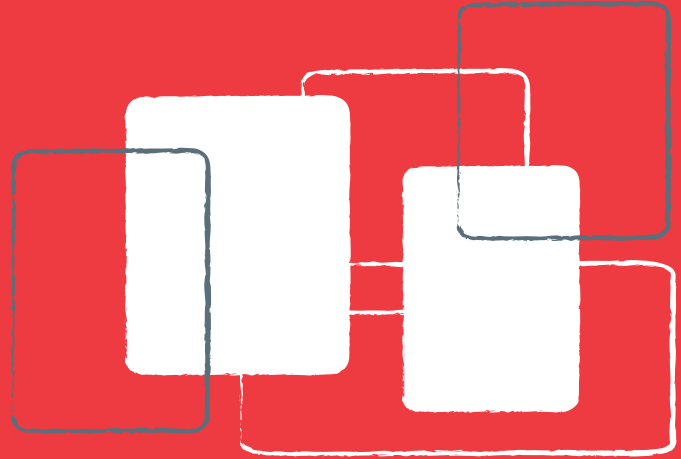




Reclaiming Social Purpose
in Community Education

THE EDINBURGH PAPERS 2008



A symposium was held at the University of Edinburgh on 9 November 2007 to develop a response to the current state of professional practice and to rearticulate a sense of social purpose for community education. These papers were produced for the symposium and amended following it. We hope they will be useful in making the case for a renewed sense of professional identity and public service.

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Community education: a mirror and a shield

David Wallace, University of Strathclyde

INTRODUCTION

The principles underpinning community education offer both a mirror on society and a shield against appropriation and co-option. However, for some time there have been concerns about the loss of community education and its influences in Scottish discourse, policy and in practice. These concerns have been serially discussed with likeminded friends and colleagues in the field, with partners in research activity and with academic colleagues – representing a fair cross section from the community education firmament. In these discussions a loss of principle is argued, there are observations that critical practices are being marginalised or eradicated and there is recognition of a growing co-option and corruption of practices to meet neoliberal ends over associational, democratic and empowering community education. Across domains of youth work, adult learning and community development ‘technologies’ (Martin, 1988) of policy, audit, inspection and challenge-funding are seen as instrumental in precipitating this deleterious trend. The mirror and the shield appear to be failing!

That there is an informed and widespread critique of current policy and practice is frustrated by the apparent absence of any body capable of representing these concerns to government. There is no professional or representative body for community education - Learning Connections, being *of* the civil service and prime movers of contemporary policy, could not be entrusted with a critique of practice.

The occasion of the recent election of a new government in Scotland (of whatever political stamp) crystallised thinking in that we (community education academics) may now have a fresh opportunity to initiate an

approach to government to seek to balance the current policy agenda and to table an alternative vision for community education. In seeking to collaborate with colleagues there was agreement that a symposium would assist both in articulating concerns and in building a rationale for such an approach to government. This paper aims to provide a general context to the symposium that took place in Edinburgh in November 2007, to this collection of papers which informed the debate at the symposium and to the representations that may consequently be made to the Scottish Government.

THE ARGUMENTS

A growing gap has emerged between the aspirations for democratic education and the regulated work that community education practitioners are required to undertake to meet Community Learning and Development policy imperatives which have become mandatory through management, audit, funding and inspection regimes. The new discourse of community learning and development brings (simultaneously and destructively) a narrowing of focus for practice *and* an espoused genericism. The narrowing of focus comes from a creeping emphasis on 'approved' forms of learning and participation over other non-regulated activity. The espoused genericism arises from the projection of community learning and development as an *approach* that may be adopted by a disparate range of agents and is not therefore recognised as a discrete and systematic area of educational practice. The combined effect of this has been to weaken professional identity and the perceived relevance of community educators. This was most recently evidenced in an official workforce survey that posed questions about the extent to which there 'is a coherent and identifiable CLD workforce' (Communities Scotland, 2007, p.11).

It has also been argued that the new discourse may be conceived as part of wider political rhetoric which may conceal, amongst other things, a desire 'to deliver learners to policy' (e.g. for community planning and skills for work) rather than to meet the ends of education for democracy and social justice (Martin et al, 2007; Learning for Democracy Group, 2007). Further, Tett (2006, p.14) argues that the shift in discourse and policy has resulted in a narrowing of the focus to 'learning' rather than 'education' and to 'communities of place' to the exclusion of 'communities of interest or function' – this she contends often leads to community educators having 'a focus solely on local issues at the expense of broader analysis of their underlying causes' (ibid, p16). The critique of the evolution of community learning and development is fundamentally based on concerns therefore

about the erosion of a commitment through community education 'to social justice, greater social and economic equality, and a more participatory democracy' (Johnston, 2000, p14).

RATIONALE FOR AN APPROACH TO GOVERNMENT

Given the persistence and salience of these arguments we (colleagues in Universities of Edinburgh Dundee and Strathclyde) undertook preliminary discussion about how we might bring these matters to the attention of government. The following points underpinned our analysis:

1. In the academy we have a longitudinal view of practice development on which to base our critical stance
2. In the academy we have an objective overview based on research, reading and teaching
3. In the academy we are specifically remitted to take a critical perspective
4. There is an ethical basis to our analysis – in arguing that current trends in policy and practice underplay structural inequality and overplay neo-liberal ideals for learning, privileging deficit models and individualised remedies
5. As the principles and values of community education are increasingly squeezed from practice and from policy, we in the academy are increasingly entrusted with their preservation and promotion
6. We in the academy are therefore concerned to preserve and promote a renewed vision of community education as an attainable alternative to the current limitations in Scottish policy and in practice.

