

## Creative Construct: Building for Culture and Creativity

### Note-taking guide for session rapporteurs

#### METADATA

**Session title:** Neighbourhoods as Sites of Community and Cultural Development – Three Case Studies with Cultural Facilities as a Hub

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**Presenter(s):** **Clarence Bayne** (Director of the Institute of Community Entrepreneurship and Development, Concordia University, Montreal), **June Creelman** (Apropos Planning – Glebe Community Centre), **Mirela Duculescu** (University of Alberta), **Lida Varbanova** (Laboratory for European Cultural Cooperation)

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**Day:** Thursday, May 1

**Time:** 1:00 to 2:30

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#### NOTES

##### 1. Short overview/summary of presentation

**Clarence Bayne** (professor/activist)

- case study of Montreal's NDG neighbourhood (principally English)
- struggle in Quebec for the preservation of the French language – but it puts artists who express themselves in English in a very difficult position – the hope for English artists should rest in the fact that we all respect democracy as a central cornerstone to organizing societies – as long as they are citizens to any region, they should be equal to free distribution of city's services – English artists can make a case that there has been an unfair distribution of public funds for the development of NDG English culture
- The Empress was built in 1927 (former cinema and bordello) – building used to represent the centre of cultural life in NDG but became boarded up after fire – boarding up of building had caused dispersal of cultural life
- Project aimed at revitalizing building and, hence, enhancing cultural life of NDG
- study funded by provincial government aimed at uncovering the needs for English artists in Montreal - \$10-15 million reserved for the English cultural sector – borough now intrinsically linked with helping develop The Empress project
- Includes black box theatre, another larger theatre space, rentable studio space – Shakespeare in the Park, Black Theatre Workshop, Repercussion Theatre, poetry readings, storytelling events, etc.

**June Creelman**

- Glebe Community Centre was built with the intention of being a recreational centre but has since become a culturally vital space
- mature, affluent community of about 10,000 people, large student population
- exists in a former church in the middle of a residential neighbourhood
- you don't always have to build cultural infrastructure to build a creative community
- pre-school, carpentry, after-four, community theatre, concert series, art shows, yoga, fitness
- minimal investment in the space when converted into a community centre in 1974 – allowed building to decline to the point of questionable usability – around 1996 City proposed a massive, new centre outside of the neighbourhood but the community protested this and 1,200 people rallied down Bank St. to 'Save the Community Centre' – neighbourhood demanded that the building was part of the heritage of the community and wanted a location within the neighbourhood
- City eventually invested \$4million in the renovation (\$2.5million for the building itself) – many hours of public consultation
- City operated the building, it performs multiple functions, community programs everything (4, fulltime non-profit programmers)
- Dramatic increase in programming, increased attendance, 5 times rental revenues, more community fundraising and volunteerism – it has become a Cultural Catalyst
- key to the success: A BIG ROOM (no other community centres in city have a gathering space of that size - 400 ppl)
- Lessons: - location, community involvement/partnership, a big, beautiful gathering space, multiple uses and users, integration

**Mirela Duculescu**

- Cultural and Architectural Promenade Route in the Historical Centre of Bucharest
- a traumatized city and the empowerment of a neighbourhood community
- local mafia have immense sway over municipal land use
- aims to preserve memory of the city - the community initiated a dialogue with the city – consultations included closing the street for two days for trial run
- a plan for pedestrians and bike path was created by architects in the heart of the city, there were many public consultations, and it was then signed by the city – action on the plan has yet to happen
- creating and ensuring high-quality public space
- the interaction of architecture, infrastructure planning and urban planning must be increased
- during the Communist Era, heritage buildings were demolished in favour of modernist housing complexes and massive, Haussmann-like boulevards - public space became associated with surveillance from totalitarian regime
- plan attempts to redesign boulevards and public spaces to increase greenery, public art, eliminate billboards, and user access
- promenade attempts to connect heritage spaces, cultural spaces, and the existing boulevards
- community interaction included: biking workshops, art installations in parks, high school drawing contests, tours of damaged historical spaces, gallery tours, public music, opened galleries, water fights, street parties, graffiti artists – each event was recorded for use in advocacy against the city's delay
- trying to convince private owners of historical buildings that profits do not simply have to come from raising spaces and erecting high rises but can translate their economic profits through preserving the space – Wild Capitalism
- there is a generational divide between the conception of public space in former Totalitarian regimes
- clear exercise in Democracy – under Communist regime, massive work projects were unrolled without delay whereas Democracy presents more community tiers

**Note taker:** Nancy Burgoyne