● Work to live, or live to work?

How can purpose-driven business be applied to architectural practice?

Jessica Bradley

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Contact:
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The many clients and projects of Sago Collective.
Bottom image: Mona Value house by Sago Design and Sago Build, Sydney
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Firstly, I acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which I live, work and operate. I recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. I acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded and pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

I commit to practice strategies that support reconciliation, personally, but also professionally, recognising my role as both an architect and a university tutor. I must take the time to educate myself, own up to my ignorance and encourage others to do the same. I recognise that dispossession and resilience are part of our history, and we must strive for a future in which we walk side by side.

I would like to thank the NSW Architects Registration Board and the Byera Hadley Trust for this opportunity to explore an important topic. I was able to meet and engage with inspirational individuals who are committed to genuine purpose and impact beyond the financial.

A huge thank you to all interviewees who so willingly and generously gave their time to participate in what resulted in long, philosophical discussions. I left these conversations inspired, excited and fulfilled, I am so grateful for everyone's enthusiasm and support.

Bob Teasdale, a lifelong mentor and surrogate grandparent whose energy and drive is rivalled only by that of Jennie; thank you for your encouragement and guidance and your vision that this is but a stepping stone to so much more.

Last but not least, this could not have been completed without the unwavering support of my parents. Their ongoing patience, critique and encouragement, the stamina to review multiple iterations and cook many meals; thank you.

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INTRODUCTION

Work to live, or live to work? The 'purpose-driven' business model is the answer to achieving both. But how can it be applied to architectural practices in Australia?

The way we consume is changing. Sometimes referred to as the "new economy", or the "next economy"(1), capitalism is evolving away from the conventional hierarchical structure of business: solely for profit and growth.

This has led to the evolution of business towards a more integrated purpose-driven model that measures its success beyond the financial. A 'purpose driven' business is founded on the values and ethics it holds rather than exclusively through financial ambition.

The Harvard Business Review on behalf of the EY Beacon Institute defined purpose as "an aspirational reason for being which inspires and provides a call to action for an organisation and its partners and stakeholders and provides benefit to local and global society." (2)

James Tutton, co-founder of the entrepreneurial Melbourne based business school, Plato Project, reflects,

"for me, a purpose-driven business is one that has an objective aside from purely financial outcomes… That objective may be environmental, it may be social, it may be community, it may be advocacy, but fundamentally it is there to not only drive financial return but also drive a non-financial return of a positive nature."(3)

The intention for this research is to explore the implementation of purpose-driven business for social impact within a broad context of businesses, organisations and companies, in order to identify the key challenges and benefits of delivering upon such an aspirational approach. The organisation or business needs to be financially viable in order to keep fulfilling its purpose.

Prospective interviewees from 'purpose-driven' businesses were initially selected from an international list of Benefit Corporations (B-Corps). "A Benefit Corporation is a type of for-profit corporate entity… that includes positive impact on society, workers, the community and the environment in addition to profit as its legally defined goals."(4)

The first interview was conducted with the team at Dunn & Hillam, a certified B-Corp architectural firm in Sydney. When asked whether they identified as 'purpose driven', Director Lee Hillam responded with a somewhat humbling reflection;

"it's not that you set out to change the world, it's that you set out to make choices that you can live with. And if that is the sort of person that you are and if that is the way your world view works then those are the decisions that you make… it wasn't ever a choice of we're going to show everyone how to do it better, it's more that this is really the only way I could have done it."

This authentic commitment recurred throughout many following interviews.

Over and over again the responses from employers, employees and everyone in between remained true to this comment. The purpose or impact of the organisation attracted engaged staff, and maintained their motivation and long-term retention.

So long as the company was authentic it celebrated the altruism of the team. To work for a greater purposeful drive beyond the immediate self, beyond the skill or profession was certainly an authentic commitment and motivator, but also a reflection of that individual's moral values that filtered into their daily life.

Speaking to over 20 people across Australia, Germany, UK and USA the conversations were philosophical, aspirational, authentic and human centred. Profit was for purpose, salary sacrifice was common, so too pro bono or volunteer hours.

Certainly, there are challenges to this field and this report cannot claim to find all of the solutions, but the repeated passion and commitment that the interviewees expressed despite shortcomings, raises questions around the way we consume, the drive for more and more and more, when purpose may well fill that material void.

"It's almost a bad word, 'enough' like you're not aiming high, or you've given up, or you're going to accept average,"

Rusty Benson thrived in the opportunity to sit down and philosophise with me for over an hour regarding his work as co-founder at Raine and Makin, a certified B-Corp that provides research, strategy and design for purposeful companies.

But purpose-driven architecture in practice, being human centred, community oriented or humanitarian work should not rely solely on volunteer or pro bono services. How can we integrate this work into a financially viable business structure? How can architecture be accessible to more and not reliant solely on privilege (both to afford to pay for services or to give it freely)? This report will not attempt to tackle the future of the way we commerce; however, it will invite you into the community of people seeking to use business as a force for good.

References

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BACKGROUND AND INSPIRATION

A 'purpose driven' business is founded on the values and ethics it holds rather than exclusively through financial ambition. Therefore, the success of the business may likewise be studied through a combination of both financial and philosophical success.

Fundamental questions are raised, including: do the skills and ethics of a profitable business conflict with those of one that is purpose driven? Alternatively, how might an integrated purpose-driven, profitable business be self-supporting, particularly since the story is innate?

As the director of an emerging architecture practice, I experience first-hand the complexities of challenging the standard business model which focuses on profit and growth of the company. It is difficult and overwhelming to prioritise innovation within a capitalist structure concurrent to running a successful and profitable business.

There is a need for a resource that challenges the standard business model and provides the space for ongoing innovation, founded on core, evidence-based principles. Small businesses in particular have the capacity to challenge mainstream structures and shape the future of capitalism and consumerism, as demonstrated in the following statistics:

"Using the employment measure of small business, there were 2,065,523 small businesses in Australia employing less than 19 people, accounting for 97 per cent of all Australian businesses by employee size. There were 51,000 medium sized businesses, employing 20 to 199 employees, which is 2.4 per cent of all firms" (1)

To reiterate, small businesses account for 97% of all Australian businesses. One could surmise that small, innovative businesses have the capacity to challenge and impact the conventional capitalist business structures.

This research explores the practical implementation of purpose upon a company that is defined by its principles. Firstly, the motivations behind purpose driven business were explored through discourse with founders and directors of these companies, followed by research into the impact on staff expectations and experience, the broader engagement of client and project selection, and further to community engagement.

If both the financial and ethical successes of a purpose driven business can be demonstrated as viable, more companies may adopt this model, thus creating a greater impact for change on community, with broader implications on consumerism and society.

There are plentiful examples of the application of the "Robin Hood" scenario within the architectural profession, in which traditional for-profit architectural firms participate in pro bono or volunteer work where and when they can afford to. There is generally no defined quota for unpaid work and little transparency around this. That being said, the unpaid commitments are not instrumental to the identity or story of the company and are delivered as separate altruistic contributions within the skilled profession.

When landscape architect Andrea Cochran was interviewed for Proactive Practices for her "Robin Hood" work for affordable housing developments, she discussed the importance of diversity for professional development,

"About half our work is high-end residential work, and the other half is institutional and commercial and affordable housing projects. What we learn on the residential side allows us to develop our craft [because we're] working with clients that are willing to take risks… We're then able to apply what we've learned to public projects that can't afford to take risks."(2)

However, the "Robin Hood" arrangement is affected by the fluctuating financial circumstances of the company and economy. This Byera Hadley research is more interested in the holistic integration of purpose into an architectural practice whose identity is defined by the authentic integration of its philosophies.

If the application of purposeful work is fully integrated into the financial and philosophical success of the business, it is not dependent on external factors such as the status of the economy, client drivers or profit, but instead forms part of the everyday practice of the architectural firm. Where this document refers to "purpose", this is in reference to the company mission or impact.

Business Structures

There is a multitude of ways to structure a purposeful business, but to organise this research, organisations have been loosely categorised into three typical scenarios which were found to be particularly applicable to architectural practice:

- "**Profit for Purpose**" – in which a for-profit firm commits a percentage of profits to a specific purpose
- "**Not-for-Profit**" – an organisation which reinvests all profits back into itself to support its mission
- "**Family Network**" – an associative arrangement in which a combination or 'family' of for-profit and/or not-for-profit organisations work together towards the same social impact or purpose, but with clearly separated identities and roles

This report will commence with a summary of critical interviews, followed by an analysis of common themes. A deeper investigation into the "Family" arrangement will follow, as this was found to be particularly innovative and applicable to architectural design processes. Looking for opportunities to make purposeful work financially viable, relationships between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations can actually assist in the realisation of purposeful, community-oriented or humanitarian architectural work by fulfilling specific roles in the design and construction process.

It is hoped that these findings will provide emerging architectural practitioners and firms with the resources to implement or plan for the continued integration of 'purpose' into their practice.

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PROFIT FOR PURPOSE

Business as a Force for Good. For example; Benefit Corporations which must meet standards of social and environmental performance, public transparency, and legal accountability; contributing profits for purposeful impact; 1% For the Planet, contributing 1% of profits to purpose; community engaged processes
(Here I loosely included interviews with practices who excelled at community engagement, but did not necessarily contribute to a purpose financially).

Case Studies:

• **Dunn & Hillam**
Architecture practice based in Sydney, Australia, with a porfolio of design focused residential and public work. Registered B-Corp, accredited Green Star Professional.
Lee Hillam (Director), Ashley Dunn (Director), Jonathan Temple (Associate), Rose Davies (Project Architect), Carlos Veas (Graduate of Architecture)

• **The Australian Centre for Social Innovation (TACSI)**
Social enterprise innovating within organisations and communities to demonstrate how social innovation can change lives, based in Adelaide and Sydney, Australia.
Ash Alluri (Principal: Co-design, Service Design and Digital, participated via video call), Ione Ardaiz Osacar (Senior Social Innovator: Service Design and Strategic Design), Lauren Anseline (Social Innovator), Michelle Miller

• **Raine and Makin,**
Research, strategy and design working with for-purpose organisations, based in Melbourne, Australia. Registered B-Corp and 1% For the Planet (contribute profits)
Rusty Benson (Cofounder)

• **Kaunitz Yeung**
Architecture practice based in Sydney, Australia. Portfolio of community-engaged paid and pro bono work
David Kaunitz, (Cofounder)

• **Studio Weave,**
Architecture practic based in London, UK. Portfolio of commuity engaged work
Je Ahn (Director)
+ **Architecture 00**

• **Assemble**
Architecture, Design and Construction practice based in London, UK. Portfolio of commuity engaged work
Joseph Halligan (Cofounder)

• **Ecosia**
Online Search Engine based in Berlin, Germany. Registered B-Corp, contribute percentage of profits to plant trees around the world, to contribute to socially and environmentally sustainable communities.
Hannah Wickes (Chief Marketing Officer)

• **Ethical Property Group, Australia**
The Ethical Property Commercial Fund raise social impact investment to purchase and refurbish properties and let to social enterprises and not-for-profits, delivering a financial, social and environmental return. Registered B-Corp.
Peter Allen, Chief Executive, Ethical Property Australia

• **Who Gives a Crap**
Sale of toilet paper products based in Melbourne, Australia. Registered B-Corp who contribute a percentage of profits to fund the construction of toilets in developing countries.
Tim Baxter (Growth Marketing Manger)

NOT-FOR-PROFIT

Not-for-profit (NFP) organisations provide services to the community and do not operate to make a profit for its members (or shareholders). All profits must be reinvested in the organisation to fulfill its purpose.

Case Studies:

• **Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust**
Community Land Trust, based in Liverpool, UK; a not-for-profit community based organisation run by volunteers to deliver housing and community facilities at permanently affordable levels for local people.
Hazel Tilley, Founding Member and Secretary

• **Create London**
Art charity organisation based in London, UK
Diana Ibañez López, Head of Capital Projects

• **Endeva**
Research and consultancy based in Berlin, Germany
Isabel von Blomberg (Project Manager)

THE FAMILY NETWORK

Network of associated businesses that may include profit and/or not-for-profit. Each separate entity retains its identity, representing as a specialist in its field.

Case Studies:

• **The Sociable Weaver Group**
A group of companies working in environmentally and socially sustainable architecture, design, development and construction, based in Melbourne, Australia. Registered B-Corp, incorporating social and environmental initiatives.
Reece Stubs (General Manager at Sociable Weaver), Annie Gallon (Good Vibes Manager at The Sociable Weaver Group), Michael Nowlan (Head of Design, SW), Janie Gordon (Finance Assistant SWG), Allison Monkhouse (Accountant SWG), Boaz Kabillo (Development Manager at Small Giants Developments)

• **Archrival, Custom Mad, Lucy Humphrey Studio**
Architecture and design studios, including two commercial practices and one collaborative not-for-profit (Archrival), based in Sydney, Australia.
Claire McCaughan, Lucy Humphrey (Founders)

• **Sago Design, Sago Build, Sago Network**
Affiliated commercial architecture practice, construction company, and not-for-profit, based in Sydney, Australia and Papua New Guinea
Lachlan Delaney, (Cofounder)

• **Inscape Studio, Inscape Publico**,
Hybrid for-profit architecture practice married to a non-profit design studio, USA

• **IDEO, IDEO.org**
International design company and its NFP spinoff, IDEO.org

METHODOLOGY

Overpage, opposite image:
Exploring the Barbican Centre, London, following an interview with Diana Ibañez López, Create London

Overpage, below:
Wandering the streets of Granby during my overnight stay with resident Hazel Tilley

Initial interviewees were selected broadly from a list of certified businesses identified on the Benefit Corporation website. It was intended that from these preliminary interviews, interviewees could recommend likeminded organisations that were not necessarily registered B-Corps.

This process was successful, since companies that had this certification were found to be particularly active and engaged within the purpose driven network.

Generally, potential interviewees were most happy to participate in an interview, both individually or engaging several staff members for discussion. It appeared that by nature of being a 'purposeful' business, shared discourse and knowledge played a significant role in contributing to their likeminded network. Very few potential interviewees denied an interview, and generally on the grounds of time or cost to the business.

Interviewees were provided with a draft of approximately five open ended questions prior to the interview. Questions explored the challenges and benefits of working within purpose driven business models. Including open-ended questions in a variety of individual and small group contexts, this was a qualitative process that encouraged participants to provide their own additional insights, often resulting in long philosophical discussions.

Participants demonstrated their authentic commitment to purpose in both their willingness to partake and the

honesty of their contributions. Some interviews were conducted over the phone, where time, geography, (or later COVID-19), prevented being in person, such as with David Kaunitz, Claire McCaughan and Lucy Humphrey.

The intention was for directors and staff to be interviewed in separate groups, encouraging an open and honest space. However, it was quickly demonstrated that a commitment to ethics was reflected in the office culture through transparency and open dialogue.

Many companies were happy to facilitate group discussions in which open, frank discourse occurred between staff across all levels of the office, such as The Sociable Weaver, The Australian Centre of Social Innovation (TACSI) and Dunn & Hillam; it was evident that this was a typical dynamic. Interviews were therefore conducted as a combination of individual and group discussions.

Further research supplemented information gathered in the interviews, as more organisations and business structures or scenarios were uncovered during this process. Therefore, while there is a substantial list of case studies, not all were directly interviewed. The availability of information surrounding purposeful impact is demonstrative of the role of storytelling in advocating for the impact of a purpose-driven company. My research revealed that transparency is an important tool for a purpose-driven company to demonstrate impact and authenticity to their audience.

DUNN & HILLAM

On Authenticity

Architecture practice based in Sydney, Australia, with a porfolio of design focused residential and public work. Registered B-Corp, accredited Green Star Professional.

Interviewees: Lee Hillam, Ashley Dunn (Directors), Jonathan Temple (Associate), Rose Davies (Project Architect), Carlos Veas (Graduate of Architecture)

February 2019

I decided to conduct preliminary interviews within the architecture industry, to then broaden the interview network and finally bring my research back to architectural practice. An initial search within the architecture/design/planning category of the B-Corp directory identified Dunn & Hillam architects as one of but two certified architecture firms in Australia, of four organisations within that category (at that time). There is a limited selection of B-Corp certified purpose driven architecture firms in Australia.

This sparked my interest, why did the directors choose to obtain B-Corp accreditation, was it a strategic commercial decision or an important way to ensure that the business would retain its philosophical integrity were the founders to leave the company?

Accreditation

Ashley Dunn, partner at Dunn & Hillam, cited in an article for Architecture AU, aptly describes that "Most architects want to make the world a better place but the pressure of running a profitable business, winning clients and fee competition can lead some into questionable ways of practising… Becoming a B Corp takes the way the business is run out of the hands of the individual and embeds it in the governing structure." (1)

During the interview, however, it became apparent that the business was in fact in good, authentic, hands regardless of exterior certification. The decision to obtain accreditation such as B-Corp and Green Star were, in some ways, commercial; rather than preach to the converted, it is a clear way to bring demonstrated value to bigger projects.

As a practice with a genuine commitment to impactful work, Dunn reflects on Green Star, "it's about the low hanging fruit. So, all the work we do, there is no low hanging fruit because we dealt with all of that in the processes and everything how we work. A lot of the things we actually fight for is not recognised in that system, it's just useful if we are trying to get bigger work to have someone in the office that is registered. So, whilst

that is good for big commercial outfits, its actually kind of problematic for smaller practices that are ahead of the curve in that area".

Outreach

Drawing on inspirations such as colleagues Rick Lepastrier and Paul Pholeros, Dunn reflected,

"[Lepastrier] doesn't stand up there as a champion for human rights or anything, he just operates in a very human centric way and is inspiring for that as well as being a wonderful architect. But he's a sort of person first who treats everyone well and fairly. And you go 'oh I want to be like that.' And then there's Paul Pholeros who again wasn't interested in being registered or seen as this kind of ethical operator, it's just the way that he thought was the right way of doing it… They couldn't have separated themselves from the way that they worked."

What is Dunn & Hillam's 'purpose' I wonder. Their greater purpose slowly becomes apparent in their actions, or reflected in their treatment of others. "The business principles that we have built up over time have been more about stability rather than making a lot of money", Lee Hillam's comment perhaps reflects their bigger picture commitment to wellbeing, their staff, their clients and stakeholders.

Dunn adds that "the first person we gave a job to, we made a decision that we weren't going to hire on contract, it was going to be a full-time position. So that meant that there is a commitment that we have made to that person, and then the idea is that it is reciprocal. It's not about working long hours, it's just about longevity really." I admire that perhaps their fundamental 'purpose' is to act morally, fairly, and this starts with their staff and extends to architectural outreach.

Dunn & Hillam are now looking for ways to broaden their impact. Comparing the outreach of residential and public projects, Dunn explains that "Lee is working inside

On the left, Dunn & Hillam's home, on the right, the architecture practice.

government now trying to change the way government agencies think about procuring work and that has a massive ongoing and lasting impact, but we have kind of sat in the middle and focused on cultural projects for local and state government. And that touches lots of people, a lot more people than a house…There's an appreciation for good design there so it allows the ego to do all the things it needs to do – since as designers we want to make beautiful things –but it also touches the social side which is tens of thousands of people a year go through these buildings and make a difference, if it's done well. Which is why we get so cross when it's done badly; it's not just because it's an opportunity wasted."

Authenticity

Forgive me for I have not yet set the scene. Our conversation occurs at lunch time on a weekday, seated at the communal outdoor table. Dunn and Hillam are partners in both business and life, and we are situated in the courtyard between their family home and the office, neatly tucked at the opposite end of their corner block. I sit comfortably with both the directors and their staff, all of whom eat lunch together most days. Behind me, their dog is asleep, basking in the sun.

Maybe not every day is so idyllic, but certainly there is

a rapport between staff, friendly and open, but speaking candidly about the challenges of running an architecture firm.

Shifting to more challenging aspects, the office give thought on the difficulty of working with clients or stakeholders whose values are not aligned. "The client is so important and there have been one or two clients that didn't fit that symbiosis since I've been here. And it was impossible, the job fell apart, because the client doesn't share those ideas," Jonathan Temple, associate and longest standing employee at Dunn & Hillam.

Dunn has a past project in mind as he regretfully expresses that,

"We learned a big lesson with that one, we knew at the beginning it wasn't a good fit. So again, that purpose, you've got to trust it and to have the guts to stand behind it, otherwise you can't do it."

Employing staff that work to their aligned sense of purpose, or morals, Dunn reflected that it was a thankless task for employees too, "No one thanks you for that kind of work even if they are getting paid".

View from Dunn & Hillam's personal home, the architecture practice beyond.

View from Dunn & Hillam's office, their home across the courtyard, beyond.

Dunn and Hillam leave with a note of novelty, so that staff can speak openly with me about their experience working in the firm and why they chose to work here.

It seems unnecessary to provide the space, given that, "They're really quite transparent with the way they run the business, like business plans, aspirations" staff member, Rose Davies contributes, continuing that "we talk quite openly and I really appreciate it because you know the direction that they're hoping to head in and they ask us what projects we're interested in."

I don't know it yet, but transparency becomes a common theme throughout my interviews with purpose driven businesses. Transparency contributes to staff responsibility and satisfaction, while also providing accountability to relevant stakeholders. Office culture and employees are certainly the first example of this, since a purpose driven business cannot be truly authentic if its staff are frustrated, overworked or dissatisfied.

Diversity

"I was really interested in the fact that they had a spectrum of work on, as in residential but also public buildings. Also the motivations behind why they do public became apparent in the interview and that was appealing to me: work for the greater good, for a bigger client than the one paying the bills. The way they talked about running the practice during the interview was appealing too. Actually, I remember catching the bus here and reading an article Lee had written for good or for bad about leaving on time, and I thought oh! I like that. But that spoke a lot to me, that there was going to be a good environment to work in and I felt like that would filter through to the work we would produce as much as the way they work. That was confirmed again in the interview." Rose Davies

I leave the interview feeling philosophically enriched, although a little confused about my definition of "purpose". On returning home, I look up Hillam's article that Davies referred to: "Long Hours: Go hard or go home!"(2). Criticising the culture of long, unpaid hours in the architectural profession, Hillam's article was first published on the Parlour website, and since republished on Architecture AU and elsewhere.

"Parlour is a research-based advocacy organisation working to improve equity in architecture and the built environment."(3) Not afraid to critique the profession, Hillam clearly lives true to her core values, personally and professionally. This authenticity in turn attracted a likeminded and engaged new staff member.

I pause momentarily here, with a quote from Temple,

"The approach to the work has really been somewhat inseparable to the running of the office. One begets the other or one comes from the other. So, the work is the first thing but the way the office works comes hand in glove with that."

So is a purpose driven business, firstly, one that is true to self, authentic, a reflection of its founders?