The above factors connect to a desire for a renewed vision of practice in Scotland – one which could and should have the potential to be much more progressive and radical. Such a vision of community education calls for an appreciation of ethical practice through which social purpose democratic education can be pursued. Challenging dominant discourse, this vision looks beyond the confines of institutional learning and embraces the diversity of associational forms of community-based and informal education. In this context community educators are constructed as change agents and not

simply implementers of policy. Keying directly into humanitarian concerns about inequality and discrimination, the aim of community education is to side with local people in opening up the prospects of constructing alternative and exciting visions for citizenship, learning and democracy (Wallace, 2008).

What is required is a more enlightened planning and management of community education, seeking to build and capitalise on its potential for democratic renewal in a period in which there is a growing concern about disenfranchisement. Arguably this requires us to reclaim and restate Freirean (1972) democratic principles that underpin the values and ethos of community education. Such a new stance calls therefore for the defence (by all concerned) of a form of education that is essentially grassroots and associational in orientation, which does not depend on official mechanisms of assessment to convey success and is weighted in favour of the educational process in which the participant engages rather than a preconceived end product. This vision of community education is one in which powerful learning draws on participants as experienced and knowledgeable social actors, able to actively engage together in processes of dialogue, reflection and action. Issues in this context would not be predetermined by the limitations of community planning or preconceived units of learning but by the creativity, energy and commitments of community educators and local people working together. However, Sommerlad (2003, p.153) has identified the often uncritical nature of community education practice, the limited pedagogic frameworks being employed and the focus on instrumental learning that is at odds with these democratic aspirations. In the future then, practitioners must reclaim a sense of agency and acknowledge that their work is ideological and whilst it may be influenced it cannot be completely shaped by contemporary policy. Reclaiming these values and principles would enable practitioners to bring both the shield and the mirror of community education to their practices. For such a movement to be mainstream however requires legitimation in policy, management and planning.

CONCLUSION

I feel passionately about the need to lobby government on the above grounds – apparently nobody else is going to do it. Really useful learning arises from the stimulation of a desire for learning which may be dynamic, political, troubling, passionate or emotional - round pegs which rarely fit within the square hole of curricular, inspection and audit systems. The overarching challenge to us in bringing this perspective to our politicians

(and through them to governing bodies, auditors and inspectors) is to get them to recognise that such educational endeavours are not only fit for policy aspirations but are a prerequisite for a more democratic citizenship for Scotland. Surely there is a collective will among the body politic to endorse Tett's (2006, p.105) assertion that:

Community educators thus have an important role in making sure that the complexity of the intellectual, emotional, practical, pleasurable and political possibilities of learning is not reduced to the apparent simplicity of targets, standards and skills.

So if community learning and development is truly concerned, as policy tells us, with education for empowerment, participation, inclusion and equality, self determination, and partnership (Scottish Executive, 2004, p.7) then in the future it must reach beyond the narrow and limiting agenda for learning set in current practices and it must engage (with) community educators in identifying with power inequalities which are concretely embedded in class, ability, race and gendered social worlds. The community learning and development paradigm that truly promotes these priorities must be explicitly connected therefore to a social purpose education at whose heart lies a fundamental concern for education for democracy.

Reclaiming social purpose: framing the discussion

Ian Martin, University of Edinburgh

The title of today's meeting suggests that we may have lost something - or perhaps that something in us may have been lost; and the fact that it is called a 'symposium' suggests that this a shared concern and that there is a collective determination to do something about it. I see my task as simply helping to get this process going.

The Scottish-born philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre (1985) has characterised institutions – and, by extension, vocations and professions – as 'embodied arguments'. This idea may be a useful starting point for us today:

Every institution is ... the embodiment of a historical argument and the expression of a set of values. Institutions survive by a continuous adaptation of their argumentative base, a continuing fulfilment of their original argument in a new context. ... At some point, of course, an argument may become redundant or irrelevant, and the institution founded on it will itself become redundant or will have to reorganise itself around a different and more relevant position.

(Craig, 2003)

How does this notion of the 'embodied argument' apply to our discussions today? It seems to me that the idea of social purpose remains an important part of the 'embodied argument' of community-based educational work, and why we choose to do it. My own view is that what we are talking about is, essentially, a way of making a particular kind of politics pedagogical. Social purpose education has always stood for purposeful intervention in the interests of social and political change: change towards more justice, more equality and more democracy. Traditions of this kind exist in most popular

histories and cultures - in the rich world and the poor world, North and South. Briefly, social purpose education can be characterised in the following terms:

- participants/learners are treated as citizens and social actors
- curriculum reflects shared social and political interests
- knowledge is actively and purposefully constructed to advance these collective interests
- pedagogy is based on dialogue rather than transmission
- critical understanding is linked to social action and political engagement
- education is always a key resource in the broader struggle for social change.

In our own particular Scottish context and tradition the notion of social purpose has been closely linked to democratic process. In fact, the Scottish version of community education was rooted in a distinctively social democratic way of thinking. Whatever the pros and cons of the Alexander Report, it did take the notion of democracy and learning for democracy a good deal more seriously than we seem to today (in spite of everything else that's been happening in Scotland of late). It also accepted that this kind of learning for 'pluralist democracy' could be an unpredictable and risky business:

Society is now less certain about the values it should uphold and tolerates a wide range. Individual freedom to question the value of established practices and institutions and to propose new forms is part of our democratic heritage. To maintain this freedom, resources should not be put at the disposal only of those who conform but ought reasonably to be made available to all for explicit educational purposes. The motives of those who provide education need not necessarily be identified with the motives of those for whom it is provided.

