beyond instant results; it has the capacity to cause informal change, causing policy catalysts to find the momentum of self-sustainability (Latham, 1997).

Governments have a role to play in smoothing the path to social trust. They can create an environment that maximizes the potential for horizontal social capital through their influence over issues of institutional design. Horizontal social capital is when trust is exercised as an expression of freely formed mutuality. Vertical social capital, where citizens have some of their rights of participation and choice replaced by the exercise of authority and control, is mainly sustained by the possession of coercive powers. The youth centre is an example of a combined form of both types of social capital. All societies, no matter their culture, history, economic structures and systems of

government, are characterised by a mix of horizontal and vertical social capital (Latham, 1997).



**Figure 5: Headquarters temporary vertical skate ramp**

Importantly, social capital should not be regarded as the preserve of either the state or the non-state public sector as it is influenced by both and by the relationship between them. Social capital is affected by the citizen-to-citizen relationship as well as the citizen-to-state relationship and is altered, created or destroyed as a by-product of these activities. Through its capacity to influence the composition of social capital, the charter of government has the most leverage in the laws and institutions governing citizen-to-state interactions; signifying the importance of institutional design in the state public sector (Latham, 1997). Headquarters illustrates how social capital can be utilized to nurture young people and hence build rather than destroy social trust and networking through multilevel government involvement and sponsorship.

Governments play a major role in the adoption of creativity and cultural planning, key elements in building social capital and in sustainable urban development. Community involvement through curriculum-based programs is an effective way for students to gain a greater understanding of the community in which they live and to promote citizenship. While participation cannot guarantee interest or future involvement, it appears to have some impact on building social capital (Hubble and Tibballs, 2001). Young people who use Headquarters' many facilities are encouraged to explore self-expression in many forms, from the physical to multimedia art. They are exposed to a working example of volunteerism and community involvement that may lead to further involvement in community development outside the centre.

In 1999 the Commonwealth Government put together a taskforce to develop practical assistance for youth in its attempts to strengthen community support for young people and their families. Its aims are to examine ways that government, community organisations and business can help young people to assume productive and independent adult lives. The expertise of the Taskforce will be directed at setting out

new approaches to tackling disadvantage and social problems impeding upon the progress of young Australians, as they mature into adults who value, and are valued by, their community. The taskforce includes members from the community, academic and business sectors, as well as Commonwealth and State governments and is chaired by the Captain of the Salvation Army (Prime Minister, 1999).

The Scenario Planning process undertaken by the State Government Commission of Future Perth, in 1999, to enhance strategic planning for “Future Perth” was designed to reflect the holistic and global nature of the cities of the ‘Information Age’. Urban development is critical to any discussion of sustainability. Improving the urban environment is a matter not only of technological progress. The changes in lifestyles, government structures and the private sector that may also be necessary will not simply happen by themselves. The Scenario Planning process objectives, through a creative but structured way of thinking about possibilities, were to understand more closely the linkages between the structural components of the city’s urban form and the social and economic activity generated, propagated and housed within the structure (Minister for Planning, WA, 1999). All partners, including young people, in the future of Perth must be involved if the economic, social and environmental patterns of our society are to promote a more sustainable future.

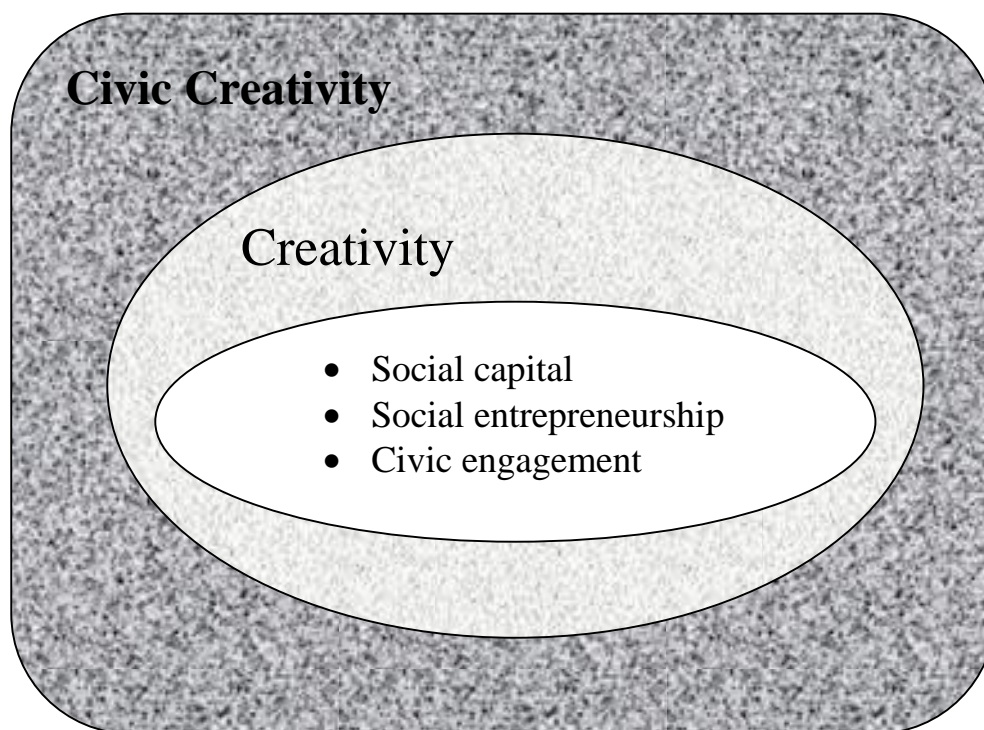
From a government policy perspective some of the key issues that are related to the guiding principles in negotiating youth-specific public space and are embraced by Headquarters are:

- To ensure that urban youth have adequate social, leisure and recreational services and amenities in suitable and accessible locations
- Recognized the diversity of social, economic and cultural backgrounds of young people and therefore develop ways to cater for the diversity of their needs
- To acknowledge that young people have essential rights, including the right to meet together, to recreate, and to be free from unnecessary interference in their affairs by authority figures
- To recognize and promote the idea that young people are valuable and valued members of the community (White, Murray and Robins, 1996)

The youth centre has potential to play an important role in the Premier’s Physical Activity Taskforce Strategic Direction (PAT), which aims to ‘get Western Australians more active’. Involving young people in physical activity has shown to establish positive behavioral patterns in participation and in reducing factors for ill health. Headquarters, by providing a safe but relatively unsupervised space, addresses the problem of the reduced freedom young people have imposed on them because their time is structured and spent increasingly under adult supervision due to the parent perceptions of an unsafe world. The concern is also that an increasing proportion of children’s days are being spent in front of the television or playing computer games (PAT, 2001).

## **STRATEGIES FOR THE FUTURE: CIVIC CREATIVITY IN THE URBAN ENVIRONMENT**

Creativity and cultural planning enable sustainable human development to tap into cities' one crucial resource – its people. The creativity of those who live in and run cities will determine future successes of urban living: human cleverness, desires, motivations, imagination and creativity are replacing more traditional urban resources such as location, natural resources, and market access (Landry, 2000). It is therefore crucial that urban youth, who will be cities' future leaders and developers, be encouraged to develop their creativity and imagination so in the future they can develop a livable city that is vibrant, exciting and a place where people have a sense of belonging and culture. Headquarters plays a dual role in this aspect; it not only gives young people a place to be but also provides for participation, education, creativity and mentoring.



**Figure 6: The civic creativity concept**

Civic creativity is the capacity for public officials and others orientated to the public good to effectively apply their imaginative faculties to achieving “higher value within a framework of social and political values”. Creativity is what balances and negotiates a harmony between self-interest and collective desires. To maximize potential, civic creativity needs to be embedded throughout decision-making structures. It involves imaginative problem solving applied to objectives in the public good with the aim to generate a continual flow of innovative solutions to public realm problems (Landry, 2002). Headquarters is such a leading, innovative project that brings together so many important concepts in our goal for sustainable human development in an urban environment.

Urbanism is the discipline that allows us to understand the dynamics, resources and potential of cities in a richer way. Urbanism is based on tying together the perspectives, insights and expertise of different disciplines. It is a strategic synthesis between land use planning, urban economics, design, aesthetics, architecture, transport, social affairs, culture, history, anthropology and ecology. Urban design is the collaborative and multidisciplinary process of shaping the physical setting for urban life. As such it should involve many stakeholders and their varied perspectives for it to be effective. Creative urban designers not only need to visualise the physical form of places, but also how people interact with spaces and move through, use, feel, experience a place, as in the case with Headquarters.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Creativity is a new form of capital, one that needs linking to human development - an important, positive step towards building a better society and should be nurtured and developed in the youth of today. It is the capacity to make the most out of opportunities and potential. It enables people to visualise future scenarios and so be able to generate preferred futures rather than responding merely to the exigencies of the moment. By looking at situations in an integrated, lateral way with flexibility it encourages innovation and generates new possibilities.

Differing types of creativity are needed to develop and address the complexities of urban living and its conflicting interest and objectives. Creative solutions can come from any source whether from within the public, private or voluntary sectors or individuals operating on their own behalf, however for best results there should be a confluence of solutions from the three core building blocks - social capital, social entrepreneurship and civic engagement. Artists may see a way to reinforce the identity of a place; business people may generate new products or services that will enhance wealth-creation possibilities. Social entrepreneurs work in the social domain to develop social innovations that might help with issues such as social fragmentation and/or exclusion especially in young people who are the foundation for future societies.

The currency for successful and sustainable urban development is changing, with less focus on finance capital (although it remains important) and more on human capital, whose currency is talent, imagination and intelligence, and on social capital whose currency is trust, reciprocity, connectedness and networks. If these forms of capital are lacking cities will experience difficulties in providing industry with skills and in dealing with increased crime and vandalism along with other social problems and therefore become unsustainable. The informal and formal learning sector, community based organisations and public-interest organisations like councils are actors that play a central role in generating the human or social capital of a city (Landry, 2002). Headquarters goal is to provide exposure and interaction for young people to these important elements of sustainable human development.

For cities to be more sustainable it is a much more subtle and overarching process than simple technological innovations and physical improvements on their own; it involves innovations at every level of decision-making, and includes regulatory regimes and governance arrangements to adapt to new circumstances. Organisational capacity and appropriate organisational structure in themselves have been

acknowledged as tools for urban competitive advantage leading to more sustainable development practices. Although if self-renewal is to be self-sustaining then people need to feel engaged, involved and have the opportunity to give of their best and be empowered which is a main objective of the Headquarters youth centre.

Sustainable urban development should be a holistic process that includes economic, social, political and environmental and cultural factors. An essential element of this process should be networking which enables more creative thinking and innovation through the incorporation and enrolment of stakeholders and encouraging partnership formations. Networking is characterised by flexibility, breadth of outreach, integration and involvement. The encompassing elements of networking are intervening in existing patterns and restructuring of network relations; furthering conditions for cooperation and consensus building; and joint problem solving. Headquarters is an innovative example of building social capital, social entrepreneurship and civic engagement with government involvement. Together with a large dose of creativity, the combination can result in civic creativity. This is the key to creating sustainable communities and Headquarters shows how it can be done given the right opportunities.

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