Summary

• Accreditation such as B-Corp and Green Star can be commercially beneficial
• Staff relationships must be reciprocal, for example demonstrating longevity and authenticity
• Staff need to be treated well
• There are scales to impact, perhaps proportional to the practice size and experience
• Aligning practice values with clients can determine the success (or failure) of a project
• One needs to advocated for purpose through diverse mediums or expressions. This will help build a network of likeminded people

Photography

Katherine Lu & Kilian O'Sullivan

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THE AUSTRALIAN CENTRE FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION,

On Prioritising Values

TACSI is a social enterprise based in Adelaide and Sydney, that partners with communities and organisations to address big social challenges and build the conditions for social innovation.

TACSI combine social sciences, community development, business and design, in order to apply three core principles to its work:

1. Human Centred: Placing people at the heart of both the process and the solution
2. Systemic: Taking a systemic view of the challenge that partners are trying to solve
3. Creative: Being creative and experimental in everything they do (1)

Interviewees: Ash Alluri (Principal: Co-design, Service Design and Digital, participated via video call), Ione Ardaiz Osacar (Senior Social Innovator: Service Design and Strategic Design), Lauren Anseline (Social Innovator), Michelle Miller (Senior Social Innovator: Strategy and Innovation Capability)

Above: Adaptation of Co-parenthood - A Solution By Aboriginal Families for Aboriginal Families. (2)

In correspondence, TACSI Principal, Ash Alluri provided the following outline to summarise the work of TACSI:

"We work on complex social challenges and co-design innovative solutions.

Sometimes we are engaged by others, sometimes we identify challenges and work on them ourselves. One of our key value propositions would be to work side-by-side with those living the actual 'complex social challenge' - this requires sharing the power or shedding power that we as 'designers' intrinsically hold.

- **Strategy in systems** (e.g. child protection, ageing, disability, etc..)
we co-create policy and strategy informed by lived-experience, evidence and complexity.
- **Innovation capability**
we help organisations develop the conditions and capabilities for innovation.
- **Systemic innovation networks**
we nurture groups of innovators to shift systems and create better futures
- **Service commissioning**
we develop new service models and models of care informed by lived-experience and evidence.
- **Service design**
we design new service and business models for new contexts
- **Organisational strategy**
we facilitate strategy development informed by our understanding of social issues, systems and innovation"

February 2019

I am swept down a windy William Street in Sydney's CBD feeling very central and city-ish. I find the entry foyer of the building and head up in the lift to the TACSI offices. Four employees have generously contributed their time on a Friday afternoon, so the least I can do is offer TGIF snacks. Additionally, Ash Alluri, Principal Social Innovator, has kindly connected via video call from overseas.

Staff describe a range of professional backgrounds including roles in mainstream or corporate companies to smaller (sometimes unsuccessful) purpose driven start-ups.

Alluri reflects on once holding a romantic association with international aid and development work, wanting to integrate travel and meaningful work. He was employed in a small social and environmental, purpose-driven business, but moved to TACSI for more rich, qualitative research and design work. He enjoys the diversity of experience at TACSI and the way the company seeks to quantify their collective impact., Alluri explains,

"We want to set the benchmark for Australia, we want to set the benchmark for the world, so we kind of have to really shape up our strategy, our business model, how they all tie together, how we're going to measure this…"

Human approach

TACSI use themselves as an example for testing ideas, as Alluri explains, "We're trying to create conditions within the organisation which are actually very different to the world outside." Using the TACSI buddy system as an example, Alluri continues, "We're trying to introduce a system where you can choose who you hold yourself accountable to and the other person vice a versa. And then you grow together a little bit. We're effectively trying to create conditions where people are in some ways guided by our values, ethos, strategy, but then those conditions can guide themselves to a level of depth or an area of focus. And sometimes that works out and sometimes people leave. And that's okay too."

I am taken by the human-centred approach that is reflected in the TACSI strategy, as Alluri asserts,

"We have to be financially healthy, physically well, relationally connected and resilient and then continue to do values driven work, which is why we're here."

Lauren Anseline, Social Innovator, reflects on her previous employment in a purpose driven start-up, "It's hard to be purpose driven and values aligned when you are a start-up. You can create a company and instil it with those values that you want it be, but the challenge [for the company] was that as they were growing, and having these ideas about having their business be 'the best place to work for, ever', and bringing fresh ideas and growing into different spaces. But when it comes down to these things Ash was talking about: physical health, financial health, the wellbeing of the team suffered and then surmounts. It's something that broke us in the end."

As Anseline describes her previous employment, "[whose] mandate was always, 'no compromise, we only do purpose driven values work'" she highlights a critical challenge common to many purpose-driven businesses: how can one retain the integrity of the company values while maintaining a financially sustainable business? Of course, this includes not only financial sustainability but that of the staff too. I find that the grey scales of impact, is a topic raised across several interviews, often with differing solutions or justifications.

Anseline continues, "I wanted to continue doing work that aligned with my values and forayed into possibly going into a corporate role, but it didn't sit right. I don't think I could have turned up to work every day, at that time, and felt like it was me. TACSI seemed like the right fit for me." Anseline came to TACSI to deepen her practice as a designer while also working in research.

Perhaps it is naïve to expect one will never have to compromise on their 'purpose' or values. The office culture is the first demonstration of the company values, so I wonder, are there are scales to the application of 'purpose', that begin foremost at home?

Prioritised Values

Ione Ardaiz Osacar, Senior Social Innovator, suggests being more strategic with the implementation of purpose;

"when we say, 'have you fulfilled your values', how do you also prioritise those values? I think if you have lots of values that you want to work on, maybe that is not realistic. But if you prioritise them and you say, 'these are two values that we stand for', and 'these ones are nice to have but not as important'".

Ardaiz Osacar continues with a practical example from a presentation by George Aye, of organisation 'The Greater Good Studio'. "In his presentation he reflected on how important it is, to have certain values in the work, and how they find a set of different principles they follow when projects come in, to make a decision." Ardaiz Osacar explains that having clearly defined values can assist a team to navigate whether projects are consistent with the organisation's mission. "But also, when you are doing the work, for people in the organisation, you should be able to say, 'I don't feel comfortable with the piece, I don't know why', then according to that list, 'I don't feel comfortable because of this, this and this.' It gives you something tangible to have a conversation, and see how we can do it differently."

Michelle Miller, Senior Social Innovator, expands on the concept of prioritising values, "the company where I came from, even though we did a lot of commercial work, was purpose driven because they said, 'let's select organisations that are right for us' because their purpose was humanising organisations… It was the way that they worked and their goal that made them purpose driven. It's almost like whatever work they did, they could apply that philosophy which self satisfies, for me and for them, that need to be purpose driven."

Miller explained that while they worked predominantly with values aligned organisations, it was the human approach to working that they sought to share with those they chose to work with.

Adhering to Values in the Real World

The conversation becomes quite philosophical, (a perk of conducting interviews in the purpose-driven sector), as we explore the difficulties of collaborating on projects with companies that stand for different or conflicting values. How does one remain true to oneself and/or the company values? "I've shifted over the past few years, that you can never do it super clean." Alluri relays an example of a project collaborating with a company that was not authentically aligned, questioning "Am I in bed with them? Have I compromised my values? Yes, definitely."

Alluri continues, musing that,

"it's just hard to live a pretty black and white context. So, I think I've had to shift as a human being anyway. And I think organisations will also have to do that compromise here and there".

The group continue to discuss the challenges of delivering purpose while maximising outreach and impact. Ardaiz Osacar suggests, "If you don't engage with the beast, is it better or worse? If it was not us working [on this project] that we were able to push back on some of the
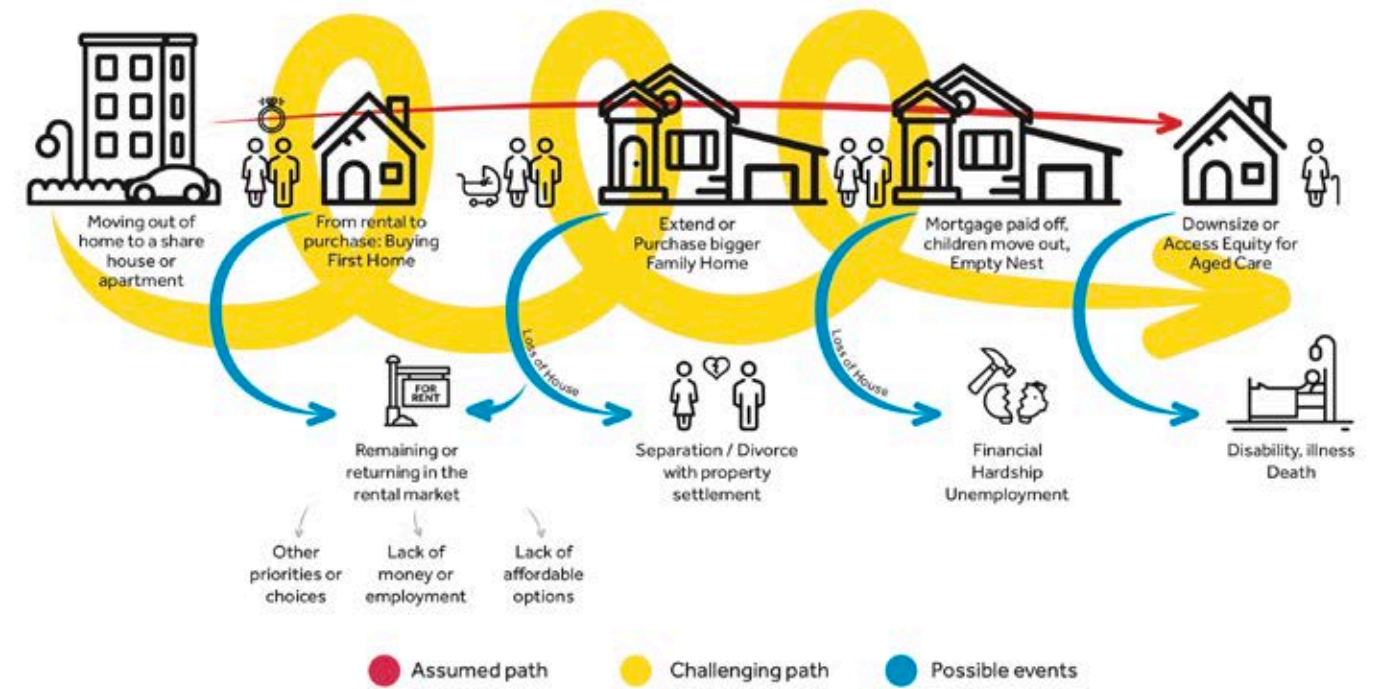
Above: Future of Home, Re-designing how we live as we age.
"Our society needs to reimagine the future of how we age and live, there is a real opportunity for change now"
Kerry Jones, Director, Systems Initiatives, TACSI (2)

things. Not to say we were able to do it all the time, but maybe they would have gone down a path that wasn't challenged at all."

On a more personal note, Ardaiz Osacar reflects that "it was quite challenging to work with a group of people that are so different to us and working such a different way, with such different values. But at the same time, I'm happy that we did it, we were there and able to challenge it. And if not, who would have done that?"

Anseline remains optimistic "maybe working together you have planted some kind of seed in their hands, hopefully. There is a mutual reciprocity there where you teach and learn. It's nice to think that, that happens when you have these collaborations".

Is it possible to effect change from within the corporation?

Moving on, we discuss the practicalities of navigating clients and projects. The team discuss the importance of diversity, for accountability and outcomes. TACSI was originally seed funded by the South Australian government. As a centre for innovation, TACSI explored ways to address social challenges. While the government had limited involvement in how the funds were spent,

Alluri asserts "we owe it back to the Australian tax payers" to demonstrate how the investment was used.

Miller explains that "Starting from government seed funding, we had to figure out a business model. Taking a consulting approach, where you bid for and win projects, helped us establish a business model. We've grown from there and our business model includes other ways of working now."

Some of their greatest challenges come from the clients themselves. Miller explains that as TACSI is engaged as a "change agent" it often finds itself having to challenge its own clients in order to deliver the brief or project.

Specificity

I wonder again about the relationship between client and outcomes. Ardaiz Osacar describes that government funded projects usually have specific, quantifiable outcomes to work to, while philanthropic money provides more freedom, "you can follow your purpose easier, whereas in government I think it's harder". The team reflect that the aspirations of government funded projects sometimes conflict with mandated policies, making it difficult to challenge the standard procedures required to deliver the social impact. Ardaiz Osacar

1. Policy, reform and comissioning

2. A helpful public narrative

3. A social accountability mechanism

4. Sector collaboration

5. Case practice behaviours and competencies

6 Predictave preventative supports

co-parenthood

7 In-crisis supports

8. Transitions from care

suggests that while it is beneficial to have well defined outcomes, it is important to have the flexibility to redefine these outcomes if needed. Overall, different projects or client types provide opportunities to experiment.

Originally attempting to tackle broad social challenges, TACSI has since found efficiency in specificity. Ardaiz Osacar explains, "We have identified certain focus areas that we all agree are important to focus on for Australia. And then we are trying to understand what are the different types of work that will help us to work on those areas. So, we have 'Disrupting Disadvantage', 'Activating Social Health', 'Furthering Self-Determination', and 'Redesigning Aging'. So, they're very broad but they are still focused enough for us to have a view on what the social change is that we are trying to address."

Project Examples by Focus Area

Alluri provided the following project examples by focus area, to clarify the range of projects at TACSI.

Disrupting Disadvantage (diagram opposite page)
• Rethinking Restoration: a three year project that aims to understand how we can evolve the child protection system to support families to reunite and thrive. "This project included research to understand what works and what doesn't locally and internationally, co-design and prototyping to develop new opportunities and trial stages to begin implementation pathways for new evidence-informed initiatives." (4)

Furthering Self-Determination
• Adaptation of Co-parenthood – A Solution by Aboriginal Families for Aboriginal Families. "Inspired by a young Aboriginal woman whose son was removed from her care, we're working with Aboriginal families and practitioners to design a co-parenting model that keeps families together and out of the child protection system." (5)

Activating Social Health
• Community Responders to Mental Wellbeing: develop, test and spread solutions to challenges of mental wellbeing in community with people who have experienced mental illness first hand in those communities

Redesigning Ageing:
• Future of Home: Redesigning how we live as we age "With the number of people over 65 set to double in Australia over the next 30 years, there has never been a more crucial time for an integrated approach to how we live our best lives as we age." (6)

Conclusion

Alluri clarifies that in developing specificity in their focus, TACSI sought to "weave a narrative around the big challenges for Australia", the separate focuses address broader systemic problems.

The team at TACSI have a wealth of experience gathered working in previous purpose-driven practices as well as in their time growing with the organisation. TACSI's capacity to reflect and review its strategy has aided its evolution to intentionally focus on more deliberate outcomes, for one cannot address all the world's problems. Specificity provides a prescribed framework for the team to focus.

I leave this interview with a special reflection from Alluri that perhaps reflects the holistic, human centred approach of TACSI, "We recognise that individuals are quite unique and powerful and a full world in themselves".

Summary

• The organisation must foremost be financially sustainable with healthy staff, before extending outreach
• Compromise may be required, in order to maintain team and business resilience
• Prioritising values, or formulating a written checklist can assist staff to identify the areas of constancy and compromise in projects and collaborations
• Efficiency in specificity – be specific about impact and outreach
• Bring about change in others through partnerships

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6. Future of Home, TACSI, https://www.tacsi.org.au/future-of-home/ (accessed 13/07/2020)

THE SOCIABLE WEAVER GROUP

On Communication

A group of complementary companies based in Melbourne. There are several layers to the umbrella companies, but for this interview, I will be looking at the group working in the architecture, design and construction industry. The Sociable Weaver Group focuses on environmental sustainability and human connection (to the natural world and each other). The Sociable Weaver group sits beneath the parent company of Small Giants, but is then the umbrella for the companies listed below.

The Sociable Weaver – Architecture, Design and Construction
B Corp Certified

Martin Builders – Design and Construction, more commercial background, collaborates with other architects
B Corp Certified, Certified Passive House Tradesperson, Master Builders Green Living

Small Giants Developments – Property Development
B Corp Certified

Interviewees: Reece Stubs (General Manager at Sociable Weaver), Annie Gallon (Good Vibes Manager at The Sociable Weaver Group), Michael Nowlan (Head of Design, TSW), Janie Gordon (Finance Assistant TSWG), Allison Monkhouse (Accountant TSWG), Boaz Kabillo (Development Manager at Small Giants Developments)

February 2019

I am bleary eyed on an unknown street in St Kilda, having caught an early red-eye flight from Sydney to Melbourne (never again). My roller bag grates against the cement path behind me, my laptop hanging off my shoulder and pastries somehow balanced on the same arm. I breathe a sigh of relief as I enter "The White House" a large, white painted revival style building surrounded by exquisite landscaping. I am welcomed by the wonderfully friendly Annie Gallon aka Good Vibes Manager at The Sociable Weaver Group (TSWG), I can see why.

The pastries are well received and the friendly bunch at TSWG welcome me into their weekly team meeting. Each team member updates the group on the status of their project or task and then provides me with the opportunity to introduce myself and my Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship.

I am seated in a luxurious room with high ceilings, large windows facing that delightful garden, comfortable seats and a tea to go with my pastry. Gallon has arranged several interviews to allow me to speak with small groups of staff at a time, starting with herself and Reece Stubs, General Manager at TSW.

We commence with introductions and reflecting on her background in design, Gallon muses that

"Everything is so visually saturated now, so if we design things well we can get the really important messages across because we have reached this point now where if something doesn't look good, then you can't resonate with the people who have the capacity to change."

As consumers we seek the story behind the product or organisation with whom we commerce, but we also need a tangible outcome reflective of the quality of the product, demonstrated value.

Diversity

Gallon is involved in community, design and sustainable initiatives, however her primary role focuses on staff culture, both the office and site teams. She discusses the importance of having both teams, to understand the variety of conversations needed across different disciplines and backgrounds. "It's very important to us that we have these two sides to our team – the site team and the office team. TSW is newer, and we've found the site team that has come on board with The Sociable

Weaver are very open to all of the sustainable initiatives and much more proactive about that stuff, and it's in line with them, so that has been great. They have been our guineapigs."

While TSW originated with a focus on environmental sustainability, working with pre-existing building companies has required the implementation of new initiatives on a more established site team. "That's really interesting because there is education to do within our team as well as then having this ripple effect outside of it. And not only that, we have a lot of people who are on site all of the time and then it's really hard to come in here and relate to us [in the White House] … So that's a big part of it bringing everyone together enough and getting this strong understanding that we're all trying to achieve the same thing and everything you do affects everything I do."

Stubbs describes the family of companies beneath TSWG, and their mission to promote change within all aspects of the built environment. He also relays the future aspirations of the companies, for TSW and Martin Builders to merge resources (including staff), aiming to focus more on outreach and broadening impact, by growing their management roles.

"That's what we're trying to do now, spend more time educating our project managers on how we want to build with zero waste philosophies and changing culture on site. If we invest time with our management and getting it progressive in that sense, that it will flow onto our sites better."

Communication

Gallon and Stubbs, and the remaining interviewees speak with a lot of clarity around their work, and I get a sense that this family of companies is quite used to (and excited by) communicating. Themes of education and communication appear central to the companies. "You might go to site and see everyone using their keep cups and feel good, but then you look around and there are so many mount franklin bottles lying around. It's very hard to be patient. But if we want to be changing people's habits, we need to provide the resources to do that" explains Gallon.

This education extends beyond the employees, to include stakeholders and clients. TSW surveys its clients at the commencement of each project, "getting an idea of how they live" relays Stubbs, including current energy bills, recycling, growing food at home, "and then do the survey

at the end and see how they've changed, and not pushing anything down their throat, but how have we provided you with a building that allows you to do those things? If you change one thing that's a positive impact",

Later in the interview Stubbs again reflects that,

"when people are coming to us, they're looking for a sustainable home. But a lot of people don't know what that is. They know about sustainability but don't really know what it is or what they want it to be. So, we discuss what is really important to them and what they would be open to changing or adjusting. We have a platform to educate as much as possible."

Demonstrating Value

Stubbs explains that environmental focus is key to the organisation, and it is critical that the company demonstrates this as value to prospective clients. "We only do negotiated tender now. We want to be selective with what we build. We do value management work too. We do ESD [Environmentally Sustainable Design] initiatives too and cost them. Clients love that – it's like a shopping list for sustainable initiatives." The Sociable

Weaver does not aspire to win tenders based on monetary value, but rather on its expertise in the field, allowing clients to put a price to its value.

During the subsequent interview, Allison Monkhouse, Accountant at TSWG, reiterates that "some tenders, we know we're above but we demonstrate value adding… The last project we won because of our keep cup policy and clean site policy. And by showing them on this tender how by changing this material, and also giving the impacts, it wasn't just a dollar term. It helps a prospective client realise the value of potentially spending a bit more money up front but saving long term."

Monkhouse also speaks of the inclusive office culture at TSWG, and that "normally in finance you don't feel a part of anything," whereas here, the team identify as "ambassadors" of social change to reflect a commitment to environmental sustainability, and expand beyond their formal roles.

The second group interview introduces the concept of changing the relationship that we, as a society, have with money and profit. "People think making a profit is an evil thing, but it's not, you can still change the world but also make money, for example by choosing the right suppliers, the right materials. You're still making a difference. Money

isn't bad. Without making a profit you have nothing to reinvest to change the world." Monkhouse continues that "working for a charity, people expect a lot of things to just happen with charities. But who wants to work for free all the time? You have to pay people. You need that money."

Demonstrating their value differentiates the staff of TSWG within the industry. They develop their expertise in environmentally sustainable design and construction, as Michael Nowlan, Head of Design at TSW refers to the importance of professional development, "Trying to change the building environment in a sustainable way, we'll give a model that is sustainable. We're out there to make money but we're not out there to not help the planet. I'm going to be put through a course to find out the impact of every design so the house gets analysed from what kind of carbon footprint it has, to the amount materials its used, to where the materials came from and the impact that has. What actual impacts, do we close the loop?"