(Scottish Education Department, 1975)

We seem to have strayed a long way from this. That is why, just over a year ago, some of us circulated an 'Open letter: Whatever happened to learning for democracy?' We will be talking about this and subsequent developments later on today. Part of the embodied argument of our work, which we are

now in danger of losing, lies precisely in nurturing the democratic impulse harnessed to a social justice agenda. This, it seems to me, is our distinctive vocation, ie using 'vocation' in the sense of finding a meaning for life in the work we do. Perhaps what we now really need is to rediscover our vocation.

Noam Chomsky, in his book *Power and Prospects*, makes the distinction between 'visions' and 'goals'. I think this may be useful in framing our discussions today. Chomsky (1996) says:

By visions, I mean the conception of a future society that animates what we actually do, a society in which a decent human being might want to live. By goals, I mean the choices and tasks that are within reach, that we will pursue one way or another guided by a vision that may be distant and hazy.

He goes on to encourage us to reassess our vocation in these terms:

An animating vision must rest on some conception of human nature, of what's good for people, of their needs and rights, of the aspects of their nature that should be nurtured, encouraged and permitted to flourish. This much, at least, is true of people who regard themselves as moral agents, not monsters – who care about the effects of what they do or fail to do.

For me, maintaining such an 'animating vision' for our work as 'moral agents' means thinking as systematically and consistently as we can against the grain of the neo-liberal common sense of our times. This brings to mind the title of Mike Newman's (2006) recent book, *Teaching Defiance*. If, as the global pro-democracy movement proclaims, 'Another world is possible', then the dispositions of this world, the world in which we now live, must, indeed, be defied and resisted. And, incidentally, Newman seems to be insisting that there can be no defiance without teaching - as distinct from learning. So, if we wish to think of our work in terms of what I have called the 'democratic impulse harnessed to a social justice agenda', the question is this: What is the vision of a future society that animates what we actually do, and how do we begin the messy business of making the choices and undertaking the tasks this implies?

This brings me to my last point, which is about language and learning. In an important book called *Beyond Learning*, Gert Biesta (2007) seeks to recover,

or re-invent, what he claims has been lost as the new language of learning has replaced the old language of education – and we may pause here to think, in particular, of what may have been lost in translation as ‘community education’ has morphed into ‘community learning and development’. The nub of Biesta’s argument is this:

... the new language of learning facilitates an economic understanding of the process of education, one in which the learner is supposed to know what he or she wants, and where a provider is simply there to meet the needs of the learner (or, in more crude terms: to satisfy the customer). [This] makes it very difficult to raise questions about the context and purpose of education, other than in terms of what ‘the consumer’ or ‘the market’ wants. This ... poses a threat to educational professionalism and ultimately also undermines democratic deliberation about the ends of education.

Biesta draws our attention to the crucial role of language in all this. The way we talk about our work (or choose not to talk about it) helps to make it what it is (or what it isn’t). This is one of the real dangers of the kind of managerial and corporatised jargon we are now expected to use. But democracy and social justice cannot be ‘delivered’ like a pizza. The point is that our work is partly constituted by the language we use to describe it and engage in it; and it becomes imbued with the values and purposes - and, indeed, the errors - we bring to this process. To a significant extent, therefore, we make our work what it is by the way we talk about it. Let us bear that in mind today.



Policy, politics and practice: community development

Mae Shaw, University of Edinburgh

HISTORICAL CONTEXT: LOCATING COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

Community development has historically (and certainly in practice) had an ambivalent relationship with the state and with democracy. As a profession, it was created as a means of managing or mediating the relationship between the state and its population, particularly in circumstances of crisis here and abroad. This relationship has taken different forms at different times, but generally speaking community development has been concerned with extending or strengthening democratic processes at the same time as locating those processes within relevant policy frameworks. Community work, therefore, embodies a central tension between the demands of policy and the demands of democratic politics which are not always or automatically compatible. Framed around an egalitarian democratic discourse, it has been deployed by successive governments of different ideological persuasions to pre-empt trouble and to deliver policy objectives as much as to challenge power and engage with communities in any serious way. As Gary Craig points out, 'community workers are often called on by government to contribute to the peaceful management of the process of economic change ... to help people adjust to the insecurity and fragmentation of their lives'. If it does not expose the critical connections – between cause and effect, micro focus and macro explanations, personal experience and political structures and processes – then community development can be a part of the problem for local communities, and democracy, as much as it can be a part of the solution. Its strength is that it occupies a uniquely strategic position between formal institutional practices of the state and informal social and political practices of communities. There is therefore a productive dialectic between

the legitimate role of the state in formulating and enacting frameworks for social welfare and social justice and the legitimate role of communities of place, identity, struggle or resistance, in generating social and political demands which contribute to, critique or challenge those frameworks.

This kind of professional reflexivity can generate the potential for a more open-ended form of practice; for working alongside marginalised and oppressed groups to politicise their experience and develop collective ways of challenging powerful interests. An understanding of the dynamic between community development as a professional practice emanating from the demands of policy and community development as a political practice concerned with wider questions of politics and democratic participation increases the possibility of exercising professional agency. It is also a legitimate position which should be advocated for within the politics of the state, with funders, managers and politicians – and in professional circles which seem more preoccupied with measurement than questions of purpose.

CURRENT CONTEXT: COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT AND THE THIRD WAY

In my view there is a crisis at the heart of all democratic projects, particularly those enacted and funded through the state, such as community development. This crisis stems directly from neo-liberal economics and the Third Way politics which attempts to manage it. Social and democratic purpose may continue to dominate professional discourses of practice, but economic objectives are increasingly applied to community development as policy. This is translated in community contexts through various kinds of service delivery and managed governance as gatekeeping rather than enabling, with profound implications for community development.

CONSEQUENCES AND IMPLICATIONS

Policy: Community has become central to policy: self-help has been revived as a means of transmuting public/state responsibility into private responsibility; as a substitute or surrogate for declining public services; as an informal arm of the state. This has been largely achieved by a process of 'decentralised centralism' where responsibility is dispersed, but power is consolidated. The outcome is that whilst consultations are widespread, the agenda is largely unnegotiable.

Politics: Democracy has become more like a managerial procedure than a political process; to be 'rolled out' rather than made. This calls for convergence between competing (potentially conflicting) interests; the manufacture of a consensus which ignores or denies power differentials. In this process, community groups are increasingly treated as 'statutory activists' – akin to consultants in some cases – in policy-driven initiatives which are conducted through state sanctioned forums. The 'capacity building' discourse is central in upskilling people for this role. One consequence is the co-option or dismissal of potentially critical or even alternative community agendas, a situation which is more likely to stifle than enable democratic politics. There is evidence to suggest that, in too many contexts, community groups are becoming so incorporated as to be almost indistinguishable from the state in their objectives. As the major Rowntree Report *Community Participation: Who Benefits?* (2006) summarise the approach: 'quick fix, consultative elite, imposed agenda', often created and serviced by community workers.

Practice: Community development has been centrally implicated in the transformation of the welfare landscape as a key agent of the 'modernisation' agenda: facilitating partnership working, enacting standardised standards of community engagement, involved in capacity building around pre-determined outcomes, managing the audit and measurement culture, brokering the contract culture, remoralising communities through deficit models of engagement. Current research consistently suggests that the opportunity for practitioners to work with community groups on issues other than those prescribed by policy has been squeezed out almost entirely by the funding regime in which workers are employed. In fact, the logic of specifically-targeted and tightly-regulated intervention may be to exclude the explicitly stated wishes of community groups because they do not meet the requirements of outcomes-based funding. The breadth of practice which traditionally constituted community development – from personal development to community action and campaigning – has been perilously diminished. Practitioners are too often expected to 'deliver their communities to policy' without question. Either by default or design, therefore, practitioners are in danger of becoming deskilled in the very kind of educational work which resourced that range and quality of engagement with community groups.

In this sense, community development has itself been subjected to modernisation: there has been a hollowing out of those core processes, purposes and dispositions which constituted community development. There is a question now as to what makes it distinctive and how this affects

the professional identity of practitioners and the future of professional practice. The following quote expresses the problem starkly. The question is whether there is now a struggle over why community work matters and, if not, how it can be revived.

The means to achieve our goals or ends do matter. *But the definition of those ends* is the lifeblood of the work. Without it community work is amoral and hollow and community workers are people of straw. There is, we believe, a very real struggle going on for the possession of the soul of community work. (Filkin and Naish, 1982 my italics)

RECLAIMING SOCIAL (AND MORAL) PURPOSE

Drawing on work by Paul Waddington, who was attempting to re-evaluate the value base of community development at the beginning of the 1990s, I would suggest the establishment of a non-negotiable agenda for community development in the following terms. Community development is a moral activity concerned with social justice and what gets in the way of it. It should be undertaken at the grassroots and should involve collective educational practice derived from the social reality of people in communities. On this basis, a working definition of community development in the current context would be to work alongside people in communities to assist them in thinking about and articulating their own, often contradictory, experience of policy, and in taking action around their collective interests and concerns. Policy makers at all levels could do well to follow the advice of Mike Geddes from the Local Government Unit at the University of Warwick, giving evidence to the Commission for Local Democracy in 1995:

... local government is also part of a wider structure of government, and of power beyond government. Its powers, duties and resources, the limits to them, and the way they are performed, reflect other interests than those of local communities. Because of this, local government often finds itself negotiating the imposition of quite other priorities.... The effective political representation of the interests of poor communities will therefore often mean an ambivalent attitude by those representatives to local government, and requires a recognition by policy-makers in local authorities [and government] that local democracy must be rooted both in and against the local state.

This would undoubtedly be good for community development but, more importantly, it would be good for democracy.



Policy, politics and practice: adult education in Scotland

Kathy Maclachlan, University of Glasgow

What can be said about the current state of adult education in Scotland? Well the first thing we can say, is that *apparently* we don't do as much of it as the rest of the UK. The latest NIACE adult learning statistics show that this year, as in the last few, Scotland comes bottom of the UK league table in relation to current and recent learning, and future intentions to learn. They show only 33% being current/recent learners and a massive 60% of respondents professing to be very unlikely to take up learning in the future. Furthermore, the learning divide throughout the UK as a whole has not lessened, with current/recent learning in AB class at 55% and that of DE being at 27%. The lowest incidences of learning (in the 30% range) were in semi and unskilled occupational groups whilst the highest (in the 60% range) were in the public sector professions. So much still gets more. No change here.

However Scotland, post devolution, is distinct from England and the rest of the UK in its adult education policies and practices, but I would argue that the general direction it is following is essentially the same as in England. Yes, there are some areas, for example tuition fees in Higher Education (HE) that, in the short term at least, run contrary to policy and practice down south, but for the most part, we move in the same direction - just a little further behind. To begin with adult education at a policy or strategic level, the 2003 document, *Life Through Learning: Learning Through Life's* vision is: 'The best possible match between the learning opportunities open to people and the skills, knowledge, attitudes and behaviours which will strengthen Scotland's economy and society' (p6). And though it justifies investment in learning for its social impact, this is secondary to the direct economic returns it is deemed to yield, and its social contribution is all but ignored throughout the remainder of the document. So the clear message is

that learning in adulthood is primarily for us to acquire the skills, attitudes and behaviours that will best benefit the economy. And though Jim Gallacher (2007) argues that lifelong learning in its broad sense retains a more central place in Scotland's policy agenda than it does in England, I would argue that the individualised, skills focus is still the predominant shaping core.