The team is encouraged to develop relationships with clients and encourage them to partake in the variety of holistic activities and initiatives that TSW has officially committed to. Nowlan explains "We invite them to the brunch we have, the clean-up days, tree planting." The
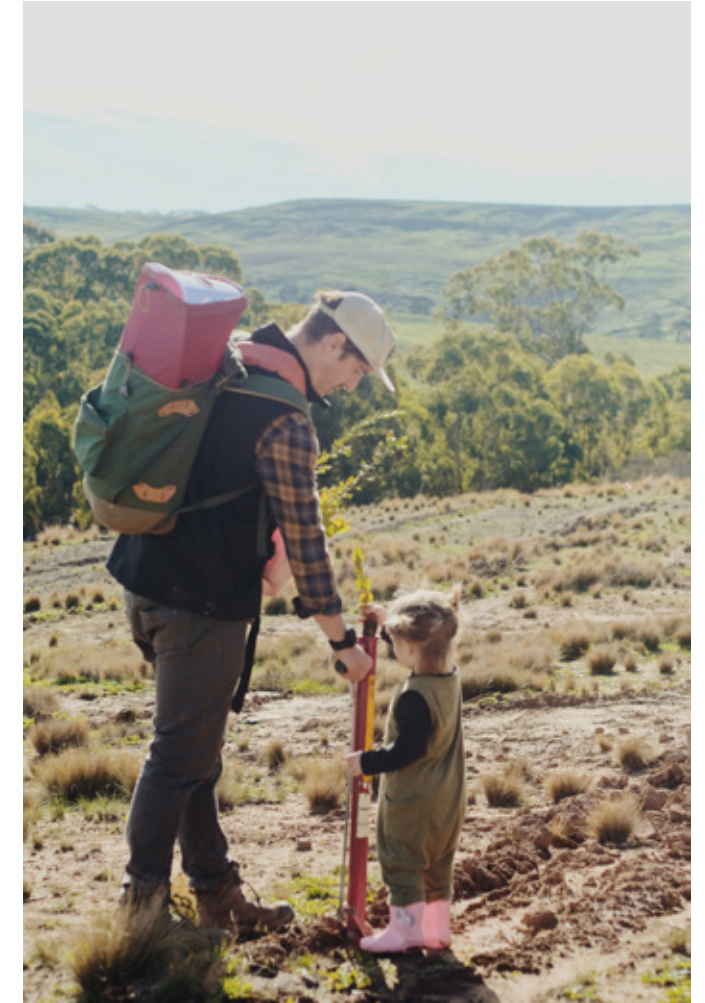
tree planting is a non-negotiable initiative in which for every building they construct, TSWG plants at least 300 trees. The team also commits to removing at least 300kg of coastal pollution from Australian beaches each year. Clients are welcomed into the friendly 'family' at TSW, and with that comes the education.

Larger Scale Impact

My last interview is a quick chat with Boaz Kabillo, Development Manager at Small Giants Developments who was able to reflect on the potential for bigger impact as a result of delivering larger scale buildings. Discussing a property development in Hobart, Kabillo explained

"We held events through School of Life and held a community activation program with lots of events around common things people would find interesting. And we sold our message of socially and environmentally sustainable initiatives and didn't have to go through a real estate agent. It was all through our events and talking about what we do; we sold 60% apartments in 24 hours."

Where the company could have advertised the project through standard channels, the project was more concerned with challenging conventional processes, and galvanising a group of people towards the same outcome. The marketing fees may well have equalised the cost of community engagement. "It's incredibly time consuming because involving the community through the build process, you can't always address all of their needs, agendas and interests. We have to be open ears all the time. Another developer can use that time elsewhere. Once the building is sold off, we try to step back from there. The vision self-perpetuates" reflects Kabillo.

Financial success was reflected in the rapid sale of apartments, but more importantly, the social success was expressed through the strong sense of community present prior to completion of the building, i.e. before anyone had even moved in.

Throughout the day I speak with a multitude of engaging, inclusive employees. Our conversations meander between small practical environmental initiatives then extend to broader philosophical meanderings with natural ease. At one point, Gallon muses that

"older clients already have an idea of permanency in their head, for example we want to be here until we can't be anymore and then we want to hand it on… Whereas for younger people it is rare to imagine staying in a place forever. They feel like they have achieved the ability to have this or be here now. A culture in our society now that if you're 35 and want to build and stay in one spot for the rest of their life that, that is strange."

For the short interaction we had, I too feel changed, charged, educated and more connected to my fellow humans, who were but strangers a few hours earlier.

Summary

• Business can be used as a tool for change, for education
• Profit can be for purpose
• Cohesive, engaged office teams can retain and motivate staff
• Management roles can broaden outreach and impact
• Determine methods to demonstrate the value of the purpose or impact, particularly where costs are involved

Images

Image one: site sign
All tree planting photography by Bri Horne

All images supplied by The Sociable Weaver Group,

RAINE AND MAKIN

On Human Connection

Small business working with not-for-profits and social enterprises, delivering research, strategy and design to build brands that inspire action, Melbourne, Australia

Interviewee: Rusty Benson (Co-Founder)

February 2019

During my preliminary research into purpose driven businesses, I noticed that a significant number of Australia's certified B-Corps were located in Melbourne. I came upon Raine and Makin who work with purpose driven businesses in research, strategy and design. Following a phone conversation with Rusty Benson, the extremely friendly co-founder of the organisation, I found he was most willing and excited to share his ideas and experience working in the purposeful business world.

In his publication, "Building Trust, The Role of Brand for Purpose-driven Organisations"(1) Rusty Benson discusses the importance of the organisation's internal culture and actions as demonstrative of its purpose,

"you can't communicate a commitment to vulnerable people, when your staff are burnt-out and disheartened. A strong brand can be used as a lens that brings aligned leadership, teams and individuals into focus."

One must be a leader in one's field of purpose and impact, actively living what one represents. I was keen to understand the office culture at Raine and Makin.

I arrive at their Melbourne office, welcoming and colourful, as you would expect from a creative or design-oriented firm. We sit at a large office table with a freelancer working in the background. Benson has no hesitations in chatting with honestly in front of his staff.

Background

Benson's experience broadly includes community theatre, film and TV work, a background that reflects a need for authentic human expression and creativity. Following a design education, he worked in advertising and then design, working long dissatisfying hours, "initially people are trying to do good work and then the dollar just drove everything".

He formed a business with colleague Luke Schoknecht and just as they too were losing sight of their mission, they became involved in work with The Reach Foundation. Working with young adults, in which they practiced human centred design and co design, "we immersed ourselves in the organisation, did observational work, did participatory stuff, and it was such a great experience; actually, quite transformative."

Benson describes this as a pivotal moment for Raine and Makin, he now seeks to constantly refine their business, reflecting,

"how do I redesign this whole business to it being what we exist for. And if we can't make this work then we'll go get jobs somewhere else. May as well be all in and not constrained by 'what if this business doesn't succeed?' No one cares if our business doesn't succeed. If its succeeding and it's not based on what we like or what we believe in, well, we can get paid twice as much to work somewhere else."

Continuing, Benson explains, "we made that a focus and spent a lot of work talking to people in the sector, talking to previous clients we had and asked what would you want from people like us? I spent a lot of time doing academic research around social impact, community engagement, this kind of stuff… It has been six years and when we launched that approach about a year and a half ago."

Although it appears the current business structure more closely reflects Benson and Schoknecht's broad aspirations, the transition of the business into one that is purposeful appears akin to rebranding, a conscious change, a moment of shedding.

Building Trust
The Role of Brand for Purpose-driven Organisations

Authored by
Rusty Benson Director of Raine & Makin

Raine & Makin

Human-centred Approach

Raine and Makin are certified B-Corp, and also business members of "1% for the Planet" which facilitates companies donating the equivalent of 1% of gross sales to a non-profit. However, as the purpose sector grows, Benson reflects that what differentiates Raine and Makin is their personal focus on human connection, that

"whoever we work with we make a true, honest, and two-way connection. That is a key point because you can be a purpose organisation, do a government thing, run a great program and it has huge impact and that's awesome. But for me it's, about how to connect as human beings so we feel like we are doing these things together and it's not a competition or a transaction."

I reflect that this two-way approach is in contrast to the 'Robin Hood', volunteer or pro bono arrangement which is ultimately a one directional provision of services. A human-centred exchange brings benefit to all participants.

Benson briefly touches on the challenges of working true to the company mission, particularly involving government work. This too, is a common theme among purposeful organisations, the conflict of exploring innovation within the regimented policies of government bodies. "We sometimes get projects that are really impactful and there is a really collegial approach, everyone's on the ground together, everyone's motivated and passionate. But sometimes you get projects that have government involvement and its less collegial, its more transactional."

Small-medium businesses do not always have the capacity to say no to projects that are not fully aligned to their mission or purpose. "So, that's a challenge as a small business because we would like to say no in those situations. That is a bargaining chip because they can see the huge amount of worth and value we bring to a project." Again, it comes back to demonstrating the less quantifiable value that a purpose driven or human centred business can bring to a project. Navigating the grey scales of purposeful business in which Benson describes "you're not moving into a negative scale but you're not moving as far up as you could."

Staff

Benson explains that another challenge the company faces is how to demonstrate value in staff who are employed in an 'Ensemble' model: on a project by project basis. Raine and Makin engage staff as freelancers and contractors, selected specifically for the projects that they work on "Not just that if we could afford it, we would, its more that different projects require different skill sets.

And it has way more impact… To have a team that has been specifically put together for that project."

Benson refers to examples of projects in which a particular diversity of key team members contributed to the project, such as women in STEM, or Indigenous and Torres Strait Islander or LGBTQI communities.

"Unless you have 20 staff of diverse backgrounds, and if we grew to 20 staff, we would want to make sure that would happen, but if you can't get your 20 then you can't. So, the challenge there is how do we create a culture and make sure we support people who come and work with us whether it's for 3 months or 2 months or 6 months or 1 month. How do we support them? How do we give them personal development? How do we reward them? How do we make them feel connected to what we're trying to do?"

Where the company cannot provide a permanent commitment to staff, Raine and Makin have explored other ways of demonstrating value in contract or short time employees by investing in their professional development;

"You talk to a lot of old school businesses and they're like, 'woah professional development in a contractor, what if I invest in them and they go to someone else!' But if you give them professional development, perhaps they will go somewhere else and be better, but also there's a good chance they'll come back to you anyway because you've invested in them as well. But you can't hold onto these people unless you can offer them security and that's a hard conversation".

In addition to professional development, Benson provides examples of staff benefits they have explored throughout the business, such as profit share, and purchase of a bike including maintenance and servicing expenses. Less tangible benefits include weekly catch ups regular two-way reviews in which staff are encouraged to provide directors with feedback. Benson wonders whether a system of businesses could evolve that share contractors and commit to providing personal or professional development, shared value. (The Shared Value Initiative explores how a specific positive impact is also financially profitable, and therefore provides competitive advantage.)

I reflect, that from my own experience, running a practice can be difficult, and the commitment to innovate (say, purpose driven business) is an additional self-imposed challenge. Already exploring beyond typical business procedures, where does one stop?

"It's rethinking some of these things, and in a small business you can, you can try these out. You're not risking millions of dollars of revenue."

Benson reflects that he needs to dedicate time to developing the business, since he is committed to rethinking these processes.

Accreditation

Having found Raine and Makin through the B-Corp website, I am curious again about its decision to certify. "When you meet people you're not trying to prove yourself, you can launch straight into 'what's going on with you guys, what are the challenges you're facing, where are you trying to get to with this thing, what is the impact you have set, how does this shift what we're doing, how does it change the people involved in the organisation?' And you get straight into that without having to provide references and justify what you do."

Benson confirms that B-Corp certification has added credibility to the business, demonstrating their commitment to a cause. However, Benson continues, to reflect that it has also exposed him to a likeminded purposeful community.

"It's that human connection part where both people leave feeling optimistic and charged and excited. So that never happened when I worked in a big design agency. When its money and profit you just don't get that kind of connection and excitement. So definitely more connected,

great community… And clients, when I go talk to somebody or a client or do a presentation it does add a lot of weight for them to see we're a B-Corp, that we're committed to a cause."

We continue to philosophise and share ideas broad and small. Family, academia, design, navigating our purpose through human connection. After nearly 2 hours, we hug farewell and I leave exhausted but stimulated. Melbourne has been overwhelming thus far.

Summary

• Internal culture is demonstrative of the business' values
• Innovation takes time, an extra commitment
• Demonstrating the value adding that a company brings to a project, provides leverage to incorporate purpose
• Small companies struggle to demonstrate longevity to staff they can't permanently employ. Valued staff can be compensated in less quantitative or financial ways
• Working with non-permanent staff can incubate their professional growth (and value) with their exposure to more diverse offices or projects
• A human-centred approach is a two-way exchange, in contrast to the 'Robin Hood', one directional provision of services

Images
All images supplied by Raine and Makin

References

1. Benson, R., Building Trust, The Role of Brand for Purpose-driven Organisations, Raine & Makin

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Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship Journal Series

Work to live, or live to work? How can the 'purpose-driven' business model be applied to architectural practice in Australia?

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KAUNITZ YEUNG

On Time

Kaunitz Yeung is an architecture practice based in Sydney, but with public and community engaged projects throughout the pacific, including both commercial and pro bono.

Interviewee: David Kaunitz, (Co-Founder)

June 2019

Kaunitz Yeung was founded by a husband and wife team of architects following diverse experience across both large scale commercial and community projects. David Kaunitz and Ka Wai Yeung held senior architectural positions in large firms in the UK and Australia, working on public projects. Returning to Australia and looking for opportunities in humanitarian architecture, circumstances provided for community-based work in the Solomon Islands, around the time Emergency Architects had also recently formed. Their architecture "places people at its centre and where good architecture does not need to necessarily be a luxury item."(1) A significant part of their current portfolio consists of public and community buildings for Indigenous communities.

Advocacy

I first saw David Kaunitz speak in February 2019 at Tusculum, Sydney, presenting at a conference titled "Socially Responsible Architecture". He spoke passionately about the rewarding nature of his work, as though his firm were an architectural facilitator of community space, rather than the sole creator. I contacted him afterwards for a chat, and he was most

willing to partake in a conversation.

A few months later, August 2019, I attended several public talks in Melbourne as part of "Humanitarian Architecture Week" presented alongside the RMIT Master of Disaster, Design and Development. Kaunitz presented at the Indigenous Architecture and Design Forum, alongside other architectural practitioners and academics experienced in collaborating with Indigenous Australians. I was glad to put a face to a name following our interview.

Kaunitz is proactive and engaged within the field of culturally considered and community driven architecture; he has committed a lot of time to this purpose. I since realise that as an undergraduate student I completed drawings for a dormitory in the Solomon Islands volunteering at Emergency Architects Australia, working under Kaunitz. This again reinforces the longevity of his commitment to a greater purpose.

Kaunitz Yeung does not appear to embody any grand gestures of being "purpose driven" but rather has evolved into meaningful work, driven by the directors' values. When asked about pursuing meaningful work alongside commercial practice , Kaunitz responded, "the

real advantage we have, is that, they're not two separate things. I know practices might do like three houses and then they might do a project in a developing country. For us it's all one thing in the sense and its complimentary to one other."

Kaunitz explains that while staff are self-selecting and motivated by the type and variety of projects the practice work on,

> "We need that extra level of buy in and commitment from people working here because of what we're doing. We're trying to do more than just deliver the project. We're trying to have that connection with community, we're trying to empower community to make good buildings for themselves. So, we can't just have someone who's just here for the simple reasons, there needs to be full buy in. It's not hard to find people like that, but it's hard to find people who have the skill set we need, because we still need to run a business right, so we still need certain skill sets… it's hard to get the balance but everyone who works here is great and really bought into the whole thing."

Architect's Role

In his presentation at Tusculum, Kaunitz explained the variety of ways in which their practice step outside of the conventional architectural role. Kaunitz used an example where the practice assisted in the preparation of a grant application. I am particularly interested in the concept of expanding the role of the architect, as this appears to be a common theme for purpose-driven architectural practices: their capacity to navigate bureaucracy to assist a project evolve past an initial idea.

> "I think what we've done is to return to what the traditional role of the architect was. I don't think we've actually extended the role, I think the industry narrowed the role of the architect, or went down the road or was pushed down the road of narrowing the role of the architect and what we've been very conscious of doing in this practice is trying to behave and do the role of a traditional architect."

Kaunitz continues, "Generally, we are traditional architects. So, if you're a traditional architect of course you would be advocate for your client in the full sense of the word

Image below and overpage: Wanarn Clinic

Work to live, or live to work? How can the 'purpose-driven' business model be applied to architectural practice in Australia?

through every stage of the process of designing and making buildings, and that includes preparing to design the building. I understand it is a broadening from what the norm is but I don't really see it as that because in my mind I still think the role of the architect is that broad role."

Community Consultation

Another key approach that is essential to the practice of Kaunitz Yeung, is community consultation; a topic vastly discussed and rarely well executed. The authenticity of their approach at Kaunitz Yeung, is demonstrated in the longevity of their commitment to the stakeholders of a project. In his presentation at the Indigenous Architecture and Design Forum in Melbourne, Kaunitz spoke of 4 months spent in country forming relationships and understanding the community he was designing for. He spoke of the variety of contexts required to ensure that all voices are heard. This is confirmed again in our conversation.

"To get that information out of the community or end users you need to provide lots of different types of forums so that every type of person has a space and a place where they feel comfortable actually speaking their mind. That differs. And then you need to have time to do that thoroughly and repetitively. Having a conversation with one person once... you need to allow for opportunity and for time. And you need to allow for serendipity to happen. Informal consultations where you're sitting around talking to people. Sitting on a front veranda just talking to them"

Kaunitz reiterates that you cannot have a conversation with one person once and expect to understand the entirety of their perspective, or for them to open up about their full view.

How does Kaunitz justify the time and effort contributed by the firm to engage with the community, end users and stakeholders? It is clearly apparent that his process is key to the success of the building.

"A building being used is a sign of a successful building, even if it's not completely what it was designed for if it is being used in a productive way, then that is probably enough really. Then this more esoteric thing of community ownership of a building which usually manifests itself in the building being well looked after, respected. Something I learned in the north of England really that buildings

could be a focus of attack. But if a building is respected by a community, some of these projects look brand new, it's amazing… so that's a metric in a way."

In both the Tusculum and the Melbourne presentations, Kaunitz delightfully describes a poem written and read by a community member at the opening of a building, reflecting their enthusiasm and appreciation for the project. Another example includes the higher attendance rate at a medical centre Kaunitz Yeung delivered. Kaunitz reflects on the examples, suggesting "These are qualitative but they're obvious. They're the things I look for in a building to satisfy myself that that one went well."

I am convinced that the time and commitment invested in end users has produced thoughtful, community focused buildings, facilitated by Kaunitz Yeung.

Summary

• Specialisation and advocacy can diversify practice networks
• Authentic commitment to impact requires time
• Staff are motivated by and engaged with the purpose or impact
• Diversity is beneficial in practice: architect's role, project scope, diversity in revenue
• Genuine community consultation requires a range of methods to accommodate a range of people
• This provides greater cultural sensitivity, creates the capacity to ask questions, and lets the community guide the project

Images

1. and 2. Wanarn Clinic, Gibson Desert. Kaunitz spent three months living in the Ngaanyatjarra region during the design process talking to specific user groups, including residents in the township and the nomadic community.
Photography: Brett Boardman

3. Image Opposite: Wanarn Clinic. The aluminium art screens, designed by two female Warakurna artists, depict the Dreaming of the Seven Sisters, a Dreamtime narrative associated with the Pleiades constellation.
Photography: Brett Boardman

References

1. About, Kaunitz Yeung Architecture, https://kaunitzyeung.com/about/, 2020, (accessed 02/05/2020)

ECOSIA

On Communications

Online search engine, based in Berlin. Ecosia invests its profits to plant trees around the world. "We plant trees where they're needed most. Our trees benefit people, the environment and local economies."

Ecosia supports over twenty tree-planting projects in fifteen different countries; Peru, Brazil, Madagascar, Nicaragua, Haiti, Colombia, Spain, Morocco, Senegal, Burkina Faso, Ghana, Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Indonesia

Interviewee: Hannah Wickes (Chief Marketing Officer)

Search the web to plant trees...

95,684,821

Trees planted by Ecosia users

July 2019

It is a hot sunny day in Berlin, the streets are full of people enjoying the weather. I arrive at a café suggested by Wickes, on the side of a cobbled road, bike riders everywhere. I am filled with a week in Berlin already; I can never help but throw myself at this city, so today I enjoy a seat and a stimulating conversation over a quiet lunch in the shade of the nearby trees.

Hannah Wickes is the Chief Marketing Officer at Ecosia where she has been employed for about one year. I will do my best to paraphrase this interview, however Wickes had a rigorous and stimulating answer for everything.

A company that originated with 1.5 people ten years ago, celebrated planting a total of 50 million trees in February 2019. When we speak in July, Wickes asserts this is now 63 million, reflecting the rapid growth of the business in the recent two years; "new users, a lot more brand knowledge that Ecosia exists, particularly in Germany and France; and the UK and US are catching up. Once you have got that it starts to really snowball."

When I screenshot the website search engine above, in May 2020, the trees are over 90 million.

Background

Unlike other companies I have spoken with, Ecosia is unique in that the 'purpose' existed before the business or service. Wickes explains, "Ecosia was created with the intention to channel money into tree planting. It was very much, 'what business model can we have to create money to give it away for trees?' And then a search engine was decided upon. So, the purpose was decided before the company existed. It was very close together but the whole reason for its existence was for tree planting, not a search engine."

Wickes looks after the marketing and communications for Ecosia, including branding and content focus, considering how to communicate its purpose and impact to stakeholders. "For marketing communications, it's really important to us to communicate those projects as well as communicating that we are a search engine. And it's almost an advantage that we have, that if you're doing something purposeful you have a visual to communicate. You have an impact to show people rather than the result of all the work is profit. The result of our work is trees."

Wickes is very clear on the significance of Ecosia's purpose to differentiate its search engine;

"Our unique selling point is our purpose. Without it we wouldn't be able to compete… But you can compete with purpose. So that is really important to us that we communicate that and it is the number one way we grow."

Staff

Ecosia is a well-established and rapidly growing purpose-driven company. I am interested in the type of staff attracted to work at Ecosia. "People who have been working for a while, especially developers in the tech industry, traditional roles and they want a gear shift; they want to switch over to something and have a positive impact with their skills. They might not be able to plant trees specifically themselves, but they can write code that enables that to happen… More and more in job applications we see 'I just want to have a job where I can turn up and know I am doing something positive' and that is a real motivator. It was for me in joining Ecosia and for staff as well."

Wickes likens Ecosia to a not-for-profit, since they make profit to plant trees. This means the company has a limited internal budget, since every dollar spent on marketing and communications means less trees planted. I wonder if Ecosia perhaps relies on some altruism on the part of competitive salaries. I quickly realise that money can't buy meaning (or purpose) and that Ecosia invests in its staff in other less quantifiable ways, "you're joining a project which isn't only about making money" as Wickes describes.

Wickes openly explains, "People have to join you because a mix of what you provide. You give them a purpose and you definitely give them a good salary but it's not the sole reason they join. And it can't be the motivator because otherwise they will be dissatisfied once they join."

Wickes reiterates upon a common theme, that an authentic purpose driven business applies its philosophy across scales of the company, beginning of course, at home. "Philosophically the company came from a democracy stand point and we believe that people should be self-motivated and able to keep on top of their own work and don't need to be micro managed. …There's a lot of side benefits that are related to the purpose. And if the founder has chosen to run a company to give the money away for a good cause, then there are often other ethical things they want to have in the company as well."