How then is this manifest in practice, in adult education in Scotland? I will deal with institutional learning in HE and FE, and non-institutional learning in communities. Both, I would argue are locked into an invidious target culture that both distorts and limits what they should be, and could be all about.

First Higher Education. In a recent paper, Jim Gallacher (2007) charts the impact of devolution in HE in Scotland and argues that differences in six areas that he identifies (collaboration, skills/employability, widening access, quality enhancement, research and funding) have created a less restrictive, more equitable system here, albeit one that is still distorted by the hegemonic discourses of the economy, global capitalism and profit. However, our recently published review of skills in Scotland is acknowledged to have been influenced by England's Leitch Review which advocates that HE provision should be 'increasingly employer-led', more responsive to the needs of large employers and be subject to more employer-led funding. Though we have not yet wholeheartedly embraced this philosophy, there is still a pressing need for those of us who believe that there is an alternative vision for education to ensure that this vision is not obliterated by the narrow, amoral demands of the market.

But why else does this matter? I believe that it matters for several reasons. The first is that an increasingly employer led/funded HE sector threatens the autonomy of universities that will become even more profit, not values led. It will change and it will diminish what universities should be all about. Second, there will be, as Jean Barr (2007, p 25) illustrates, a growing divide between 'those academic practices that have goods to sell and commercial options outside the academy, and those that do not'. Third is a question around the future viability of non-marketable subjects and disciplines such as English, History, Art and Philosophy in a market driven system. Finally, an unfettered HE market will not redress the power imbalances that sustain our increasingly unequal society because those in power - the socially and economically advantaged - are those who dictate the rules of the game, and it is unrealistic to assume that they will alter them in any way that reduces their advantage.

If we add to this litany the profit requirements through HE's Full Economic Costing systems that now determine what, how and whom we teach, it becomes clear that the spaces for critical, challenging, counter hegemonic teaching, learning and research that are part of what a university should be all about, are becoming increasingly and alarmingly diminished.

Turning to Further Education (FE), the latest lifelong learning statistics indicate that it attracts more post-compulsory learners than any other single form of provision. In the context of this debate, there are two points I want to make about FE today. The first is that colleges are outcome funded in relation to the percentage of their students gaining qualifications. The direct consequences of this are that a) they are increasingly turning away more vulnerable adults whom they deem are less likely to pass their courses, and b) the range of non-certificated, in-college and outreach courses that have traditionally focussed on excluded or disadvantaged groups, is being curtailed.

The second point about colleges is that they now include school pupils from S2 upwards in their teaching portfolio so that 'non-academic' pupils can access a more appropriate and 'useful' educational curriculum in colleges than they could in school. Underpinning this premise is the largely uncontested assumption that 'useful' equates with vocational, and this dangerously diminishes what education *is*, and is for. It also assumes that the non-vocational has no relevance to less academic pupils. In addition, FE lecturers recount that this strategy is changing the culture of colleges, altering their adult ethos to better suit the requirements of schoolchildren.

On a brighter note, colleges are making some inroads into engaging traditional non-participants in learning, despite the caveats listed above. They support many innovative projects that bring challenging learning opportunities to groups traditionally denied them. One such example is John Wheatley College, Glasgow's 'Routes into Learning' project. Linked to Glasgow City Council's 'Routes Out' project for women in or vulnerable to prostitution, 'Routes into Learning' provides safe learning spaces where through art and creative writing, women are able to explore, question and challenge aspects of their life and sexual experiences, and in so doing, assert their own sense of agency and self. Although there are many other examples of social purpose learning associated with colleges that could also be cited, many suffer from the uncertainties of short term, project funding that jeopardises the benefits they bring to individuals and communities.

These then are a selection of issues associated with adult education in our institutions that I see as relevant to discussions around learning for social purpose, but this does not account for all, or even the majority of adult learning that is happening in the country, which is outwith our institutions. The Government's Lifelong Learning statistics paper shows an estimated figure of around 108,400 adults engaged in other types of adult learning in 2004. They comprised 23,400 adult literacy and numeracy learners, and 85,000 community based learners. But if we examine this paper more closely, in particular chapter four 'Training and Adult Learning' that deals with non-institutional learning, we see that this chapter includes 'in-work training, training programmes that improve the chances of employment and *other types of learning* (for example reading journals or attending an evening class)' (emphasis added). The economic – the work related – still predominates.

So the learning that many of these adults were estimated to be engaged in is merely consigned to the 'other', and out of 21 pages of statistical data devoted to training and 'other' learning, only four are allocated to non-training, or 'other' learning. With the exception of a few demographic and regional statistics, no details or descriptions of this non-work related learning are provided, so this undefined, barely recognised 'other' is consigned to the margins of the margins in adult learning in Scotland - not important enough to merit more than a few pages of demographic tables.

But we know through our work and through our students that this is where so much 'really useful', not merely useful learning occurs, and though there is not space in this summary to cite examples of well and lesser known adult learning initiatives, they still survive and thrive at local, national and global levels, albeit under-recognised and undervalued. Yet this is where much challenging adult education takes place. It is challenging in that it enables learners to question and re-define their ascribed social place and value. It is also challenging in that it confronts hegemonic assumptions about a correct and natural social order that we know is essentially unequal and unjust. Our challenge is to re-affirm its necessary and important place in the spectrum of adult learning in Scotland.