Referring to Ecosia as an ethical business, Wickes explains that this must resonate in multiple ways throughout the

business. Wickes lists a multitude of staff benefits including maternity leave, sick leave, carers leave, "there's not that focus on the money to the ultimate degree. And people are seen as more than resources. On the flip side money is tight so the teams are often quite lean. You're not going to have someone sitting there doing one tiny portion. They're often doing a lot in their roles. I think people like it because they get a variety in their position but you can end up being stretched, to have many hats."

Ecosia's commitment to its purpose is scaled up to include actively aligning the company with global movements. Wickes explains Ecosia's company policy for climate activism,

"If you want to be involved in a climate march or the student strikes, we have a couple of people still studying, or if you want to join Extinction Rebellion or for the climate crisis, you don't have to take leave or holiday pay or call in sick… we will cover fines if you are involved in non-violent disobedience acts as well that lead to you becoming arrested. The climate emergency is very much a part of our business."

Partnerships

Ecosia is a well-established search engine with a large source of users, meaning that it can dictate certain terms in its partnerships, "If you have things that you won't compromise on and if you bring enough value as a partner then you can impact change. And you can change from within the way that people think about certain topics. Which is very, very powerful. And for us to have more than 8 million users, it's a sizable footprint of people who are having a voice for a certain mode of behaviour. It's quite valuable."

Ecosia's search engine results are sourced predominantly from Microsoft. Microsoft ads run at the top of the search engine, as well as thousands of advertisers; Ecosia obtain a revenue share or commission from these ads which are used to plant trees. Wickes describes Ecosia's "very strict contract with Microsoft particularly in regards to privacy. And really pushing for that to be at the core so we are probably able to provide more privacy than Microsoft's own search engine because we enforce that for the partnership to exist." Ecosia has several revenue models including merchandise and Ecosia Hotels, but predominantly relies on the search engine.

As a growing company, Ecosia openly challenge other companies in order to advocate for its purpose, Wickes explains "We have large numbers of advertisers on our platform but that doesn't mean we wouldn't criticise them for their climate policies… if you have that platform you almost have more of a responsibility to do something with it."

Ecosia is also able to leverage its purpose when negotiating partnerships with other companies, "When you're a non-profit or purpose driven, you have to address your case a bit differently and you have to know how to negotiate that. Because for every dollar we spend on a marketing tool or campaign or a workshop or whatever, that's 5 trees we can't plant. So mentally we all think that way, if you're coming to discuss a partnership or work with someone, and it's important that they are aware of it too. Usually you wouldn't necessarily have the industry rate, because it seems, and not to take huge advantage of it but it seems obscene that a fortune 500 company would be charged the same fee as a non-profit for certain products or services that maybe just have a very inflated cost to them."

Navigating the less quantifiable value of purpose goes both ways, as Wickes provides an example of an agency that Ecosia has engaged, in part because of its aligned commitments; "one of the reasons why we go with that agency is because I know he does pro bono work and I know that his heart is in the right place. Also, that we are paying a fee for his services is funding the fact that he can work for other clients who don't have the money or resources to make money like we do. So, when I'm searching for partnerships, it's 'have you done any pro bono work?', 'have you worked with the movement before?' it is not just speak."

Transparency and Accountability

I wonder how Ecosia audit to confirm that its impact, tree planting, is delivered as promised. Wickes discusses the need not only for audits, but more importantly having contact with different people at all levels of the tree planting organisation, (which is not dissimilar to my approach to these interviews!) "Not to coordinate only with the CEO or head person in this village. To actually have contact with people working across tiers of the organisation, particularly for marketing and communications, we get a lot of photos for social media from people who are on the ground planting trees. Those people can confirm things or give you information about stuff you didn't know about either. You need a web of contacts across a whole tree planting partner. Some will be successful and some aren't, and things do rapidly change, so you need to keep tabs on it."

Another level of transparency is reflected in Ecosia's open books, "Every six weeks we publish our financial reports and it shows for example how much we're spending on marketing. Which is very rare for companies to do that unless they are listed companies. It also shows salaries, how many trees we plant each month. That is our most viewed piece of content by far. People scrutinise it down to the last thing. It is very, very important that we show it because it is the reason that they selected us. It is the final proof for them."

Wickes describes their open book policy as the 'checks and balances', that hold the Ecosia team accountable for every dollar spent, "It is interesting because I have worked in places where journalists hold companies accountable or politicians accountable. But in this case, it is actually the users."

Wickes continues that ,

"It's good to know that your audience or client or user base cares about that. It really helps to make decisions. Helps me to decide whether we do this or that with marketing. If we're making a decision about partners it's like what would the average user say to this? Would they be excited? Or would they question why we would support that?"

Several of my interviews explored the link between revenue sources and accountability or demonstrated outcome. Ecosia maintain financial independence through the search engine, giving them full ownership over the direction of the company. Wickes explains that the founder never sought significant investment finances, maintaining control over the company procedures and ethics, "Once you're taking money from investors, they are open to giving their opinion to you and also changing your business direction and purpose. You're easily compromised."

It seems Ecosia has successfully set up its finances in a way that it is able to maintain control over the company decisions and core principles, "if Ecosia was a search engine that only took green advertisers we wouldn't be able to plant 60 million trees. We are open to many advertisers. It doesn't mean we endorse them but we are open to them. And by advertising on us they are enabling us to plant trees at scale. If we only took green advertisers maybe we would have hit two million by now."

Ecosia has contractual safeguards ensuring founders cannot sell their shares to anyone outside of the company, nor take dividends or earn profits, meaning they earn a salary like everyone else. "You don't ever want to buy out. And if you have a purpose, unless the company was going to buy you out for the exact same purpose you would be changed." Additionally, Ecosia

are contracted to an independent third-party company in Germany called Purpose Foundation, who can veto certain decisions within Ecosia, providing another level of accountability and credibility.

Credibility

We explore the the importance of credibility, as Wickes describes that purposeful or admirable organisations are quickly criticised 'too good to be true' or inauthentic,

"your business sense is sometimes doubted when they see the purpose so strongly."

While Wickes describes B Corp as useful, Ecosia was one of the first in Germany, and many people did not know what it meant.

Wickes suggests that credible media coverage is important for any business or start-up, "because if you have a brand new idea people question you, but if a journalist has taken the time, from a credible publication to scrutinise and interview and then choose to showcase what you're doing, it's a really strong endorsement."

Continuing, Wickes explains the importance of public engagement with aligned movements, across scales –

both internationally advocating and locally demonstrating.

Highlighting the Climate Emergency as core to the company values, Ecosia actively supports Fridays for Future: school climate strikes and climate marches in Berlin. Wickes describes Ecosia's engagement with its user base, suggesting it "gives us a level of credibility especially with that audience. And also, recognition that we know the struggle that they are fighting for and acknowledge it."

Wickes furthers that "it's about giving back a bit as well. Sometimes there may be talks that you choose to do or there may be events you support or things are happening that you know you aren't necessarily going to break even or aren't going to give back immediately but long term it's about something bigger than that. But you also have to be careful because you can start doing so much of that, that you can't do your original work."

Meanwhile, Wickes reflects that movements may also be your harshest critic, particularly being a for-profit business opens the company up to criticism, despite profit being for purpose.

Speaking eloquently, Wickes touches on the 'grey' scales of impact when navigating potential partnerships or clients, a common challenge for purpose driven businesses. Giving

colour to the term, Wickes loosely categorises companies into red light – for example banks supporting fossil fuels; orange – providing a service but without significant positive benefits for people or the planet; and green companies, those trying to change their behaviours but also committed to a purpose.

"If you want to have a positive impact, some people that really want to do it will never have the money to pay you the actual rate. Other people can definitely do it, definitely have the money to pay for it, they're an orange company, so it almost deserves a kind of premium on it."

Wickes further explains the importance of highlighting the impact that the so-called orange company inadvertently sponsored, "allowing them to be part of that story. If they have helped subsidise some really amazing projects, that's something that is meaningful for them. If I knew in my agency that they were working pro bono with a whole bunch of clients that we also want to support, I am far more likely to go with that agency over a more traditional, commercial agency. Because that enables me to justify the spend. To myself and to what we do."

This I find interesting: could my own 'green' company be the facilitator for purposeful impact for an otherwise 'orange' client? Could this reach as far as a red company? Perhaps the office checklist of values and priorities, discussed in my interview with TACSI, likewise needs a $ubsidy meter for green-orange-red clients.

Summary

• Impact provides a visual outcome to communicate beyond money
• Purpose can be a unique selling point
• Staff are self-selecting, motivated and aligned
• Purpose can contribute a qualitative income
• Media coverage can provide third party credibility to a company
• Purpose can provide leverage in negotiations with external partners
• An ethical business can demonstrate its values through staff benefits
• Purpose companies are accountable to their client or user base; transparency can communicate this
• Could fee proposals reflect a tax for less impactful clients?

References
All photos from Ecosia website www.ecosia.org

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Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship Journal Series

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ASSEMBLE

On Making Stuff

A multidisciplinary collective of 16-20 staff (most of whom are cofounders), based in South London, working across art, architecture, and design. They retain a "democratic and co-operative working method that enables built, social and research-based work at a variety of scales, both making things and making things happen."(1)

Interviewee: Joseph Halligan (Co-Founder, Architect), Hazel Tilley (Granby resident and founding member of Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust)

June 2019

I am a longstanding fan of Assemble's work, having watched its diverse portfolio grow since its first creative, self-initiated group projects in 2010. Experimental and well executed projects; most of all, they look like they're having a lot of fun.

Background

Assemble studio was formally founded by 14 architects that met as students. In their post-graduation summer of 2009, they participated alongside a group of 40-50 volunteers, to design and build 'Frank's café' as part of "Bold Tendencies" a seasonal roof-top café and art space.

In January 2010, the group dedicated its skills and energies into a self-initiated project to transform an empty petrol station into a cinema. Titled "Cineroleum", this project consolidated the group's focus on self-

initiated, design and construction projects.

The following summer, charity art organisation, Create London, was running community engagement projects in the London burroughs. Create commissioned the group, who then formalised as 'Assemble' to participate in the design of what became, "Folly for a Flyover". The project reinvigorated a motorway undercroft, constructing a temporary building that housed public community events. Assemble and Create London have a continued professional relationship to this day. I meet with Diana Ibañez López from Create London, later on in my trip.

"Folly for a Flyover" had a high level of media coverage and alongside "Cineroleum", established a unique portfolio for Assemble. While the initial projects were essentially volunteer, I see in particular two benefits: they attracted paying clients interested in similar community engaged, creative projects, and secondly, they prepared Assemble with the skills to deliver them.

Images of the Cineroleum, below photography: Zander Olsen and opposite, photography: Morley von Sternberg

Diversity

For my first international interview, I travel to Bermondsey, East London, to meet with Joe Halligan, cofounder of Assemble. He meets me at the front door to the building, and guides me through the various workshop spaces before we sit out the back adjacent to the architecture studio. The workshops are well supplied with tools and machinery for communal use, with spaces upstairs leased to creative freelancers and small businesses.

This is a strategy for subsidising overheads that Assemble has historically implemented in its studios, a way of providing stability. Halligan explains, "We see it as the basis of a stable business. It's a good cross over for us because we're interested in making stuff, so then the idea of providing the provision for other people to make stuff is quite interesting. We think the basic model of architecture is broken, we're more interested in being involved in more of the discussion around the brief and what it is, so we're interested in taking on space in the city and developing it as work space for people to make stuff, because we think that people making stuff is a good thing for wider society."

Assemble was able to leverage the exposure from its first self-initiated projects. The team appear quite comfortable engaging in flexible roles beyond those of todays conventional architect. I ask Halligan if they still initiate their own projects,

"The projects that people enjoy the most are the projects where we're not just sitting in the role of the architect but we can somehow be involved in the formation of the brief and maybe how its run as a project and even what the project is. And I think they're the most exciting but it's not always possible to do projects like that. We would like to do only self-initiated projects but they are a little bit riskier. Normally requires you to do some work at risk, so, it's a mix now."

10 Houses on Cairns Street

I am particularly interested in a project from 2013, in which Assemble worked with Granby Four Streets Community Land Trust (CLT) to refurbish 10 derelict terrace houses in Toxteth, Liverpool. A CLT "is a not-for-profit community-based organisation run by volunteers that delivers housing and other community facilities at permanently affordable levels for local people."(2)

The CLT was formed by local residents campaigning to save their houses from demolition and redevelopment,

working hard also to regenerate and repopulate the streets, galvanising a diverse community. They purchased 10 empty houses intending to renovate them as affordable homes.

The project invitation came to Assemble through a friend of a friend type connection, with funds for their commission made possible through a philanthropic investment to the CLT.

Assemble was paid to prepare a feasibility study and preliminary schematics to communicate the project for fundraising. Halligan explains that "we did it partly at risk because it was an amazing project."

Following a re-tender process, Assemble was awarded the remainder of the project. Assemble's existing project knowledge and established relationships with members of the community and the CLT, differentiated Assemble to deliver the project.

Halligan confirmed that their prior experience in self-initiated design-build projects prepared them with the skills to undertake the project,

"We were trained as architects but on the first two projects we were really on-site building stuff and having to talk to lots of different people about how to make projects happen. And that equips you with certain skills which is quite good for being able to try and make something happen and talk to different people and gather momentum around a project."

Fortuitously, while working on Granby, Assemble was nominated for the Turner Prize. Exploring what to show in the exhibition, in 2013 Assemble established Granby Workshop and advertised for people to join a 3-month summer project designing a range of architectural ceramics, including door handles, tiles, mantle pieces, light fittings, that would be installed in the Granby houses.

The workshop remains at the end of the main street and continues to be strongly community-oriented and successful to this day, employing 3-4 people from the area. Halligan explains that they continue to commission products from the workshop, such as the tiles for "The Factory Floor", Assemble's contribution to the Venice Architecture Biennale, 2018.

When I first approached Assemble for an interview, referencing my interest in this project, they promptly provided me with a wealth of online sources for background on the project, including connecting me to local resident and Granby Four Streets CLT cofounder, Hazel Tilley.
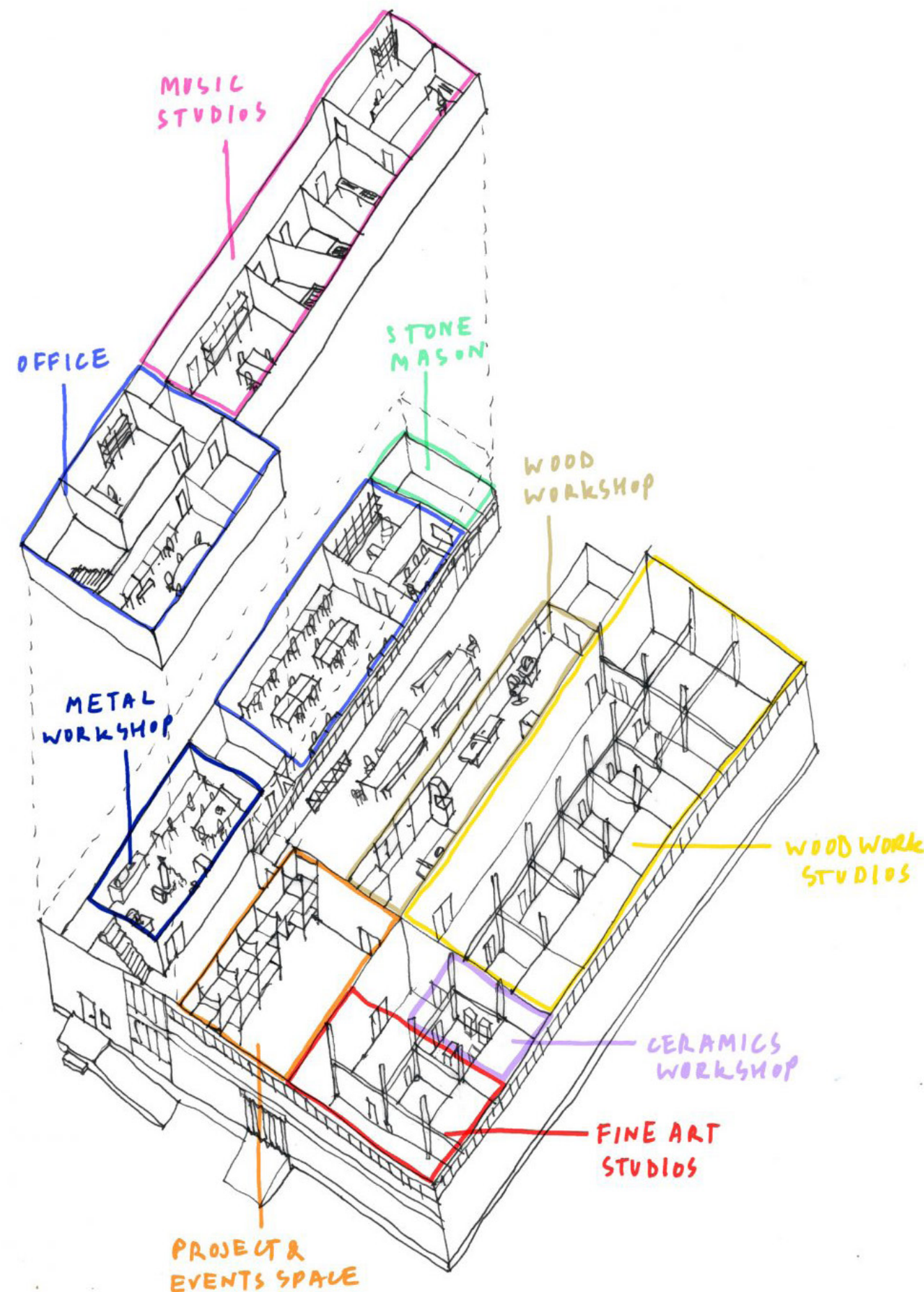
Assemble sketch above: Sugarhouse Studios, Studio and Events space, Bermondsey, South London

Tilley kindly housed me for a night and spoke at great length of the positive impacts of the project, clearly quite fond of the Assemble team.

Tilley's enthusiasm was infectious and certainly she was an unstoppable energy, the matriarch of the community. I can see she fought hard for the area.

At a time when the streets surrounding her home had fallen into disrepair, she commenced planting street gardens and actively engaging her community to rejuvenate the area. Tilley played a vital role in reengaging the community,

"bringing people in even though they didn't live here. While Council was busy emptying us out, we were bringing people in: via the market, by the gardening… Opening the streets to people for charitable things. Not for our gain but to raise our profile all the time. Because the mythology about the area was so appalling. people wouldn't come into the area."

While Tilley was engrossed in meetings at the Granby Winter Garden, a semi-public component to the Granby project, I venture outside to explore the area. As I walk the surrounding streets, I reflect on diversity.

Passing a mosque, a church, a Continental Store that reads 'African, West Indian, Chinese, Greek, Arabian, Asian, English'.
I am reminded that a building cannot directly create community; communities evolve organically. Architecture can however, aim to meet or support a community's needs; to grow, or to stand demonstrative of its strength and willingness to survive.

Later I wonder out loud to Hazel whether diversity is what has made the local area so culturally rich and unique,

"it's the celebration of otherness. We talk about difference but what is difference anyway? Where do you set the benchmark?"

Tilley continues to philosophise with me for hours in her dining room. I am so grateful to Hazel for opening her home to me and giving her time so openly and generously.

Agile Business

Back in Assemble's workshop, I wonder with Halligan about the impact of having so many cofounders. Not all are active in the business to this day, however they are still attributed as part of the original team of founders. Halligan reflects that,

"we've done much more together than any of us could have achieved by ourselves... Having so many directors has meant we've had a really rich business of different opinions, but what people want from it is slightly different so I wonder if in the future it will become more of a barrier."

Halligan continues, "I'm quite interested in agile business… every time that you increase overheads and things like that it means that you are beholden to them and then you have to take on work that you wouldn't necessarily have taken on and that leads to more work that you wouldn't want to take on. Whereas if you can slim it right down so that you can basically operate with zero costs then you can be a bit more strategic about doing different things".

This concept re-emerges in my later discussion with Delaney, cofounder of Sago Network, who suggested that in working for yourself, one can harness the flexibility to accommodate community contributions.

In consideration of the richness of large collaborations alongside the individual's career aspirations, I wonder if this is where the 'family network' of associated businesses

has been successful. Where individual skills are cultivated in separate studios, bringing together their collective experience in a group organisation.

I will explore the family structure in later interviews and further in the summary and conclusions.

After nearly ten years, Halligan explains that the studio is composing an ambition statement and business plan, a milestone for the business as they look to the future. I am eager to see where they go.

Summary

• Self-initiated projects can build the portfolio of an emerging practice, but are not financially sustainable
• Diversify revenue sources for stability
• Work alongside likeminded individuals, even curate the space or workshop to house them
• Sometimes a project can be taken at risk for less quantitative returns (for example experience or impact)
• Architecture does not create community, but architecture can support community
• The importance of multidisciplinary collaboration and longstanding networks and working relationships

Images

All images, sourced from Assemble studio's website unless noted otherwise.

Sugarhouse Studios sketch, credit: Assemble

Opposite: Toxteth local Continental Store, credit: Jessica Bradley (my own)

Below: 10 Houses on Cairns St, featuring Granby Workshop fireplace mantle, credit: Assemble

Overleaf: Folly for a Flyover, credit: Assemble, Photography: David Vitiner

References

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2. What is a Community Land Trust?, Granby Four Streets CLT, https://www.granby4streetsclt.co.uk/whats-a-clt, (accessed 20/05/20)

https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/folly-for-a-flyover, (accessed 03/06/2020)

CREATE LONDON

On Legacy

Based in London, Create London is a non-profit arts organisation that works with artists to realise new social enterprises, charities and cultural spaces. They "commission, curate and incubate long-term projects that are useful to society, supporting artists to work collaboratively with local communities."(1)

Interviewee: Diana Ibañez López (Senior Curator (with a focus on architecture, policy and urbanism)

June 2019

Create London originated in 2009, when founder Hadrian Garrard lead on commissioning projects for the east London cultural programme for the 2012 Olympic Games, creatively engaging with six London boroughs adjacent to the site of the Games and with the communities excluded from the Olympics itself. As part of this arts program, Create London commissioned a fledgling group of architect friends and colleagues, for the project, "Folly for a Flyover".

It was for the Folly commission, that the emerging architects formalised as 'Assemble.' Having already interviewed cofounder, Joe Halligan, I am eager to chat with the charity arts organisation that had facilitated some of Assemble's first paid community focused projects and established Assemble within the network of community engaged architects and designers.

Background

I find myself at the Barbican Centre, a creative centre-point in the City of London, host to contemporary music, theatre, film and art, a library, restaurants and a conservatory. A cultural richness permeates the brutalist architecture as does the lush vegetation throughout the estate. I am seated outside with Diana Ibañez López, one of two Senior Curators at Create London; I recoil in disgust as a pigeon beside me attacks an abandoned sandwich, "I am such a big fan of pigeons. I also know that at some point they'll have had their lives shaped by the violence done to them and people reacting really bad to them", I am humbled by her comment, and notice there is an intense openness and acceptance from Ibañez López, a nature that I can see translated into her work at Create London.

Before taking her role at Create London, Ibañez López had a range of experience working firstly for the well-established architecture firm MVRDV, and in contrast, in local authority. She also worked at Phaidon architecture publishing, which interested Ibañez López in "how architecture communicates, why it exists, why it

becomes a reference" and she runs a studio on the MA in architecture at the RCA. Her collective experience is reflected in her responses throughout this interview.

Create

Create London is a charity and arts organisation that reimagines the role of the artist in a city, working to highlight the contributions of art and creativity within a community. Ibañez López explains that the organisation undertakes a diverse range of roles on any given project, "our role is everything from coming up with it, sometimes funding some of it, or fundraising for it, to sometimes co-creating, to coproducing, we co-commission or commission for others, so we are across the spectrum of how to get things moving."

Create cofounds smaller creative organisations, intentionally assisting them to establish independence. "[We are] deliberately not [an umbrella company]. We might commission something to explore a particular issue and if it looked like it was working, then rather than keep being an umbrella, because then we would need another employee to umbrella it, you fundraise and support so that it becomes a fully independent thing. And it ends up rivalling us for funding!" explains Ibañez López.

Project Examples

Create's approach allows the new organisations to specialise, existing longer term and with a broader outreach than if Create absorbed them. In more detail, Ibañez López explains that Create "has grown to about a consistent 10 people and we try really hard not to grow more. So instead our model is more about, say we cofound something, we might remain on the board, but we will often fundraise for and invest a lot of time in making it become independent. Rather than becoming an office of 100 people."

We discuss Folly for a Flyover, the project in 2011 in which Assemble were commissioned to transform a motorway under croft into a temporary performance and screening space.

Folly for a Flyover image credit: David Vitiner

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Above: A House for Artists, Apparata
Below: Selection process for the artist-tenants

Ibañez López discusses the differences between community engagement and community offerings: Folly was largely constructed by other young architects, friends of friends, exploring the co creation of architecture, "How do you build a really unlikely structure? … How do you pass on skills and collectively build? And that as an exercise is really, really fascinating but I would say that it wasn't all built by and for local community per se."

Ibañez López explains that "Folly for a Flyover" was a well-intentioned and successful project with an aesthetic outcome, but which encouraged Create to challenge their processes to optimise community outreach, diversity and legacy.

The project had significant media coverage and professional impact,

"but it made us question actually what does a legacy for a built thing mean? What's our responsibility if we're working on a building scale to do much longer projects? And those are often increasingly invisible and much harder to get a media splash with."

Moving forward, Create have focused more on their "invisible" work, navigating policy and bureaucracy, to deliver the greatest long-term impact.

Ibañez López reflects on Assemble's Granby Four Streets project, as "a really good example of a much longer-term practice and allowing something to be set up independently, allowing it to rival you and for you not to become an umbrella. Linked but giving parity to the thing you setup."

Create are currently working on another building scale project in collaboration with Apparata, a London-based architecture firm. "A House for Artists," is a multi-residential live-work development, with full-time programming for the local community provided by the artist residents, and which Create will initially lead for 3-4 years, establishing a framework that can exist beyond their involvement.

"What we're putting our energy into is governance structures, funding alternatives, tenancy agreements that are agreed with the council's lawyers… effectively invisible bureaucracy which isn't going to make the headlines but which we think is what will make the project run, last, and be replicable."

The project originated when a London Council approached Create about a new live-work development proposal. Create ran an architectural competition which was awarded to Apparata architects.

Ibañez López explains that Create's strategy was to demonstrate the importance of providing artists with the capacity to be grounded in and contributing to their local community, "why don't we give them more generally affordable work space and housing together. But in exchange for their reduction in rent they give half a day a week of their time to the public program. So, it's like a tethered tenancy."

Wanting to broaden the impact of the project, Ibañez López explains that Create looked at "the potential long-term measurable impacts of having artists settle in an area. And it isn't just that they pass on skills. If they are genuinely engaged with the community and genuinely there for the long term, it's about bringing up a family there, it's the stability that it gives the artists and their practice. But in this project, by having an artist-run public program in perpetuity, in exchange for genuine affordable and long-term housing contracts, this benefit isn't just given to the artists for the sake of them being artists, because that's good in itself, which I would argue isn't justifiable; that public program partly passes on creative skills to local people, but also builds an awareness of another profession and creates an access to the language of that profession -- and it creates a space, and dedicated time, for flexible programming beyond just arts or crafts or culture that can respond to the local community's needs (say, for a breakfast club for school children)."

To summarise on Create's architectural collaborations, Ibañez López explains,

"we don't believe the community is there to be given things to, or to have things done at them or for them. But often the edges of practice that are collaborative, whether it's working for local authority, or speaking to funders in a particular way, whether it's allowing a project to be flexible; are things that should help us develop our practice as architects, as artists, as legal authority, officers, politicians."

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Unpaid Work

I ask Ibañez López whether volunteering plays a part in a lot of their projects; she has a clear and considered response, "yes… but the point at which someone is volunteering too many hours there would be a question about whether that was appropriate and what they're getting from it. When involving volunteers from communities there is also a question about whether it is part of upskilling or a training programme. If so, is there employment at the end of that training, and should skilled time be paid for?"

Using the example of applications for funding, Ibañez López states that a project which comprises volunteering must demonstrate this as vital to the process, "proving a certain number of volunteer hours is important, not just because you're creating a form of collaborative working … I think you would get strongly questioned if finance was replaced with free labour."

Diversity

Assemble have become critical friends who have collaborated with Create on about 4 projects including Blackhorse Workshop, a fully equipped wood and metal workshop which provides affordable access to tools, workspace and technical support. It aimed to cultivate a culture of mending and making. Reflecting on that project, Ibañez López explains, "We often set up new models for things which means if someone comes and asks us to do another Blackhorse Workshop or asks Assemble to do another one we would both probably say, well no, that was a really interesting model to work out how it works, and it works, so it's quite easy to replicate but we would rather be pushed a bit more and tackle a new question."

Despite longstanding relationships with studios that have grown alongside Create, Ibañez López asserts that the organisation must actively challenge themselves to ensure that they continue to diversely commission, "at which point we ask ourselves: Do we take the time and risk and extra money required to launch a competition to look for talent, more diverse talent? To work with less likely backgrounds within architecture as well". (Ibañez López later adds that "The answer is yes, by the way, with a number of competitions currently running in parallel for a series of commissions to celebrate the centenary of the Becontree Estate, the UK's largest public housing estate.")

Ibañez López explains that as Create London push boundaries, they reflect on the challenges of each project to ensure they can learn from mistakes, ask new questions, reassess in order to achieve deeper, broader impact on the next project. The growing scale of their current projects reflects a commitment to broader, long term outreach for greater community impact.

Summary

- Impact can be invisible
- Beautiful photographs do not qualify impact
- Management roles can broaden outreach and impact
- Non-profit structure provides access to alternative revenue such as grants and donations
- Volunteer work should be time-limited, and have the potential for upskilling
- Broadening roles and working at the edges of practice can provide professional development and experience and open up new forms of practice
- Reflect and learn from past projects; make and acknowledge mistakes
- The importance of multidisciplinary collaboration and longstanding networks and working relationships

Images

Dual spread image: Folly for a Flyover, photography: David Vitiner
Sourced from Assemble Studio's website

Images 1 and 2. Folly for a Flyover, photography: David Vitiner
Sourced from Assemble studio's website.

Image 2: Grayson Perry and Apparata team up to create A House for Artists in East London, source Dezeen

Image 4: The selection process for the artist-tenants of A House for Artists
Sourced from Create London website

Image 5: Blackhorse Workshop, credit: Ben Quinton
Sourced from Assemble studio's website.

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https://assemblestudio.co.uk/projects/blackhorse-workshop (accessed 07/07/2020)

Opposite: Blackhorse Workshop,
Image credit: Ben Quinton

STUDIO WEAVE, ARCHITECTURE 00

On Building, or not

Architecture firm with an extensive portfolio of community engaged projects, London

Interviewee: Je Ahn (Founder)

June 2019

An architect friend living in the UK suggested for my interviews to have a look at Project 00, "Zero zero is a collaborative studio of architects, strategic designers, programmers, social scientists, economists and urban designers practicing design beyond its traditional borders." (1) Zero zero lists six affiliated ventures, including Architecture 00 – architecture and strategic design, and Studio Weave – an exploratory architectural studio.

I was not able to establish contact with Architecture 00, however Studio Weave founder Je Ahn was happy to meet with me in his office in London. It is the end of a big day of interviews and I reach out to press the intercom and navigate my finger to Studio Weave, which to my surprise, sits next to "Architecture 00".

00 Network

In the Studio Weave office, I sit down with Ahn and relay my surprise at finding the two architecture practices in the same space. "Well, there they are!" laughs Ahn, "well, I say there they are, but I am director of projects at 00 as well, we became one big family".

The two practices were established for over ten years and knew each other well before they commenced this collaboration. Ahn describes,

"what we are trying to achieve is very similar. How it manifests, is quite different. We can work with each other in various means, and a small practice is much more difficult to resource and balance and provide people with the kind of experience they are looking for. So, we thought, we have trust in each other let's see what happens when we are close to each other."

The two firms started working in proximity about five years ago, Ahn likens the setup to separate teams operating within a larger firm.

The separate identities have been retained, and they attract completely different client groups, meaning the firms are not competing. Architecture00 attracts more commercial clients, however Studio Weave clients are more community driven, resulting in differing scales, ambitions and client motivations. Where 00 attract more professional clients, Ahn finds that Weave works with more personal, passionate community-driven clients.

A Conversation, not a Building

Weave has a diverse portfolio of projects that are a blur between (and not limited to) art, theatre, and architecture. I enquire with Ahn how his projects originate, "I personally don't believe in a designer architect going 'I designed something, please fund me'. If local people want to do something, I advise them whether or not they need this building or they need other things, most of the time it's other things. And if they are going to do a building, I make sure they have the right purpose and they understand why they're doing it, how they're going to do it, what that means. Often that is what community needs: conversation, not a building."

Fees mainly come from grants, or community raised funds, particularly for feasibility work. Occasionally it is a developer paying for this process. Sometimes it is a developer paying for this process. "We don't want to be project initiators, because we don't create projects."

Ahn is concerned by the conflict of interest in architect self-funded and initiated community projects. Instead, Ahn clarifies with the client, what role he should play in their project, particularly for consulting work: help with the design, help with the brief, or simply to be a critical friend.

Ahn questions what outcome a client seeks, rather than responding only to the architectural brief. "I guess just being slightly more nosy than I should be as an architect. But then I'm not just a typical architect" reflects Ahn, continuing that often a built project is not what is needed to meet the desired outcome.

Image opposite: Bridge Street Project, street performance

Architect's Role

I am interested in the various skills Studio Weave bring to a project, and am eager to discuss the broadening of the architect's role to meet the needs of community driven projects since this has been a recurring theme. However, I find architects have differing responses to this concept, such as Ahn:

"I personally disagree with the expanding architect's role, because that is profession. As a profession, a qualified architect is the designer of building and spatial arrangement. I think that's fine. But an architectural training might equip you to do something beyond that. But that's not everyone's bag. If I meet 10 architects, 9 of them will be rubbish at talking to people.."

There is a diverse range of people in the profession, some will have the skills to work with people and community, some will not.

I don't disagree. I believe that the skills of a good architect require communication, mediation, coordination; which can make architects very suitable for, or predispose them to, community engaged work. Ahn reflects that; "My architectural training is useful, because I built the other end of it so I know how it works and I can filter that back in. That's exactly the same as other projects we do. We do quite a lot of large-scale master plan projects and

that's possible because I understand the legal implications, the financial implications, the policy implications. And we follow back all the way to where it stems from. But I don't think that should be the architect's role to do it, it should be your choice to expand [the architect's role]."

Our experience and knowledge in policy and bureaucracy are skills that are an asset to a community engaged project.

Process

Ahn briefly discusses the significance of delivering outcomes suited to the source of funding, considering agenda, why funding is there, what clients are trying to achieve, "The funders need a photograph and our projects are photographable… we make sure that is part of the results".

Ahn uses the example of their Bridge Street project, envisaged to revitalise run-down streets in Callan, Ireland. The project comprised a program of immersive events, including a theatre performance down the main street. The project was partially funded by Equinox Theatre Company, Asylum Productions, and Ahn reflects that "The photo they got was of a theatre, because the funding came from a theatre".

I wonder out loud to Ahn whether the process is more important than the outcome? He responds,

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"The result is more vital than the process, but the process is vital as well. It's not an oppositional thing. Even if you do great engagement, if your end result is crap… The process will live in memory but the physical stuff we have to deal with every day."

Ahn queries the notion of purpose driven business, "We are more driven by needs, rather than a purpose… I would never call ourselves purpose driven." I think what is purposeful is their attention to community engagement, where the firm can use its architectural skills to facilitate positive impact, not always through built form.

I explain that for the purposes of my research, I describe "purpose" as fulfilment outside of conventional architectural practice, for example projects more engaged with community needs. Ahn suggests that "If someone who is qualified as an architect wants to do that kind of work, I would always encourage them to do project management. Do you want to manage a group of people or do you want to design? Because ultimately you won't be able to do both."

I finish as Ahn reiterates his insight,

"Most of the time community doesn't need a building, they need an activity to do together".

Summary

• The solution to a community need is not always a built one – determine outcome over output
• Maintaining separate identities of collaborative practices can market to different clients or project types
• Architects can assist a community to navigate bureaucracy
• Architect's skills (such as mediation, communication, collaboration, understanding of bureaucracy) predispose them to community engagement, however these are not necessarily the role of the architect

Images

All images of the Bridge Street Project, sourced from Studio Weave website,
https://www.studioweave.com/projects/bridge-street/
Photography: Neil O'Drisceoil

References

1. Project 00, About, https://www.project00.cc, (last accessed 02/05/2020)

INSCAPE STUDIO, INSCAPE PUBLICO

On Streamlining

Inscape Studio, commercial architecture firm and Inscape Publico, not-for-profit architecture firm, both based in Washington DC, USA, are associated practices that deliver specific stages of an architectural project in a streamlined process.

Background

In the course of my research, Ash Alluri from TACSI referred me to a remarkable online resource, a website dedicated to profiling several different architecture firms across USA that employ various strategies to incorporate 'purpose' into their practice. This website has since expired, which is unfortunate because it was a well-researched and communicated resource that thoroughly documented both the qualitative and quantifiable successes of an organisation, such as graphs demonstrating diverse sources of revenue and expenditure across the commercial and purposeful structures of the businesses.

I was particularly interested in the following two case studies, Inscape and IDEO, which demonstrated the 'family network' scenario and informed my decision to reach out to Archrival and Sago Network.

Inscape Family

Greg Kearley founded the architecture firm, Inscape Studio in 1998. The commercial firm focused on single and multi-residential housing, with an interest in community-oriented projects but was constrained financially to do so. Following the 2008 recession, the studio dropped from 12 to 3 employees and in order to remain viable, Kearley looked to reconfigure the business.

Speaking to the researchers of Proactive Practices, Kearley explains, "The recession was really a catalyst for us, I had always thought about having a nonprofit design firm, and the economic crash really got the wheels turning on that idea."(1) Kearley had experience working as an advocate, volunteer and board member for multiple arts-based not-for-profits, and understood the challenges faced by these organisations working with design firms.

The preliminary communications of an architectural project are critical tools for not-for-profits to source funding for the subsequent stages of the project. Early phase design services such as concept development, visualisations and sketch drawings can be used to attract capital investment to construct a project. Lacking funding for these stages meant many projects rarely evolved past an idea.

Stefan Schwarzkopf joined the firm in 2009 and together he and Kearley explored new business structures that provided financial stability for the practice; that met the requirements of the preliminary design stages but were not reliant on pro bono or volunteer work.

Inscape Publico was established as a not-for-profit 'sister' firm whose mission is

"to provide professional architecture services for other non-profits and the people they serve… We believe non-profits deserve access to professional architecture services, thereby allowing them to leverage the power of design to increase the impact of their organisations."(2)

Inscape Publico works exclusively with not-for-profits to deliver only the schematic stages of a project. Publico develops concepts, visualisations, renderings and design packages for the purposes of fundraising, pitching to potential donors, seeking loans and investments. Once the project is funded, the client can choose whether to engage Inscape Studio or an alternative architect; this is key to avoiding conflicts of interest for the business. The relationships and project-specific knowledge established during this time mean the clients more often choose Inscape Studio as the architects to complete the projects at market rate once funds have been raised.

Not-For-Profit

The not-for-profit structure provides Inscape Publico with potential access to grants, tax deductible donations and fundraising. This allows Publico to subsidise the services they provide to community groups, 70-80% discounted below-market rates.

Inscape Publico pay Inscape Studio market rate for their work and use its not-for-profit status to raise funds to cover the difference. As of 2015, 40% of Inscape Studio's work originates from Publico, with the intention to increase this.(3) Publico services are strictly limited to the schematic stages and fills critical gaps in the market working for non-profit clients.

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inscapepublico
Nonprofit Architecture Firm

1 Pre-Design
Facilitate envisioning exercises to understand the character and mission of our nonprofit clients, which in turn leads to the creation of a project program.

2 Schematic Design
Create schematic design drawings and renderings to establish the vision for the project and procure project cost estimates.

3 Partner Fundraising
Assist nonprofit partners in leveraging our designs to raise the funds for construction.

Professional architecture services offered to nonprofits at significantly reduced fees based on need, typically discounted 70-80%.

inscapestudio
Architecture Firm

4 Technical Drawings
Develop the schematic design drawings to create the construction documents, necessary to obtain a building permit and build the project.

5 Permit Filing/ Contract Proposals
Assist nonprofit partners in negotiating a contract for construction with the chosen contractor, while monitoring the permit process.

6 Construction Administration
Represent nonprofit partners throughout construction to ensure successful completion of the project.

Professional architecture services offered at market rate fees. Nonprofit partner may proceed with Inscape Studio or another architecture firm.

While Publico subsidises its fees to non-profits, it intentionally provide a discounted service rather than free work.

Kearley believes that if a not-for-profit cannot invest in a small fee to genuinely explore the project, they are unlikely to have the capacity to raise the greater cost for constructing the project. Quoted in Proactive Practices, Kearley explains "We think it's actually very important to charge something… we understand that most non-profits can't spend $20,000, but if you can't spend even $4,000 to get the ball rolling on a project that will ultimately cost $2 million, then you're probably not very serious about the project to begin with."(4)

Publico is a separate legal entity, which has no architects or designers on staff. Since Publico subcontract all design work to Inscape Studio, it avoids the need for administrations such as liability insurance and payroll services. Instead, Publico diversify its deliverables to include grant writing or relationship building with non-profit clients, stakeholders and potential partners.

The above Business Model Diagram created by Inscape is clear and concise, perhaps reflecting the clarity around its approach. This clarity is used to communicate identified roles and scope of work to clients. Since this is an innovative business structure, it would be important that it is clearly conveyed to stakeholders.

Longevity

In Proactive Practices, Kearley explains that the established portfolio of Inscape Studio was an important foundation to launch Inscape Publico, "It was really important that we had Inscape Studio established before we started Publico. It gave us credibility, experience and networks."

A significant portion of Inscape Studio's work now comprise projects of social value. This portfolio attracts passionate potential employees who are motivated by the commitment to impact work. In addition to this, the time lag between project schematics and funding provides opportunities for relationship building. Inscape

has become a facilitator for not-for-profit organisations, connecting them with potential funders within its growing network.

Summary

• Inscape Studio's established commercial portfolio and network provided the credibility and foundations for Publico to launch from
• Streamlined approach creates work for the commercial practice
• Clearly defined roles and deliverables simplifies the process and avoids administrative overlaps
• Not-for-profit structure diversifies revenue, and allows discounts to benefit not-for-profit clients
• Diversified work reflected in range of revenue and broadened professional networks
• Purposeful mission attracts passionate, engaged staff

Images

1. Proactive Practices, http://proactivepractices.org, (accessed 10/03/2020)

References

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2. About, Inscape Publico, http://www.inscapepublico.org/mission, (accessed 03/06/2020)

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4. Kearley, Proactive Practices, http://proactivepractices.org, (accessed 10/03/2020)

IDEO, IDEO.org

On Leverage

Should IDEO.org do the work?

Impact – Can design feasibly have an impact on this area of work, and are there any precedents for designers playing a role in this area of work?

Talent – Does IDEO.org have access to designers with the necessary experience, knowledge, and skills to valuably contribute to this area of work?

Funding – Are there funding partners interested and willing to commit to financially supporting this work over multiple years?

Is the organization a good partner?

Capacity – Does the partner organization have the technical expertise and local resources to take on the proposed work?

Experience & Credibility – Is the partner established in their field, and have they demonstrated an ability to generate, track, and assess their impact?

Financial Resources – Does the partner already have funding, and does the scale and visibility of their work have the potential to attract additional funding?

Background

The second case study that really interested me from Proactive Practices, was that of IDEO, a global design and innovation consultancy that established a spinoff not-for-profit in 2011, IDEO.org, a design studio with a mission to improve the lives of people in poor and vulnerable communities through design, "we design products and services alongside organisations that are committed to creating a more just and inclusive world."(1)

I will not go into the organisations in great detail, but will instead look at the opportunities created in the umbrella type incubation of a no- for-profit, supported by a larger, well established company.

Since 1991, IDEO employ a human-centred design approach to create products, services, spaces and experiences for clients in public, private and non-profit sectors. The company grew to become a global practice, and in 2001 the leaders saw opportunities to apply their design approach to social impact work. The company already worked with non-profits and NGOs, however looked more strategically at ways to connect the practice to the social sector in significant and long-term ways.

Leverage

IDEO.org strives to leverage existing resources and infrastructure to develop self-sustaining initiatives that build local capacity.

IDEO acted as an incubator for IDEO.org for the first 18 months:
- Provided workspace
- Engaging fellows instead of full-time staff
- Allowing top IDEO designers to join the IDEO.org team
- Providing the organisation with top staff without the need to commit to long term employment
- Offering training opportunities in the field of human-centred design
- Giving financial support to the new non-profit
- Hiring more staff and gradually phased out fellowship program in lieu of full-time staff

Most significantly, IDEO.org was financially supported by IDEO, which meant that the not-for-profit could be uncompromising in its selection of projects and partners based on impact rather than revenue.