But where does all this leave us as teachers and researchers in higher education? We are no longer practitioners in the field, so what can we do to affect change? I think we can do four things and it is with these possibilities that I want to finish. They are:

1. That in our research and publications we continue to voice what Ian Martin calls the unfashionable and oppositional.

2. That in our teaching, we resist as much as we are able, creeping behaviourism, and we retain the essential critical, theoretical elements of our programmes.
3. That we lobby, as a professional group and also with our students. John Field maintains (2007) that 'One of the most positive aspects of devolution has been the parliament's willingness to engage with civil society – that is with voluntary organisations, youth groups, interest groups and indeed the wider public' (p15). We have started this - how then should we continue with it?
4. That we profile, we share with our students and with each other, the hidden from view, 'other' learning that thrives in communities and in institutions, in spite of governmental agendas.

And finally, despite the rather pessimistic overview of adult education that I have presented today, there are still glimmers of hope, spaces and cracks that we can exploit in all aspects of our work, and I hope that this newly formed Learning for Democracy group will enable us to best utilise them, inside and outside of the academy.



Policy, politics and practice: work with young people

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THE CHANGING STATE OF YOUTH

This subtitle draws on Phil Mizen's book, 'The Changing State of Youth' (Mizen, 2004) that examined how changing state interventions and perspectives have impacted on the lives of young people in contemporary British society. This short paper asserts that youth work has also changed to accommodate oppressive state policies, interventions and adverse perspectives. These have resulted in the emergence of a form of youth work that is about controlling and containing young people rather than empowering and liberating them. The paper is optimistic that challenging current constructions of youth through a dynamic educational youth work sector may alter the prevailing discourse and strengthen the possibilities inherent in young people's democratic and human rights. As academics, we are well placed to mount this challenge through dialogue with the Scottish Government.

Political rhetoric extols the virtues of respect, justice and education but seems to forget that these associational, dialogical and reciprocal processes demand a socially situated exchange of ideas and experiences. Rather than create opportunities for all young people to engage in these processes and exercise their democratic entitlements, youth work policy and service development has become driven by outcomes, outputs and inspection regimes that provide funding hoops through which to sustain particular practice. These create fear and apathy amongst professionals who collude, often unknowingly, with policy agendas that have created 'busy work' around the industries of protection, regulation and diversion of young people.

WHY IT IS TIME TO SAY ENOUGH IS ENOUGH!

There are many examples of passionate and exceptional youth work and little doubt that in recent years the youth work sector in Scotland has come together through the endeavours of agencies such as YouthLink, Young Scot and Dialogue Youth. However, while these agencies work together to make the best of the present situation, the lack of critical dialogue and published research leaves the sector vulnerable to, 'over-enthusiastic and under-analysed colonisation by non youth work agencies [that] could so easily extract from the practice what ultimately makes it youth work' (Davies, 2005 p 21).

It is argued that youth work has become diverted from what Davies (2005) identified as its defining features: voluntary participation; tipping the balance of power in young people's favour; responsive to their expectations for fun and challenging activities; responsive to their social, emotional and cultural identities and peer networks (Davies, 2005). The balance of power is firmly held by an adult community that seeks to control and demonise young people through scapegoating and sees them as, 'a threat to the social fabric of this country' (Barber, 2007).

In a recent research project it was noted that young people were routinely 'watched' by adults and only able to access areas when supervised by staff (Coburn, 2007). Despite initial surprise, youth work colleagues suggest this is routine. This appears to be consistent with McCulloch who observes that youth work has been required to, 'incorporate an element of disciplinary surveillance' (McCulloch, 2007 p 20). Young people have therefore been identified as a problem to be solved (Harland & Morgan, 2006) and as such are accustomed to surveillance as a routine part of their lives. Meanwhile, youth work professionals who, 'suffer from a poverty of vision' (Batmanghelidjh, 2006) have been compliant with an ideology of control, surveillance and regulation, rather than develop the ethical, loving and communal actions that facilitate transformation (Freire, 1993; Giroux, 2005).

In responding to consultation on the youth work strategy, the Scottish Centre for Youth Work Studies welcomed the advent of a strategy for youth work but expressed concern that the youth work sector in Scotland was [is] in crisis. This assessment was based on the steady erosion of values and principles, limited and short term funding and an almost wholly negative view of young people. The strategy itself (Scottish Executive, 2007) has been developed through extensive consultation and yet unsurprisingly remains

driven by economic interests, measurable outcomes and standards, together with a closer than healthy alliance between youth work, schooling and employment.

SO WHERE DO WE GO FROM HERE?

At the present time there is a limited literature on youth work practice and limited connection between ourselves and with others who are passionate about youth work. It may be useful to consider ways of strengthening connectivity across the UK, between institutions and national youth work agencies that, for example, may include joint research and publications. It may also be useful to connect with colleagues in other disciplines to share practice and learn from each other about ways of enhancing social purpose education.

While there have been some successes in the development and delivery of educational youth work that was grounded in a flexible curriculum, it feels like an unfinished project that has not quite reached its potential. State induced diversion has negated young people's rights to free association, participation and dissent. The state (through specific policy development or lack of support to the voluntary sector) has also distilled youth work to the point where workers no longer feel empowered or have the freedom to develop subversive practice and the notion of a 'dissenting vocation' (Martin, 2001) seems to have become engulfed in a raft of oppressive policy agendas on and about young people.