Prioritising Values

The diagram above, produced by IDEO.org, is reminiscent of my previous discussion with TACSI regarding prioritising values (2). We discussed the need to create a type of quantifiable checklist to refer to, when determining whether to engage in a particular project. The table provides an example of this put into practice.

Partnerships

IDEO.org established a partnership-oriented approach to design, where clients are identified as partners. Rather than responding to an established brief or scope of work, IDEO.org begin by discussing broad, relevant issues with their partners. The partners inform the regional and local context, unpack complexities around the area of proposed work, and help gain a deeper understanding of the root causes of the challenges.

Building on the human centred design approach of IDEO, this became central to the mindset of IDEO.org throughout its practice, which is more akin to strategy and consulting, than product or service design. This has slowly evolved to projects to programs, for long term impact.

Using a completed project as an example, IDEO.org worked with the American Refugee Committee to address infant mortality in the Democratic Republic of Congo. Bringing its human centred approach, IDEO.org workshopped with local mothers to understand the challenge from their perspective.

This reframed the challenge from a focus on preventable diseases, to a focus on the interconnected systems controlling access to water, healthcare and agriculture.

The outcome was the design of a new social enterprise that provided a range of services to address these identified needs.

Summary

- An established company can incubate a not-for-profit by providing the initial resources and financial foothold
- This enables the leverage of existing staff expertise, access to established networks, and building upon the established company's robust, influential reputation
- Building upon an existing company, means the not-for-profit can draw upon the credibility of an existing portfolio of work

References

1. About, IDEO.org, https://www.ideo.org (accessed 27/05/2020)

2. Diagram source:
Proactive Practices, http://proactivepractices.org, (accessed 10/03/2020)

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ARCHRIVAL, CUSTOM MAD, LUCY HUMPHREY STUDIO

On Collaboration and Rivalry

Affiliated architecture firms based in Sydney. The architect founders of Custom Mad and Lucy Humphrey Studio (traditional for-profit architecture firms) cofounded Archrival, a not-for-profit organisation exploring collaboration and rivalry in design practice.

Interviewees: Claire McCaughan (Architect, founder of Custom Mad and Cofounder of Archrival) and Lucy Humphrey (Architect, founder of Lucy Humphrey Studio and Cofounder of Archrival)

May 2020

My research into the architecture firms Inscape Studio (a conventional profitable business) and Inscape Publico (a not-for-profit) in the US, stimulated new ideas around the processes of an architectural project and the separate roles that affiliated profitable and not-for-profit organisations may play in its delivery: the so-coined, "family network" arrangement of complementary entities.

In March 2020, I attended a Small Business Masterclass delivered by the Australian Institute of Architects, NSW Chapter in Sydney. Claire McCaughan, Custom Mad founder and Archrival cofounder, presented at the Masterclass, discussing Archrival,

"a non-profit organisation that unites the creative community through rivalry and interdisciplinary collaboration"(1)

Following the Masterclass, I looked at the websites of the three firms (Archrival, Custom Mad and Lucy Humphrey Studio). There was deliberate cross referencing across the practices, suggestive of the "family network" arrangement. I immediately contacted McCaughan and Humphrey to discuss how this relationship had formed and why they retained the three separate identities when they were clearly so intertwined.

I spoke to McCaughan and Humphrey separately by phone, but will integrate their discussion here, since the cohesive nature of their comments reflects the clarity of their Archrival mission and strategy.

Background

In 2011, McCaughan was an Associate at Sam Crawford Architects, and Humphrey had recently commenced her own private practice; both studios had submitted proposals to City of Sydney, for their Art and About scheme. McCaughan explains, "We knew there were a lot of emerging studios at the time putting in submissions, and we wanted to do an exhibition in a laneway, have a

party and paste up all the proposals in the back of Surry Hills."

McCaughan continues, "We thought it would be great if the City of Sydney staff could attend the exhibition, so they could see how much creativity they had encouraged. We were so naive! They told us we were not allowed to have the 'exhibition' because it would jeopardise the entire tender process"

Humphrey relays their frustration at what she describes as wasted productivity, where ideas and work were never seen nor shared, "I think it was specifically that event, that triggered us to say okay, let's start doing things where we can do call outs and lots of people could do things and we had all different ideas. It's just testing the waters, really."

McCaughan and Humphrey shifted their focus to a proposal for Sydney Fringe at Carriageworks, which became Eleventh Hour, Archrival's first project.

Responding to their experience with the City of Sydney, McCaughan describes their intention for people to be involved in Archrival on a project by project basis.

"That's when we thought that we would base the whole practice around rivalry instead of having secretive design processes. That we could encourage people across practices to come together for projects only, and become part of Archrival for a project… What we were encouraging people to do is take that content and use that as their own. And be very transparent about how it was created. For example, if they worked for another practice, that person became part of Archrival at the same time. In 2011, that wasn't a situation that was acceptable in most studios. You dedicated yourself to one studio. It's different now."

Eleventh Hour, Carriageworks, Sydney, Australia, 2011 credit: Archrival

Humphrey reflects, "when we set it up in 2011, we weren't at all trying to start a practice per se. We had ideas about doing projects and we had ideas about having a kind of manifesto and a really strong set criteria that we had to work to. And it didn't fit normal architecture practice at all, so we were happy to just not think about it like that and just set it up as its own creature. I think Claire looked into it a little bit and decided that the non-profit was the best structure because it has a totally different funding stream. We conceived it in the beginning as something that we'd basically be putting money in for and we were quite into doing unsolicited projects so we didn't care at all, about a corporate or a business structure. We were more interested in how you could set it up like a social structure and engage people."

Family Network

I wonder why Archrival is separate, when McCaughan and Humphrey have such clarity around their core principles, couldn't it translate across all projects? Humphrey asserts, "Because that would change the way we work… it was just that idea that you could conceive of something totally different and it didn't work to have an idea of the normal architecture practice and try and push it a little bit. It's just you can't mould it from the inside. It was better to just start fresh with a totally different system."

Humphrey describes how Archrival allows them to infiltrate the profession with new ideas, unrestrained by conventional practice;

"We didn't like the idea of expanding the boundary we worked. We liked the idea of working totally outside of the boundary instead."

This comment resonates, for throughout my interviews, architects have reflected on the definition of the architect, the role of the architect, what are the boundaries, are they being pushed, expanded or returning to what they fundamentally were? Humphrey muses, "one person described it to us like having an antidote to our normal practice. And I thought that was totally, exactly right."

McCaughan likewise rejects the concept of combining their practice, "it's not how we find impact. We find impact from having the different studios. The organisational structure of Archrival allows us to respond quickly to opportunities and be more flexible."

McCaughan explains in more detail, "Lucy and I acknowledge that we don't want to spend 24/7 with each other as well. We find we work better when we go off and do our own thing. We have different skills because we have different clients and produce varied projects. I

Above: Arena Calcetto, Venice International Architecture Biennale 2012, credit: Patrick Fileti

make exhibitions with the Australian Design Centre and I build houses for private clients. Lucy does a lot more hospitality work and she runs her own art practice. So, we have different portfolios, relationships and skills. Also keeping Archrival as an independent entity, without the burden of needing to make profit, allows us to turn it off and on."

Both founders have young children, and have also found benefits in the flexibility that the separation of the organisation allows. McCaughan explains that neither she nor Humphrey are employed by Archrival, and that every project uniquely combines those that want to participate,

"when we have a project, we would say, who's available? Who wants to do it? This is the money involved, and it's small, but you might not have heaps to do at the moment. You might want to boost your portfolio, and for that reason you might be interested in the contents. You might want to work with that consultant or that artist."

Humphrey explains, "We haven't done any private work with Archrival. I think maybe that's something we haven't thought about enough but none of it is private. No commissions. It's always public, and that was one of our initial rules and the point of the non-profit, like the mission is to kind of educate the public about, design; to engage with the public differently, but also to engage

with the profession differently. And that can mean not just architects and engineers but all the other people involved."

Humphrey continues to reiterate the importance of having both the not-for-profit and the commercial practices independent, since both contribute to her professional experience, "the public nature of the projects was important in that I think being a small practice a lot of your work tends to be residential. Not all of it, Claire and I both do non-residential projects as well, but the majority of it is. So that's also why the practices are separate, because we can't take, well, maybe we don't feel comfortable, taking risks and experimenting on private clients. Which I think is fine, that's reasonable. People would say we've taken risks, like we've taken all sorts of risks, that's true. I've pushed boundaries and limits, but never at the expense of someone else or someone's brief for personal budget. I think that's quite important."

Leverage

The separate entities also provide the architects with additional leverage when bidding for work. McCaughan explains:

"we have an expression of interest at the moment that we need to apply for. If I applied for it or Lucy applied, we don't have the experience to win it separately, but Archrival does."

Humphrey does her own art-based commissions, but maintains that Archrival projects are architecture; both as a product of their architectural training, as well as always having a function or purpose in a way that separates their work from fine art.

Archrival has provided opportunities for new connections and projects for both the non-profit organisation and their commercial studios. Humphrey describes this as cross pollination, "We've met quite a large number of people now who have become really key contacts or people that we work with a lot, or if we collaborate with a lot, we have had a few really good opportunities come from… We had this kind of vague idea to find those like-minded people, because they are out there just need to find them. This is a different way to find them rather than just slogging away doing the normal thing; participating in the normal system, not really helping to change the status quo or advocate for anything. Like if you just carry on, nothing will change that we had this big idea that we could find people who are interested in working differently if we put ourselves out there."

McCaughan and Humphrey refer to Archrival as a privilege, or luxury, in not having to rely on the organisation for income; but that it was a deliberate choice not to focus on money. Both architects depend on their commercial practices to support their livelihood; meaning projects can be carefully selected for Archrival, preserving its mission.

Humphrey confirms that maintaining separate organisations has allowed them to selectively curate discussion and preserve the identity and mission of each practice,

"we've given talks where we just don't show any architecture… I think that's the benefit of splitting them, too. You can be really clear if you want, with the message. You don't have to try and make everything into the package."

Not-for-Profit

"When you set something up as a not-for-profit it is helpful for a number of reasons, but mainly because you can choose to not focus on the capitalist entity," (McCaughan).

For the last few years, McCaughan and Humphrey have been juggling young families alongside both their commercial studios and Archrival. Humphrey reflects that this experience has reconfirmed her values and commitment to the core Archrival principles,

"If you're going to spend your time working and you have something else important to do, it better be worthwhile. It better be worth it. And you better have principles. And you really have to know what you're doing and why you're doing it. I think that, that's quite clear and it's quite important… What are you spending your time on?"

There are unanticipated implications of the non-profit arrangement, across both financial and social exchange, as Humphrey describes, "everybody was very open to collaborating and also to giving; maybe not money, money was hard, but they would give services and they'll give materials or at least give big discounts. So, right away, as soon as we said non-profit, the attitude of everyone is very different. They are much more willing to contribute, which is interesting." A new language or attitude established itself around the non-profit venture.

Both McCaughan and Humphrey discuss their ongoing collaborative relationship with ARUP engineers, whose company mission incorporates giving back through community engaged work. ARUP is particularly unique in that these commitments originated long before the current trend of purposeful work. In 1970, founder, engineer and philosopher Sir Ove Arup delivered 'The Key Speech' setting out the aims of the firm, striving to shape a better world.(2)

Projects

Studying two projects, it becomes apparent that the non-profit structure of Archrival assisted in the delivery and outreach of its works.

One of Archrival's earliest projects was Arena Calcetto, an interactive installation for the Australian Pavilion at the Venice International Architecture Biennale, 2012. Reflecting on the benefits of the non-profit structure of Archrival, Humphrey relayed that "we were usually building on a network of people that we knew. But when we did the project for Venice, which was obviously a big one, there we were approaching strangers and it definitely made a difference to getting people on board."

The non-profit structure of the organisation also assisted Archrival to access funds that allowed the work to be transported from Italy to Australia. McCaughan explains

"We did all that work for free at the time, but then a year later, the City of Sydney awarded us a grant to showcase the work in Sydney. We wouldn't have been eligible for that grant if we were a for-profit entity."

As a non-profit organisation, Archrival can be a profitable business, but profits must be reinvested in the organisation or used to achieve its ultimate objectives.

Archrival can broaden its outreach and impact by selectively investing surplus revenue. McCaughan provides an example, "Archrival now has funds so we can decide to invest in a project where we want to collaborate with a certain artist and where there's not enough money committed to the project.."

A more recent project in 2018, Grandmother Tree (Sunset), was a collaboration with Yuwaalaraay woman, Lucy Simpson, who McCaughan knew from her time working at the Australian Design Centre. McCaughan explains, "Lucy and I were acutely aware we had never worked in close collaboration with an indigenous designer. I had commissioned and curated Indigenous artists at the Australian Design Centre and noticed that the art community were much better at cultural collaborations than architects. So when Lucy Simpson approached us in early 2018 to work together on a project at Barangaroo we immediately said yes. The Archrival structure allowed us to intensely focus on working together with Simpson, to listen to her stories, and learn about her culture that is so close to us, yet so far away. Without the burden of monitoring profit, Archrival gave us the freedom to spend time developing that relationship."

Below: Arena Calcetto, Venice International Architecture Biennale 2012, credit: Patrick Fileti

Process: Collaboration and Rivalry

McCaughan references the Australian culture of competition in sport, which isn't translated into conventional design practice. Design processes in Archrival try to encourage healthy competition and rivalry, as McCaughan describes "We wanted to open up that process. When we talk to potential clients and where we're not developing the project ourselves, we like to explain how we use rivalry as a design tool. For example, if there is a room full of stakeholders, each with separate agendas and priorities, conversation can become awkward pretty quickly. So we like to set up an introduction about how we encourage rivalry and disagreement, and that it's ok to have competition in the room - and in fact, if you think of grand sporting rivalries, the outcome will be better, and more exciting if we disagree more often. As soon as you talk about sport, people get it!"

McCaughan describes the iterative design process between herself and Humphrey, in which they edit each other through constructive rivalry, suggesting they are "unafraid to insult each other, so we don't hold on to things and worry about being wrong" and reflecting that in her Custom Mad work, she now finds it disconcerting when someone agrees with her.

Above: Grandmother Tree (Sunset), North Festival, Barangaroo, Sydney, Australia, 2018 credit: Archrival

Humphrey reflects that Archrival's collaborative design process can require managing multiple people and personalities, making it more challenging at times than conventional design. However, it has also produced a more stimulating practice, "a different way to build relationships and find opportunities than just doing it the normal way, which seemed really irrelevant and ineffective and just not right anymore. Not suitable for the world, not representative."

The fundamental importance of design through rivalry stems from the founders' experience of ego and separatism within the architecture profession. Humphrey describes how Archrival sees value in

> "creating a rivalry that people that would normally be in different offices, were together in a project space, working on something, it's just a bit unusual to do that."

Talking with Humphrey, I can see that their collaborative design philosophies are reflected not only in Archrival, but their commercial practice too, "we've talked a lot about collaboration and people often criticised us for that, maybe not criticised but just thought it was a bit naive because people sometimes are not very good at collaborating… I think the core thing we tried to do and we always try and do, is not do the normal process

where the architect kind of controls the project up until DA [Development Application] basically, or up until it's approved and has full creative control and no one else has a look in."

Humphrey continues to reflect on collaboration as a tool for a much richer design process, "We were very interested in having people involved much earlier, like almost from the beginning, because, first of all it sets such a different tone for the team if everyone is invited to have input from the beginning." It is clear that Humphrey and McCaughan were looking for new ways of working to harness the range of creative skills and experience available in multidisciplinary work.

There have been challenges to the multi-disciplinary approach of Archrival, including the issue of insurance for an architectural firm working beyond the conventional scope of a professional Architect. Humphrey explains, "our insurance as architects does not let us do the Archrival stuff. Basically, it's an absolute no go zone. It's out of bounds. It's sometimes not a typical procurement process. Sometimes we get paid the fee for the project and have to deliver it sort of like a builder. Or sometimes we have to engage consultants, which we would normally not do. Sometimes we have to supply materials and depending on what the work is, very often we're on site and doing things with our hands, which is totally not allowed either. So, this is an ongoing chat we have with

our insurers. We have our PL [Public Liability] and PI [Professional Indemnity] and everything, but the switch between practices in insurance world is a nightmare."

A potential solution would be for Humphrey or McCaughan to obtain a builder's licence, or to invite a builder into Archrival, however the first is costly, and secondly, it is important to the founders that Archrival does not consist only of individuals within the architecture and construction industry.

Humphrey explains that

"sometimes we're put in positions where you have the contracts, and as architects, they're really onerous. And they're like, don't worry about it, it's an artist contract or something like that and artists sign it all the time. And then we say yes, but we are both registered architects and we are bound by certain Codes and there are things that we can and can't do. And that's been a really interesting challenge."

Another more obvious challenge has involved the juggling of multiple practices; Humphrey refers to Archrival as their extra-curricular activity, navigating the time to dedicate to its projects.

Fortunately, as Archrival has evolved, the work has progressed from essentially volunteer work, to paid. "We can get paid and we should get paid. And, you know, first and foremost, we don't like asking people to work for free. The first people we're going to pay are the people working on the project."

Overall, despite the challenges of working beyond the conventional scope or role of an architect, Humphrey reflects on Archrival's capacity at times to have impact across multiple layers of a project, due to their full engagement with the processes.

Here, referring to a project in which artist Lucy Simpson had designed custom rugs and cushions, "Claire found this company where they had employed refugees to do all of the making…. If we're in control of delivering something, we can actually choose an ethical producer or a local producer, or you can have interesting things like that. Which wouldn't happen if you're handing over to a builder who might just be sourcing whatever they can as cheaply as they can. So, there's benefit, you know, to having the full creative control. You can have a whole story in there that you don't need to tell people about. You just do it and you know, you contributed positively"

Summary

• The founders intentionally structured Archrival to exist outside of conventional architectural practice models; working outside of the boundary rather than expanding it
• McCaughan and Humphrey gain experience and knowledge from their commercial practices that they bring to Archrival
• Having separate commercial practices allows the founders to fulfil their own career aspirations separate to Archrival
• The separate identities of the practices allow the directors to access separate markets or project opportunities while representing them as specialised in the subject field
• Archrival is separate so that its practice concepts can remain undiluted. The founders are not financially dependent on Archrival so can be selective on projects
• Innovation in practice can be more straightforward than innovating in business – for example, the challenges of obtaining insurance for an organisation that works beyond conventional architectural practice
• Non-profit structure provides access to alternative revenue such as grants and donations
• Non-profit structure also increases receptivity from stakeholders

Images

1. Eleventh Hour, Carraigeworks, Sydney, Australia, 2011
photography: Archrival

2. and 3. Arena Calcetto, Australian Pavilion, Venice International Architecture Biennale, Italy, 2012
photography: Patrick Fileti

4. Grandmother Tree (Sunset), North Festival, Barangaroo, Sydney, Australia, 2018

5. (Opposite) Grandmother Tree (Sunset), North Festival, Barangarodo, Sydney, Australia, 2018

References

1. About, Archrival, http://www.archrival.org/about.html, (accessed 16/05/2020)

2. Values, ARUP, https://www.arup.com/our-firm/values, (accessed 16/05/2020)

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Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship Journal Series

Work to live, or live to work? How can the 'purpose-driven' business model be applied to architectural practice in Australia?

SAGO DESIGN, SAGO BUILD, SAGO NETWORK

On Identity and Specialisation

An associated group of business including Sago Design – a bespoke architecture practice, Sago Build – a construction company, and Sago Network – a not-for-profit that works across Australia and Papua New Guinea on humanitarian design and construction projects.

Interviewees: Lachlan Delaney, (Architect, cofounder)

Opposite photo:
Community centred approach, votes being cast,
Papua New Guinea

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After speaking with McCaughan and Humphrey from Archrival, they recommended I look into Sago Network as an effective example of a family network of companies doing both commercial and humanitarian architecture.

The architecture firm, Sago Design; construction company, Sago Build; and the not-for-profit, Sago Network; share similar titles and are heavily cross referenced on their separate websites. I am excited to speak with Delaney who promptly accepts an invitation to chat.

Papua New Guinea

I am interested in why, with Australian origins, Sago is linked to Papua New Guinea. The answer is a result of long-standing friendships and relationships, and firstly the formation of Sago Network. Lachlan Delaney (architect cofounder), Brendan Worsley (architect, builder and cofounder) and Rosemary Korawali (Papua New Guinea based architect, cofounder) came together in 2007 on a program that Korawali had organised in Papua New Guinea (PNG). The ten-week program was a design-build community project collaborating with a village.

Delaney explains that each of the cofounders had a background and interest in community engaged work. Korawali was a PNG architect with "a lived understanding of the trials and tribulations of PNG life and the development challenges they have." Worsley had a background in indigenous work and volunteer work in Africa; and growing up, Delaney had lived in an indigenous community in Australia for a short period of time, then worked over a seven year period with Paul Pholeros on his Housing for Health programmes.

Continuing, Delaney reflects that "I guess all of us had our own reference point as to why we saw a relevant role for the architect in community development as we

would think of it and that came together in 2007 on this student programme. We left that programme feeling like there was so much more to be done and to be achieved with communities up there, that in 2011 we formalised Sago Network as a not-for-profit entity here in Australia and in Papua New Guinea with the specific objective of improving village health through water, sanitation and other sort of health facilities: clinics, aid post that sort of stuff."

Delaney discusses how both the shared history of Australia and PNG, and the warm reception from the Melanesian people contributed to their longstanding relationships there, "What we had was our nearest neighbour, with many shared cultural and historical ties that is in desperate need of even basic development assistance and, to be quite honest, a friendship in a partnership between three people who had the connections and the energy to make it happen. So, it's not, you know, solely saying it was logic alone. It was also the fact that we had agency as a team of three friends to operate within that community".

This comment relates to an invaluable insight shared by Delaney, that architects (or anyone) looking to be involved in purpose, community or aid work should look to their own network to identify where they can be useful.

"It's not about picking or trying to select the community that's most in need. It's about working with whatever community's within your orbit and within your power to collaborate with. There's always need, whether it's in a city, Sydney, whether it's the outskirts of Sydney, whether it's you know, the desert of South Australia or whether it's Papua New Guinea or Kenya, it really doesn't matter. Its whomever we're connected to and can assist."

Identity and Specificity

I am eager to discuss the relationship between the three organisations, and why Sago has been separated into three entities. Delaney explains firstly, the consideration of identity. Internally, the team members behind the three separate companies are fluid and culturally interconnected. Externally, however, Delaney explains the value of preserving the separate identities to reflect their expertise in each of their areas.

"My first answer to that would be that identity internally is interconnected, but there can be a big advantage externally when you think of it from a client's point of view, a sort of marketing or image-based point of view for things to be specialised and experts in what they do in a sense."