It is time to reclaim youth work from Community Safety, Regeneration, Youth Justice and Youth Diversion (to name but a few contemporary poachers). Put simply, where we go from here is to engage in dialogue to connect better with the Scottish Government and alert it to the extended and progressive possibilities for youth work.

A starting point is the reclamation of educational youth work that is voluntary, empowering, responsive, fun and challenging (Davies, 2005). The lobby of the Scottish Government suggested in the lead up to this symposium, creates the opportunity to shift the balance towards these defining features. From within the academy our influence may be felt both internally and externally as part of our teaching and learning with students but also in published work and external contracts. Where we are able to bring such influence to bear we should take positive action to challenge, transform and reclaim the social and democratic purpose of youth work.



Reararticulating professional identity

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WHAT DO WE MEAN BY PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY?

Community Education as a profession is rooted in the interests and experiences of people in communities and is committed to increasing the ability of individuals and groups to influence the issues that affect them and their communities (see Tett, 2006). Ian Martin (2001) has introduced the notion of community education as a dissenting vocation that takes the side of ordinary people against the forces that seek to dominate, oppress and exploit them. So community educators are charged with applying their professional judgement on the basis of an ethical code that has at its heart a commitment to bringing about positive social change that leads to reductions in inequalities. Community education also has a distinct epistemology and methodology that uses the lived experience and knowledge of people to build a curriculum that involves a long-term process of dialogue and negotiation through engaging actively and creatively with people in communities. So the most distinctive aspects of this work are an ethical commitment to an egalitarian social project that focuses on reaching out to communities beyond educational institutions in ways that are responsive to the issues and concerns that they have raised. However, it appears that these core purposes are being eroded in the current context and that has implications for our professional identity.

EROSION OF PROFESSIONAL IDENTITY IN COMMUNITY EDUCATION

What appears to be developing currently in community education is a division of labour between full-time professional staff, whose work is of a more managerial nature, and part-time staff that undertake face-to-face

work with individuals and groups. In this respect, the data from a research project recently conducted by Edinburgh University (Tett et al, 2007) consistently demonstrated a growing concern from staff that educational work in communities may, by default, have moved from being a core component to an optional extra. The data from a survey of early and mid-career practitioners show that they have experienced a shift in emphasis from face-to-face work to various kinds of management, audit and measurement activity. This has happened incrementally, perhaps inadvertently, but nevertheless now represents one of the most significant characteristics of the contemporary field of practice in Scotland and also across the UK as the literature consistently demonstrates (Henderson and Glen, 2005; Bamber, 2000; Learning Connections, 2007). This could well have consequences for the development of competence, since lack of opportunities to practise inevitably results in a loss of confidence and a feeling of becoming deskilled - a mutually reinforcing process. Some practitioners appear to be experiencing a dissonance between what could be described as the educational aims and claims of the work and the managerial imperatives of the job. This has a particular effect on grassroots fieldworkers who can become less confident in their professional identity if their energy and commitment to working with communities is dissipated by an audit culture.

Another change that the research revealed was that practitioners were increasingly responsible for the implementation and delivery of policy objectives, which are targeted on externally defined priority groups and specific policy initiatives, rather than emerging from the local context and communities. The prioritization in policy of particular target groups draws workers into new kinds of work-related learning and development and this may lead to a useful degree of specialization in, for example, literacies work, family learning, and capacity building. However, it can also mean that rather than developing a popular curriculum that addresses the concerns of ordinary people and actively draws upon their experience as a resource for educational work in communities the autonomy of practitioners and the range of strategic choices they are able to make about their work is reduced. The extent to which practitioners can exercise discretion is contingent upon both the wider context of policy and practice and on the particular culture of the workplace. This means that a great deal depends on the local and distinctive characteristics of specific work contexts, which may be either restrictive or expansive in terms of how practitioners experience the problems and possibilities of their work (Evans et al, 2005: Fuller and Unwin, 2005). Where practitioners were confronting the experience of socially excluded groups this had extended and enhanced their professional

understanding of both community cohesion and social inclusion and enabled them to propose solutions in dialogue with ordinary people. Working in this way takes time, of course, and many organizations, particularly those in the voluntary sector, found that they were restricted in the resources they had by the need to find funding to carry out their work. This was also compounded by the pace of policy change that sometimes made it difficult for them to keep up to date with what activities would attract external funding.

On the positive side the research showed that practitioners were developing a reflexive and self-directed type of learning, particularly by comparing what they think they should be doing with what they are actually required to do, and this kind of critical and engaged practice was important in generating confidence and competence. Practitioners showed a highly positive commitment to working with, and learning from, the knowledge and expertise that exists in communities and in making a realistic appraisal of the possibilities for engagement. Nevertheless overcoming the barriers outlined above that could get in the way of doing this was always a challenge.

WHAT DO WE STAND FOR?

Community educators work in difficult situations, sometimes with little access to support from other community educators. This means that it is all too easy to lose our vision of ourselves as a profession that is about challenging existing inequalities when much of the policy discourse is about incorporating communities into existing structures and silencing their dissenting views. Current policy does, however, provide spaces for our primary educational task of resourcing democratic capacity so that ordinary people have the potential to be active political subjects rather than the objects of policy. For example, the current policy imperative to consult communities provides a space to work alongside people to help them make strategic decisions about where and when they might make the greatest impact rather than simply following the more powerful players' view of what is wrong in their communities and how it might be put right. A vision of education that moves away from inequitable, individualized, deficit models of learning and instead focuses on challenging the structures that gave rise to these problems in the first place can lead on to a more democratic, equitable life for everyone. This vision is something to aim for but is very hard to achieve. However, this vision lies at the heart of a rearticulated professionalism in Community Education. The university sector has a role to play in articulating this vision both through our initial professional education courses and through continuing professional development that provides

opportunities to stimulate debate and share a vision of what might be possible across our field. We need to think collectively about how we can provide spaces for practitioners to come together to debate, share problems and build alliances so that we have a clearer view of where we stand and what we stand for. This would give us the possibility, as Mae Shaw (2007) suggests, of 'reclaiming a notion of professionalism' that 'includes the capacity to express and contest professional and political purpose, not just to act as State functionaries'.