Delaney relays several scenarios to demonstrate the relationship between expertise and client, "I say client thinking of a villager as much as inner city Sydney resident who might want to design or build with us. But when you think of it from a client point of view, at times there are advantages to not seeming so diluted and broad at times… two out of three clients, I reckon, would doubt whether we're good for our Sydney services if we went too hard on the PNG stuff in our identity".

Likewise, Delaney explains that working in PNG, amongst the international development community, Sago Network does not broadcast Sago Design or Sago Build. "We're a charity registered with the Australian not-for-profits commission, we're not-for-profit in both jurisdictions, we sit in meetings up there in PNG amongst World Vision, UNDP [United Nations Development Program], UNICEF, all these sorts of characters. We're at their tables up there and I think it's easier for them to have confidence in the community focused work that we do, if they don't have to grapple with a broader sort of nebulous idea of this design build team from Sydney that actually bolsters our village-level community development work."

Delaney summarises, that it is advantageous to present yourself more specifically to clients or shareholders, so that they have confidence in the services being delivered.

Using the work of Paul Pholeros and Health Habitat as an example, Delaney explains that "He wasn't trumpeting the fact that back in Sydney he's this architect, that does amazingly beautiful work. That was irrelevant to the communities he was serving out there. There are many other things, there were a million things to mention before that identity was relevant in that context." I reflect that this example perfectly summarises the discussion around specificity, identity and stakeholder.

Ownership and Governance

The second significant reason to preserve the separate identities is regarding ownership and governance. Delaney explains that

"when you're operating as broad as what we are, it's pretty clear, I think, to us, that even though we're innovative in the way that we practice, we certainly aren't trying to innovate in terms of the structure of each of our three entities. That is because, there's well number one, because with rules, regulations, licences and insurances, … the economic systems that are out there, prompt you to conform; they need you to conform. Insurers need a way to understand, 'hold on are you a builder or are you design-build? Design-build muddies the waters. We'll insure you if you're a builder'.

Delaney explains that since Sago operate (quite intentionally) as three separate entities, risks are compartmentalised. "Sago Design as probably similar to your own company with architectural registrations with the Architects Registration Board. But on the build side, of course, there's a whole series of licences, and insurances from a construction point of view that need to be held and held with a clean entity that is capable of maintaining those licences. But also compartmentalising the risk associated with constructing a $1,000,000 house in Sydney. If Sago Build was to receive a challenge on that front, the system of the broad, interconnected cultural team is protected by its legally compartmentalised nature, if you know what I mean."

As a registered not-for-profit, Sago Network is registered with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission, "which is a significant undertaking. But it does mean that we have separate accounting. In fact, we have a specialist accountant for Sago Network who has experience with not-for-profits. Our books are signed off and vetted on in a very different way to the way that Sago Design and Build are."

Delaney explains further, that registering with the Australian Charities and Not-for-Profits Commission was important for credibility amongst the NGOs they were working beside, as well as accessing certain grants.

The separation also allows the flexibility for each organisation to adapt to changing or potential future needs, Delaney suggests that "with Sago Network, there's certainly precedent for good community development organisations to adopt different ownership arrangements or membership arrangements, and in the future, I guess by having a structure like we've got, we've got maximum

Client consultations:

Adjacent photo:
Water well rehabilitation,
Papua New Guinea

Photo below:
On site, Mona Vale House,
Sydney

flexibility to continue to operate as we do, or in 10 20, 30 years adopt, or spin off, certain parts of what we're doing if it makes good sense for its objective."

Financial Sustainability

As three separate entities, Sago Network can function as a not-for-profit, while Sago Design and Sago Build can act as for-profit businesses. Ultimately, from a financial perspective, Delaney asserts that each entity can operate as their own cost centre, ensuring that each business is separately, financially, sustainable.

Delaney had worked closely with the late Paul Pholeros in his work at Health Habitat. Reflecting on the work of Pholeros, Delaney muses that "in a sense, he was also trying to set, and did set Health Habitat up as a financially sustainable, independent entity, from his architecture work. No doubt there were, of course, as there are for us, various ways, intangible, nonfinancial ways, that things are propped up by our fee-paying work for sure. But he certainly did, he was able to run Health Habitat as a financially stable and independent organisation."

Delany explains that Sago Network comprise approximately fifteen staff, "those two not-for-profit companies in PNG and Australia operate sustainably and independently from Sago Design and Sago Build, with the sole exception, perhaps, that there is still pro bono work being delivered by the three founding directors. So, in a sense that's the financial challenge as well, to make sure that all three can stand on their own two feet in the way that Paul ensured Healthhabitat did. But maybe in his messaging didn't always convey that they did."

Delaney explains that while Sago will remain as three entities, it is considering how best to communicate more regarding the broad experience of the team, "we're about to start rethinking how we broadcast ourselves maybe to actually show a little bit more, communicate a little bit more this richer team in this richer operation that happens behind some fairly, in a sense, conventionally structured companies."

To summarise their approach to the three companies Delaney suggests that "I would say we're looking to innovate through practice, but not through governance, not through structure. Like each individual structure, for

reasons of, accounting, compliance, governance, all of the boring stuff really. The bigger, more innovative purpose is helped by having compartmentalised but conventional business structures, the building company is a building company with all of the insurances it's got to hold. The architectural entity, but then also the not-for-profit, has all of the right standing that it needs in the not-for-profits space in which it exists."

Collaborations

Delaney explains that he too undertook a Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship, looking at the capacity building potential of architects around the world. One example that he wanted to relay, was the work of Ukumbi. Based in Finland, three individuals maintain their private practice, coming together in Ukumbi to deliver community work throughout Africa. Delaney reflects, "Ukumbi for me was yet another answer, that a purpose driven business model can actually be well served by having different entities that have slightly different compliance regulatory requirements, but also that can facilitate different collaborations."

I agree with Delaney, following many interviews, and more recently with Archrival, that the separate practices each develops its own skills and experience, and nurtures individual career projections, then comes together for the community work. Delaney contributes that "they're honing their expertise through their fee-paying work and in a sense they're able to make a better contribution to the community work or the creative work that they do."

Pro bono

Delaney clarifies that the founding directors, including himself, Worsley and Korawali still undertake unpaid work with Sago Network, "there is an element of still about 20% of our time being devoted to Sago Network in a pro bono capacity, it means that the work that we do with Sago Design and Sago Build is actually quite focused from an economic point of view. We can't and don't have any interest in exploring non fee-paying sorts of ideas with those two, because we have to focus our non-billable time into Sago Network and the community objectives."

Delaney explains that community work puts pressure on the other businesses to be financially sustainable. "Like you can't muck around. You can't if you're going to devote 20% of your time to something else. I had someone approach us, a consultant that we collaborate with that we really respect come at us with some really big ideas on bushfire recovery stuff. And I had to say to him earlier this year, "That's so awesome. But I literally can't keep the show running with 20% that we wipe off the balance sheet by working on PNG work whilst also going after

that. That is equally as relevant and noble. but it's not financially feasible."

Sago Network is the vehicle through which they make their community contributions. "We have to resist the urge for the heartstrings to be tugged in other directions as well," Delaney explains that opportunities arise across the Pacific, Solomon Islands and beyond, however "but at the moment we're actually serving a real community in need by being quite focused on Papua New Guinea. There is more need than we can handle up there alone if we spread it, if we would have spread ourselves too thin even with what we're doing, even within the remit of what we've decided to do, IF we spread ourselves geographically too much, we would become less effective as well, I believe."

Images below and opposite: Mona Vale House, Sago Design and Sago Build. Photography: Alex Mayes
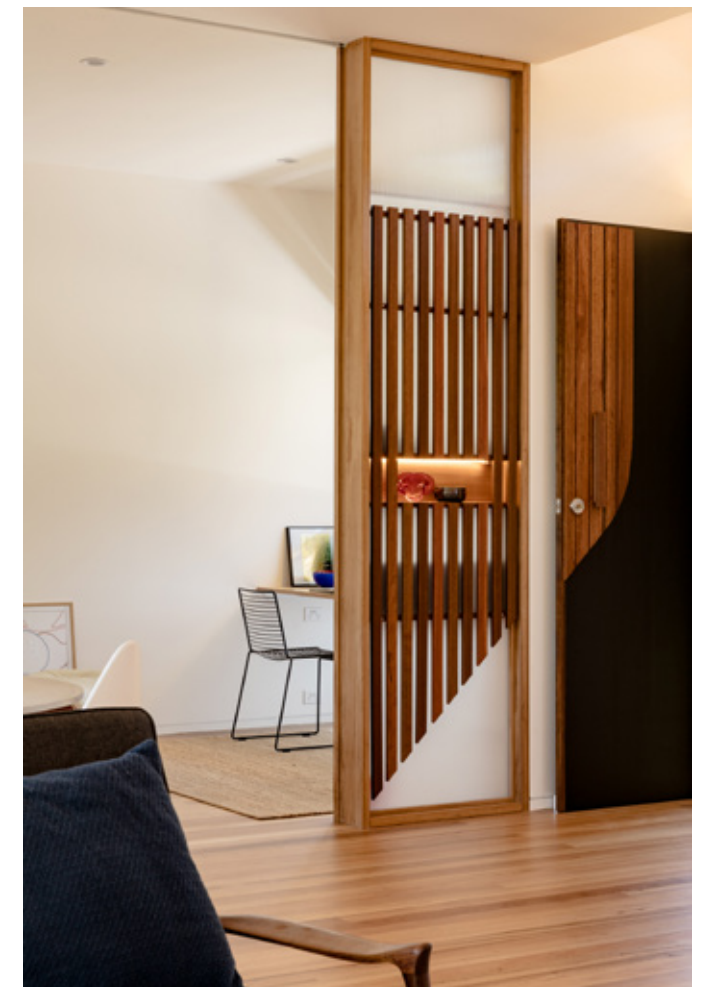
Goodwill vs Business

Delaney reflects on the rise of purpose driven business models, and the risk of working solely on motivations alone,

"I think all of us are now engaged with this idea and motivated by this idea of working for companies and entities who have purpose, who have the common social good at their core. So, I think that's the paradigm that we're in. We're all motivated by that, or many of us are motivated by that."

Delaney reflects on the demise of specific not-for-profit organisations, examples of well-intentioned organisations built on volunteers but which perhaps relied too heavily on motivation, without the financial sustainability, "It's still got to be driven by people at the core and they can get too big too easily because of too much good will and become ineffectual and ultimately unsustainable."

Delaney explains that Sago receive a lot of interest from architects, eager to chat and collaborate, but that he had to set work boundaries to ensure he did not burn out. Delaney highlights the red flags of a well-meaning organisation, as, "too much goodwill, but too much disorganisation and not enough focus".

Reflecting on the example of Archrival again, Delaney asserts that you're better off "as a professional entity with professional services, a momentum behind you, the software paid for by your fee-paying work and the community stuff can be accommodated within that momentum."

Delaney muses that making community work the 'bread and butter' is a less resilient model,

"You've got to address that, to pay the rent before you can find the time to help others. I mean, you've got to be that strong pillar yourself, in order to support others. . . . Financially and in every other way."

This conversation resonates with my interview with TACSI, whose staff prior experience commonly included a variety of well-meaning but mismanaged organisations, that worked for purpose at the sacrifice of financial or staff wellbeing.

Delaney goes further to suggest that:

"I wouldn't innovate with the fundamentals of good business. Instead, innovate with the way that you collaborate, innovate with the communities and the clients that you engaged with. But really, for that to be successful, it's actually got to be underpinned by business fundamentals that have probably been the same for decades."

The practice must be established on strong commercial foundations, from which to engage in purposeful work.

Continuing to reflect on his own practice, Delaney explains that "Our staff, I could tell you hand on heart, do very little overtime here in Sydney. Even doing our architectural work or our construction work, very little over time, and they value that. And that's part of the broader philosophy we're not here until 7pm on any night. That's part of, I guess this attempt for a more balanced approach. It means we can't cut fees or do stuff at a cheaper rate in order to win more projects but we are financially sustainable, as a practice and socially sustainable, I think in the way that we operate."

Sago Design comprises three registered architects including Delaney. He explains that "it's only a team of three, but we're all registered and therefore it's got a bit of momentum." I read between the lines that perhaps staff are encouraged to work autonomously; since it would be a different dynamic were the staff to be two students or graduates. Sago Build is a team of five, including Worsley, and Sago Network has a CEO in Sydney plus a team of fourteen local nationals in PNG.

Delaney had previously mentioned that Sago Network occasionally draw on the services of Sago Design. I am interested whether Sago Network can in some ways engage Sago Design, beyond a pro bono relationship. Delaney explains that their staff are energised to work with Sago in part for the community work, as well as the residential work as part of Sago Design and Build.

As a priority, staff are always paid for their time working on Sago Network; this cost is absorbed by Sago Design; "We're not asking them to do pro bono work, the company might, but the individuals don't. Their wages are always covered."

This year, for the first time, Delaney explains that they have secured funding for programs in PNG that can cover the wages for Sago Design staff, "we are gravitating out of a necessarily not-for-profit or pro bono mode of operation for the Sydney staff, and we're moving into their time being covered by Sago Network. So, Sago Design invoicing, Sago Network for the time that it's got to devote and that really is the most sustainable outcome. And that's where we need to get to, and we gradually
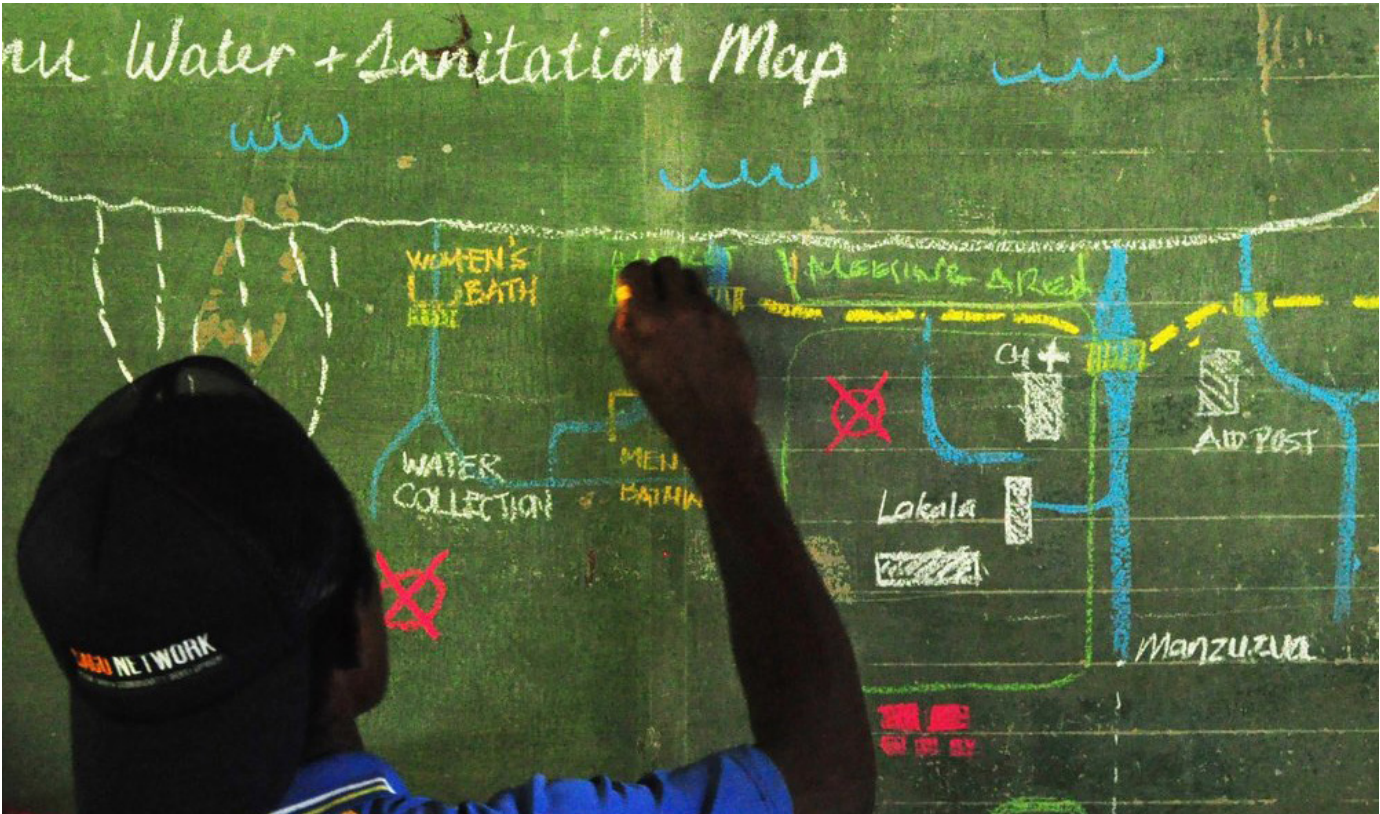
are. It's just a case of winning the community work up there that can have the project management and design, sort of staff, built into it in support."

I ask Delaney for closing advice for someone like me, an emerging architect with her own practice, looking to get involved in more purposeful work. First, he suggests the need for strong commercial foundations. Second, he revisits a previous suggestion: to look for opportunities within one's own orbit or network,

"No matter what our contributions are, it's got to be with the community that we're connected to that we can have agency with. You know, that community or that purpose, that contribution will probably become obvious when the time's right, based on who's within your orbit and who you can collaborate with."

Delaney's third piece of advice, reflects on the benefits of self-employment, "I reckon when you work for yourself, you can then shape that 20% of community contribution exactly as you see fit." Delaney explains that prior to establishing Sago Design, they were reaching the limits of goodwill from employers, providing leave with or without pay, working seven days a week and long hours. By working for himself, Delaney feels more able to keep his contributions in balance.

Reflecting on a project in Kenya that he was aware of a number of years ago, Delaney explains that it was

"...almost too much of a stretch. That's not close enough to being within your orbit to be impactful. That's when it becomes a real drain on your own business and You can't be present enough within the community to be effective... Be commercial and have eyes opened to the need that is within one's own reach."

Delaney does not claim that the Sago team has all the answers, however from our brief conversation they certainly have a viable game plan for contributing to a well-rounded, work-life balance.

Summary

• Sago innovate in practice, not in governance or business
• Separate not-for-profit and for-profit entities allow the organisations to present themselves specifically to their stakeholders
• Each organisation must firstly be grounded on financially sustainable foundations to succeed. Good motivation is not enough.
• Look for community or purposeful opportunities within one's own network or orbit
• Self-employment can provide the flexibility needed to focus on one's community contribution while maintaining a work/life balance

Images

Above: Community planning and mapping, Sago Network
Overpage: Sago Dry Toilet brochure

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Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship Journal Series

Work to live, or live to work? How can the 'purpose-driven' business model be applied to architectural practice in Australia?

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WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS ?
PNG'S WATERLESS AND PERMANENT TOILET

1 DESIGNED FOR PNG AND MADE IN PNG

A sanitation solution designed for rural communities and coastal villages throughout PNG, especially those affected by flood-prone or high water table environments.

A product made in PNG supporting local jobs through local manufacturing.

A solution firmly aimed at improving community health through quality design.

2 WATERLESS SOLUTION

No water is required to process the waste.

All rain water collected can be used for handwashing.

Toilet tanks are fully sealed, sit above ground and do not allow rainwater or ground water to reach waste material, eliminating risk of water contamination.

3 PERMANENT SOLUTION

High quality manufacturing uses plastics that ensure a lifespan of at least 15 years.

Core components have been industrially designed to ensure good functionality now and into the future.

4 NO SMELL AND NO FLIES

No smell due to a ventilation system that uses both wind and convection to draw smells up and out above the toilet. Good seals keep flies and insects out.

Output is a dry sand-like fertiliser that is largely free of smells and can be used productively on fruit trees or flowering plants.

5 EASY TO USE

4 simple steps for daily use with graphical reminders built into the toilet's core components.

Minimal maintenance on a 6-monthly basis for emptying of dry fertiliser from the dehydrated tank.

6 EASY TO TRANSPORT

All core components of the Sago Dry Toilet are delivered as a packaged kit of parts with the dual tanks and all components designed to be stacked.

One packaged Sago Dry Toilet is easily transported in the back of a small truck or within a banana boat as a compact package.

7 SAFE FOR PEOPLE

Each toilet has dual dehydration tanks with rotation every 6 months making cross-contamination impossible between the fresh waste in one tank and the dry fertiliser in the other tank.

Output is a dry sand-like fertiliser that hardly smells and can be buried or used under fruit trees or flowering plants. Use of fertiliser directly on root crops should be avoided.

8 SAFE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

Designed to isolate waste from people until transformed into fertiliser and is safe to be returned to the environment.

Perfect for high water table environments with no contamination of the water table or well water sources.

2

SUMMARY

Background

The term, 'purpose-driven' business has gained momentum recently as new generations explore ways to integrate purpose and meaning into their work life. As Delaney of Sago Network described, "I think all of us are now engaged with and motivated by this idea of working for companies and entities who have purpose, who have the common social good at their core."

But how do we overcome the unfortunate prejudice that purposeful work should be volunteer, and that free work is delivered either by passionate students or inferior design professionals? Purposeful work should not rely on free work, and emerging architects should not have to volunteer or intern in order to demonstrate their skills or build their portfolio, since this raises questions around privilege, financial backing or access to resources.

I commenced my Byera Hadley research hoping to find ways for an all-encompassing architecture practice to be both financially sustainable and socially impactful. I was inspired by the company, Who Gives a Crap? a for-profit business selling toilet paper, that commits a percentage of its profits to other not-for-profit partners that construct toilets in developing countries. Its marketing campaign focuses on presenting this impact, engaging consumers with the humanitarian work and using the company purpose as the differential for selecting its product.

I wondered if potential clients would select an architecture practice for its involvement in humanitarian work, whether they would engage with part of the story or impact. However, I didn't rephrase the question for a different type of client; for example, working in community or post disaster, would a stakeholder, working with a humanitarian architect, value (or care about!) its bespoke portfolio or expertise?

I realised that an organisation attempting to appear as all-encompassing, might instead dilute its mission or relevance in a given context. Speaking with Delaney from Sago Network, he stressed the importance of presenting as a specialist in your field. Seated amongst large aid organisations such as UNHCR and World Vision, Delaney reflected that Sago's bespoke work was possibly detrimental within that context, and certainly irrelevant. What was important was its registration as a charity which certified its legitimacy.

Who Gives a Crap and Ecosia are two companies that commit their profits to a purpose, and market this impact. Neither of these organisations are directly delivering the purposeful service. There is a definite, quantifiable, monetary contribution from the company to the organisation delivering the impact. The profits are committed to the service provider who must use all funds to realise the mission and deliver the defined impact (building toilets or planting trees).

A not-for-profit organisation can still make profits, however these must be reinvested to fulfil its impact or meet its mission. This got me thinking; architects are service based professionals. A not-for-profit structure can be applied to a purposeful architecture practice since we deliver the service, the impact. Throughout the design and construction process, we, as architects, can direct funds for maximum impact across the project stages –the more obvious examples include sourcing sustainable and local materials, trades, and so on. Further examples were provided by Archrival, that use its practice to encourage diversity across the project stages, such as working with indigenous artists and ethical or local producers.

Most significantly, I wanted to investigate how the architecture practice can remain financially viable, without compromising its values. Financial sustainability is important, since the business must exist to deliver its impact, and on sound foundations for longevity: longevity of impact, longevity of staff, longevity to gain expertise and understand context. The knock-on effects are many.

There is no single answer to this research; the definition of 'purpose' is diverse, as are its implications for practice. However, the structure that resonated with me, is that of the 'family network'. A conventional for-profit practice that supports the architect's livelihood, builds their portfolio, facilitates experimentation and expands its experience. Plus, the separate not-for-profit: committed to its mission, uncompromising in its values, since it exists independent of the founder's personal financial requirements. The successful family network is the association of the two (or more): a network of organisations delivering deliberately separate, specific, projects to identified client demographics.

Inscape Studio and Inscape Publico have successfully streamlined the relationship between the two

organisations, finding a way to channel new work from the not-for-profit into the commercial practice. For the first time, this year, Sago Design is being paid for work they undertake for Sago Network; and the exposure from Archrival has facilitated new paid work for McCaughan and Humphrey's commercial practices, while forming a network of likeminded individuals.

The following summary of common themes will therefore be explored generally in relation to the **Family Network** approach.

The Architect

My discussion with several architects working in community engagement spoke of broadening or expanding the architect's role. It would involve another research study to determine the definition of today's architect, however I do assert that the skills required of a good architect can predispose them to community engaged work. In broadening their role, architects can expand their professional development, but also diversify their sources of revenue, both of which contribute to a sound business strategy.

Architects' skillsets that predispose us to community engagement work and as project facilitators include:

• Skills of communication across disciplines and levels of expertise, including translating technical information for the layman
• Management and leadership
• Collaboration
• Understanding of policy, and ability to navigate the bureaucratic processes of development
• Concept and visualisation skills
• Capacity to determine when the solution may not be specifically architectural or built

Furthermore, as explored in the work of Inscape Publico, Inscape Studio and Kaunitz Yeung, architects can contribute to the preconception phases of a project which enable it to evolve past a preliminary idea. This preconception work can be critical for the project to come to fruition, but is sometimes beyond the conventionally prescribed work of an architect:

• Capacity to seek out and assist in grant writing applications
• Understanding of policy and government
• Preparation of feasibility studies
• Navigating bureaucratic processes
• Communication with stakeholders (visual and verbal) including client, end users, funders, philanthropists, government bodies

Our skills as architects can be employed to undertake genuine community consultation, which requires a range of approaches to reflect the diversity of people to be heard. People are diverse, as are their backgrounds, methods of engagement, interaction, and communication.

As Hazel Tilley, community member for Granby Four Streets, suggests, "there's no such thing as a hard to reach group, it's that you're not welcoming them in, in the right manner."

Image below: Hazel Tilley in her home in Liverpool where she kindly housed me for a night

Image above: The Sociable Weaver Group staff and families on a tree planting day. Photography: Bri Horne

Architects must engage appropriately with stakeholders before they can provide genuine, contextual advice. The solution to a community need is not always a built one – as Ahn from Studio Weave asserted, it is important to determine outcome over output, and only after close consultation.

Struggling with the conventional role of the architect, the founders of Archrival explained that they had intentionally structured the organisation to exist outside of established architectural practice modes. This allows them to work and challenge architectural practice from outside of the prescribed boundary rather than attempting to expand it from within.

Ultimately, however, it is up to individual architects to determine their role to meet their own professional aspirations. All individuals have their own character, strengths and weaknesses that can be instrumental to a range of impacts and community contributions. Not all architects might have the desire to engage in community, public interest or purposeful work. However the importance of authentic impact cannot be disputed.

Health and Wellbeing – Staff, Office Culture, Network

I wondered whether there are scales to the application of purpose, in a loose order of: self, office, consultants, client, project, stakeholders, end users. But instead, it quickly became apparent that foremost, impact starts at home: staff and office culture are the first demonstration of the business' values. The company or organisation must firstly be financially sustainable with healthy staff (mentally and physically), before attempting to extend purposeful outreach beyond the office.

Despite the greater commitment to purpose, real life indicates that compromise is required in order to maintain team and business resilience. The family network enables the not-for-profit organisation to be uncompromising in its values, across all areas of its existence. This is only in conjunction with the financial sustainability of the for-profit, which may compromise if necessary, to maintain the health and wellbeing of the team. In short, some flexibility in revenue must be accommodated, in order to remain afloat. The family approach allows the separate entities and their values to be compartmentalised and preserved.

In the case of Ecosia, the compromise occurs within the business, as Wickes explains, "if Ecosia was a search engine that only took green advertisers we wouldn't be able to plant 60 million trees." However, its profits are dedicated to organisations that must be uncompromising in the delivery of its purpose, to plant trees through socially sustainable organisations.

Returning back to staff and office culture for a moment, these must demonstrate the fundamental values of the practice. Across all of the interviews, founders reiterated the importance for an ethical company to demonstrate its morals firstly through its staff. Typically, they were leaders in implementing staff benefits, including family leave, professional development, mentoring, flexibility and above all, two-way communication. This reciprocal relationship nurtured a culture of longevity and authenticity.

In every interview, directors confirmed that staff were self-selecting, motivated by and engaged with the purpose or impact of the business. Purposeful business values were demonstrated in the human centred approach to the staff and office culture.

In her book, *The Year of Living Danishly, Uncovering Secrets of the World's Happiest Country*, UK author, Helen Russell, describes her shock at discovering that an employee consistently working overtime in Denmark is more likely to be reprimanded for time (mis)management than congratulated for hard work. This approach flips on its head the 'long-hours' culture for which architects are infamous.

Similarly inverting standard approach to practice, Raine and Makin determined that working with non-permanent staff was an opportunity to engage with individuals exposed to a diverse range of offices and projects. This experience can incubate the professional growth of the contractor, determining them as attributes to a team project. This innovative approach to staff engagement inverts the historic aversion for staff to be engaged across multiple practices, an approach that Archrival is also determined to erode.

Raine and Makin found alternative ways to cultivate long standing professional relationships with project-based contractors; investing in professional development and staff benefits.

That said, this collaborative and impermanent approach to staff is relevant to the practices of both Raine and Makin and Archrival, and not necessarily to full time architecture practice. It does however provide some insight into the way that small, emerging companies struggle to demonstrate longevity and commitment to staff they don't have the capacity to permanently employ.

Valued staff can be compensated in less quantitative or financial ways. Providing purpose might subsidise this in part.

Another avenue that is important for demonstrating an authentic commitment to purpose, is through active engagement in an aligned purposeful network. Advocating for purpose through diverse mediums or expressions, builds a network of likeminded people, including reaching out to prospective, aligned staff. Kaunitz is a longstanding advocate for humanitarian and community involved practice, and is revered somewhat as an expert in this area. In the case of Archrival, through their projects they curated a network of likeminded individuals interested in multidisciplinary collaboration.

There are further advantages to active engagement with the purpose network,. As Wickes explained, Ecosia very intentionally engage agencies that undertake pro bono or purpose work. In this way Ecosia fulfil both its own purpose, but also enable that of another agency with aligned values.

Credibility

In order to establish themselves with a credible portfolio, community engaged or purpose driven architects rely at times on a portfolio of volunteer or pro bono work. A family network of businesses means that an architect (or firm) can draw on its experience undertaken in commercial practice to demonstrate its expertise. This negates the need for architects to rely on pro bono work to build a purposeful portfolio, which regardless raises questions around the privilege and access to resources that enable such free work. Community work is important and so is an architect's skills, which should be paid for.

Inscape Publico was able to harness the existing portfolio, experience and networks of Inscape Studio. Likewise, Archrival is able to reference the commercial portfolios of McCaughan and Humphrey; and IDEO.org the reputation of IDEO.

Accreditation can be commercially beneficial, such as Benefit Corporation and Green Star. Formal registration of not-for-profit or charitable entities provide credibility and demonstrate authenticity within those areas of expertise. Each of these accreditations speak to different audiences and the significance (or lack thereof) should be considered in the context of each project. For example, Dunn & Hillam reflected that environmental sustainability is addressed in its standard design processes, above and beyond the capacity of Green Star, which communicates more to developer clients who might otherwise seek the minimum environmental requirements in larger scale projects.

Work to live, or live to work? How can the 'purpose-driven' business model be applied to architectural practice in Australia?

Wickes from Ecosia expressed the importance of third-party credibility, particularly for purpose driven companies, acknowledging that admirable purposes are more likely to be challenged for authenticity, "your business sense is sometimes doubted when they see the purpose so strongly." Here she recommended media coverage and aligning the purpose company with movements or advocacy.

Prioritisation of Values

A purpose-driven company achieves success through specificity. Speaking with TACSI, the team reflected that the company evolved to became more and more specific in the challenges it sought to address. They suggested forming a checklist of prioritised values, forming a quantifiable method to determine whether to undertake or continue with a project.

Likewise, Delaney stressed the important of being an expert or specialist within one's field – both for marketing and identity, but primarily for greatest impact. The family network allowed the Sago team to diversify across several fields whilst maintaining its outward identity of specificity.

Wickes discussed how Ecosia's clearly defined client or user base assisted her in making decisions that they would be supportive of. In many ways, Ecosia's client base are the keepers of the checklist It is up to the company to properly address it.

A clearly defined prioritised set of values contributes to the mission of a practice; the clarity of which reflects the staff's own understanding of their mission. This could benefit a practice to determine not only suitable projects, but compatible clients too. Dunn and Hillam reflected that misaligned clients can determine the ultimate failure of a project.

Diversity

Diversity in practice is important for several reasons: it expands networks and exposes the practice to potential projects, clients, philanthropists and stakeholders among others. Using the work of Inscape Publico for example, presenting at fundraising events and curating community engagement workshops introduces Inscape to a broad network of people.

Furthermore, staff engaged in a range of project types and scales are stimulated and enriched by the variety of work and experience. It is important in this regard to address the less direct financial returns such as the indirect profits or benefits of staff retention and motivation.

The family network of organisations, preserves the specialised identity of each practice, while the internal, fluid culture of the staff, benefit from the variety of exposure to networks, projects, collaborations and partnerships.

Secondly, diversity in practice translates to diversity in revenue:
• Consultant work: specialisation in practice provides one with the opportunity to consult to higher paying private sector clients for example as community engagement leaders
• Teaching: encouraging students to consider a range of professional trajectories can broaden the impact of one's purpose
• Giving talks or lectures: specialisation and advocacy can diversify practice networks
• Grant writing can facilitate new projects or provide opportunities to form relationships with potential stakeholders
• Management roles can broaden outreach
• Design and or sell merchandise (where relevant)

The Value of Purpose

I must preface that this section discusses the value of purpose within business, marketing and negotiation, rather than a discussion of the broader value of purpose and impact.

It is beneficial to demonstrate the value that the purpose driven company contributes to a given project. As Benson reflected, this provided Raine and Makin with invaluable leverage with clients to better incorporate purpose where a project is not achieving the full impact potential.

Wickes provides another example in which Ecosia is able to leverage its purpose in negotiations with external partners. Wickes discussed the importance of delicately managing negotiations to reduce expenditure that might otherwise be dedicated to fulfil its purpose (in Ecosia's case, plant trees). Another example was provided by Humphrey and McCaughan who discussed the way that the tone and attitude of conversations changed when they explained that Archrival was not-for-profit. Potential collaborators or partners were more open to contribute materials, time or expertise. This is further discussed under the subheading, Not-For-Profit.

The Sociable Weaver was able to effectively communicate and quantify the value of its contributions, providing a checklist of sustainable alternatives, associated costs and benefits. This may require clients to consider long term benefits such energy savings over one or more years. However, when communicated efficiently it becomes more accessible to the market.

An additional, less determinable value of purpose, is that it can provide a qualitative income. While I certainly don't encourage salary sacrifice, purpose and meaning contribute non quantifiable benefits to staff. Furthermore, as previously discussed, a company or organisation that identifies as purpose-driven, is more likely to be a leader in staff benefits, and this is a great motivator in attracting talented and engaged staff.

Wickes explained that for Ecosia, purpose can be a unique selling point. Its impact provides a visual outcome to communicate beyond money. Perhaps this is particularly beneficial for a company that would otherwise rely on the less tangible marketing of a search engine.

Adversely, as suggested by Ibañez López from Create London, a highly photographable project might not reflect its social impact and outreach. Certainly, marketing is important, however genuine impact might be invisible, such as bureaucracy or policy. Therefore, the ego must be placed aside for the benefit of the greater purpose.

An example of this was provided by Kaunitz, who described a community building in which the end users suggested that they had instructed the architects' design, reflecting their sense of ownership of the building. Furthermore, some of the great successes of Kaunitz Yeung's architecture is 'invisible', reflected for example in the higher attendance rates at their medical centre.

Not-For-Profit

The not-for-profit structure provides an organisation with access to a range of opportunities. Firstly, it provides access to alternative revenue such as grants, donations and philanthropic investment. An organisation is able to fundraise for a project, expanding its network and sources of income.

Secondly, identifying as a not-for-profit, is a declaration of a greater purpose or commitment. Both McCaughan and Humphrey discussed the increased receptivity from stakeholders who were more willing to contribute time or resources to their projects, knowing Archrival is a not-for-profit.

Inscape Publico is able to subsidise discounted fees to other not-for-profit clients, with alternative revenue sourced through its own not-for-profit structure. In this way it translated the financial benefit within its not-for-profit network.

Meanwhile, it was important for Sago Network to officially register as a charity with the Australian Charities & Not-for-profits Commission, in order to stand equally beside other international not-for-profits.

Unpaid Services

Short but direct, the success of an organisation will be ensured by informed business principles, it must not rely on volunteer work. Free labour certainly should not be relied upon to replace paid work. As discussed with Ibañez López from Create London, volunteer work should be minimal, and provide a return benefit for the worker, such as the potential for upskilling, or in the case of Archrival, a contribution to one's portfolio and access to a broadened professional network. This two-way exchange provides benefits to both parties involved, in lieu of a one-directional provision of free services out of good-will.

Image below: Community engagement Papua New Guinea, Sago Network

CONCLUSION

I momentarily revisit revered Australian humanitarian architect, the late Paul Pholeros. Speaking at Ozetecture Deerubbin 2020 conference, Healthabitat employee Helena Genaus reflected that "Paul had flipped on its head the very notion of what a traditional architect was. He had a small practice… and the traditional architecture that he did was very deliberately hidden from view, I don't think because he was embarrassed by it but because if he was going to talk about something publicly in his role as an architect it would be about this idea that had very big issues to fix with a very simple solution, and that idea is Housing for Health."

By carefully crafting his architectural identity, Pholeros was able to guide conversations towards the issues most important to him. Where his bespoke practice was concealed, perhaps this reinforced the incorrect assumption that it financed his capacity to work at Healthabitat, coined a 'Robin Hood' approach. Perhaps the family network of organisations can curate the identity of each, where necessary, but also contribute to a holistic concept of practice.

Family Network

As service providers, a not-for-profit structure is applicable to architectural practice. Architects can determine where funds are directed in order to fulfil the purpose for greatest impact across the stages of design and construction. Enabling a commercial practice to meet its financial requirements, a separate not-for-profit can be uncompromising in its fulfillment of purpose and impact.

Relationships between for-profit and not-for-profit organisations can assist in the realisation of purposeful, community oriented or humanitarian architectural work. Each organisation must firstly be grounded on financially sustainable foundations to succeed. Good motivation is not enough. As Delaney relayed, Sago innovate in practice, not in governance or business.

An established company (the commercial business) can incubate a not-for-profit by providing the initial resources and financial foothold. This allows leverage of existing staff expertise, access to established networks, and building upon the company's reputation, such as Inscape Studio – Inscape Publico; IDEO – IDEO.org; Custom Mad, Lucy Humphrey Studio and Archrival. Building upon an existing company, means the not-for-profit can also draw upon the credibility of an existing portfolio of work, avoiding the need for volunteer work to provide this.

Maintaining separate identities for each organisation, harnesses the competitive advantage of being a specialist in each field. Separate not-for-profit and for-profit entities allow the organisations to present themselves specifically to their stakeholders. Each identity is preserved, without diluting their mission. Meanwhile the interior overlaps provide diverse and stimulating work environments for staff.

Humanitarian or community-oriented work can present challenges since there is no single identifiable client whose needs to address. Practicing in separate organisations with clearly defined roles and scope helps to narrow down the challenges to each step of the architectural process. For example, particularly in the case of Inscape, the not-for-profit focuses on community engagement, addressing social and public processes, whereas the more conventional architectural practice engages with the government and political context.

McCaughan and Humphrey both value the experience gained from their individual commercial practices. This diversifies the collective experience and knowledge base for Archrival, extending its capacity for impact. The separate identities of the practices allow the directors to access different markets or project opportunities while representing them as specialised in the subject field. This was apparent also for Sago Network, Sago Design and Sago Build.

In the case of Inscape, its streamlined approach creates work for the commercial practice. Inscape's clearly defined roles and deliverables simplifies the process and avoids administrative overlaps.

Reiterating the conflict between innovation, business and practice, both Archrival and Sago experienced difficulties insuring their organisations. Particularly in the case of Archrival, the architectural role is somewhat broadened beyond the conventional (and insurable) role, including construction and contractor engagement for example. Sago was able to overcome this challenge in some ways by compartmentalising risk within each separate organisation, Sago Design practice as architects with relevant registrations, Sago Build delivering construction work as builders with their separate licensing requirements and so on.

The separation of not-for-profit and for-profit services preserve each specialist identity. This is most significant in that the not-for-profit can be uncompromising in its engagement with projects that are aligned with its purpose since it is not relied upon financially.

To Close

Why do we want our work to make us feel good? Is it because we spend the majority of our lives at work? Is it too much to ask to make a living and do good at the same time? Perhaps the relationship between money and meaning is too grey and complex, and that is why the separation of commercial practice and not-for-profit so far seems the viable scenario. It prevents the blurring of boundaries – both financially and philosophically.

Unfortunately, it seems that to be uncompromising in purposeful practice, something has to give: income or staff wellbeing. By compartmentalising the purposeful practice from the commercial, staff can hone their skills, explore their creativity and celebrate a diverse design experience at the expense of those that request and afford it. Meanwhile, these developed creative skills can contribute to a lateral design approach that may result in a unique innovative result

The opportunity to challenge and explore projects through design contribute to an architect's creative process. It trains the mind to look for opportunities within constraints, and to think laterally. An architect's creative skills are finessed on commercial projects. This developed professional experience can be applied to purposeful work; for example, community or

humanitarian, likely on more constrained budgets. Diversity in practice contribute to a rounded, holistic professional architect. The family approach facilitates a range of projects and experience, delivered in specific roles, and through sound, separate business entities.

Where volunteer, pro bono or 'Robin Hood' services rely on financial capacity, they also facilitate a one-way provision of services in favour of the recipient. While this altruism might make the service provider 'feel good', critical humanitarian and community engaged work is architecture that reaches those that need it most, and should not rely on good-will, financial privilege and/or global markets.

The family network approach to purpose driven business in architecture facilitates a robust network of organisations. Each entity has its own 'purpose' or focus: such as humanitarian architecture, community engaged design, good design, sustainable design, and so on. Each entity has its own financial and administrative implications, but the compartmentalisation of both these and a purpose, avoids overlaps, preserves identity, promotes specialisation, strengthen and diversifies networks, prioritises focus, and most importasntly facilitates the two-way relationships that give humans connection and meaning.

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Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship Journal Series

Work to live, or live to work? How can the 'purpose-driven' business model be applied to architectural practice in Australia?

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ADVICE FOR EMERGING ARCHITECTS

What advice would you give to someone looking to commence working in the purposeful sector?

Lee Hillam, Dunn & Hillam

• Firstly, think about whether there are other ways for you to have meaningful work. It doesn't have to be working for yourself. Government work (local or state) NGO's, B Corps and other purpose driven organisations, being a sustainability or design expert inside a 'big corporate'…these are all very satisfying jobs.
• Then, if you think running your own business is the way to go, then think about what the value is to you.
• Do you value flexibility over say, a steady wage?
• Do you want the choice of what projects you go after and how they're run?
• Are you happy to work on small scale work, possibly for a long time?

Michelle Miller, TACSI

• Architecture, and any form of design, is an inherently privileged activity. To be in the seat of making is a place of privilege. It is never politically neutral. Architecture is always situated in place - and therefore the dynamics of community, the machinations of politics, the day-to-day tasks of people's lives, the visions we hold for our future and the society we want to create. Every act of design and architecture can be an intervention into place, power, privilege and people's lives.
• So, how do we recognise the people, the place, the power, privilege, and politics in our design activities? How do we work in ways that do not 'do to' others? How do we avoid reinforcing systemic disadvantage, racism and oppression? How do we work in ways that connect, inspire, uplift, empower, enable...? How do we give people their own power to make places, communities and societies that manifest something people will contribute to, something that others want to be a part of, places that invite people in, where we can care for one another and co-exist in all our diverse ways?

Rusty Benson, Raine and Makin

• Be clear on what your purpose is and what contribution you want to make. Most importantly that it is truly inclusive and focused on outcomes, rather than as a tool for ethical business development.
• Finally, it all starts with people, both how you treat staff and people that your work is meant to reach.

David Kaunitz, Kaunitz Yeung

• You cannot have a conversation with one person once and expect to understand, or for them to open up about their full view.

Lucy Humphrey, Lucy Humphrey Studio, Archrival

• I think it's important to be specific about what type of communities you would like to engage with and why - and to spend time in these communities in order to better understand their stories and needs. 'Community engagement' is often a box ticking exercise but to engage meaningfully takes a huge amount of preparation, collaboration, research and the ability to listen. I think as architects we are often driven by our own motives and interests to some degree, so it's important to make sure you are truly aligned with the project and can be open minded enough to let things evolve in potentially unexpected ways.

Claire McCaughan, Custom Mad, Archrival

• From my perspective, after working with people very skilled in community engagement, the only approach is to develop strong relationships. This might sound mundane, but as architects, we are often object focused, rather than human focused. And good relationships take time, so project timelines need to be reinvented for community-based projects.

Lachlan Delaney; Sago Network, Sago Design, Sago Build

• Look for community or purposeful opportunities within your own network or orbit
• Self-employment can provide the flexibility needed to focus on your community contribution while maintaining a work/life balance

Image overleaf: Wanarn Clinic, Kaunitz Yeung
The aluminium art screens, designed by two female Warakurna artists, depict the Dreaming of the Seven Sisters, a Dreamtime narrative associated with the Pleiades constellation.
Photography: Brett Boardman