Learning for Democracy: Ten Propositions and Ten Proposals

Akwugo Emejulu, University of Strathclyde

Although the well received and much commented upon ‘Open Letter: Whatever happened to learning for democracy?’ captured the zeitgeist and articulated the frustrations and possibilities of community-based education and development, the spark that initiated the work around Learning for Democracy should be seen as a historical concern. Community-based educators in Scotland seem to struggle in a contradictory space that creates tensions and paradoxes in our ethics and our practice. We serve two masters— the ‘state’ and the ‘community’— and as a result we can do a disservice both to ourselves and to democracy. By serving the state we very often deliver, monitor and evaluate questionable projects that limit the scope of education to instrumental purposes. By serving the community we frequently attempt to strip ourselves of ethics and political positions in the vain attempt to be a neutral and unbiased vessel for local people’s interests. By displacing our politics and our (often competing) self-interests we help contribute to the growing democratic deficit in Scotland because we do not often seek transformative opportunities for our theory and practice.

Over the last 11 months, the Learning for Democracy group has sought to describe and analyse what democratic and transformative community-based education and development might look like and the group has also sought to reclaim a dissenting professional identity. Initial action was channelled through working groups focused on interrelated issues: writing an ‘alternative report’ on learning for democracy, undertaking an audit of democratic practice and engaging in lobbying around the Scottish elections and beyond. Of all the working groups, the one tasked with writing the report has been the most active. Over the course of five meetings and several email discussions practitioners and academic colleagues have discussed and debated the meaning of ‘learning for democracy’.

As a result of discussions among the working group, three groups are piloting these Propositions and Proposals. These groups will report back on the usefulness of the document for dialogue and practice. Whilst it is encouraging that practitioners are seeking a new future for community-based education and development, the working group also hopes that this document will serve as a foundation for higher education institutions' rethinking of the ethics, teaching and practice of community education in Scotland.

INTRODUCTION

This project arises from an 'Open letter: Whatever happened to learning for democracy?' which was widely circulated in Scotland towards the end of 2006. Here is an extract:

We see our work in community-based education as part of a broader democratic process. This is about enabling people to demand social justice and equality for themselves and others. There is now an historic opportunity to renew democracy in Scotland, and yet we are beginning to feel a profound sense of disappointment about the way in which both our own work and the lives of people in communities are being managed, regulated and controlled. ... What is required, in the first instance, is a much more open, democratic and imaginative dialogue and debate about what kind of society we want to live in, and how we can begin to build it in Scotland today. Education and learning in communities can contribute to making this vision a reality, and they are a rich resource for tackling significant problems in society. Ordinary people need the opportunity to have their say, to be listened to and to talk back to the state. This is essentially a democratic process. It cannot simply be managed and measured; it has to be nurtured and cultivated in communities. It requires faith and trust in the people, and a valuing of genuinely democratic dialogue and debate.

In some ways, the recent election for the Scottish Parliament heralds the possibility of a new era in the politics of Scotland. One question it raises, however, is about the way community-based education and development has got cut off from its roots in learning for democracy and cultivating a democratic culture in Scottish communities. The ten propositions and ten proposals which follow seek to mobilise interest and support in order to put matters right.

Ten Propositions - Democracy is about:

- 1. Freedom**

The flourishing of human attainment is achieved through freedom to act individually and collectively, only constrained by due consideration for others.
- 2. Equality**

People are of the same moral worth and are obliged to mind the equality of others.
- 3. Justice**

Social justice and democracy are interdependent; an unequal society is an undemocratic society and an undemocratic society breeds inequality.
- 4. Solidarity**

We are all interdependent. Shared aims and values arise from the pursuit of common and mutually supportive ways of living.
- 5. Diversity**

Differences of culture and identity can enrich common life and help to build a common culture.
- 6. Accountability**

Citizens are accountable for their commitment to the common good, and the state for providing the policy framework within which judgements about common good are made and contested. Those who hold power are answerable to the people.
- 7. Dialogue**

A democratic culture requires a process of purposeful exchange; learning to argue, articulate beliefs, deliberate and come to collective decisions concerning what constitutes the good society.
- 8. Responsibility**

Consistency and coherence between private and public behaviour is essential for democratic life.
- 9. Participation**

Democracy is something to be demanded from below rather than handed down from above. It requires the active involvement of people in deliberation and decision-making.
- 10. Sustainability**

A commitment to the environment, the planet and future generations requires opposition to those forces which are wasteful and destructive.

Ten proposals - Learning for democracy means:

1. **Taking sides**

Educational workers are not merely enablers or facilitators taking their brief from 'the community'. The claim to neutrality reinforces and legitimises existing power relations. Practitioners need to be clear what they stand for – and against.

2. **Acting in solidarity with communities and social movements**

Educational workers should proactively seek opportunities to engage in a critical and committed way with communities and social movements around progressive social change.

3. **Taking risks**

Critical and creative educational processes are necessarily unpredictable and open ended. Exposing the contested nature of social reality can be both a liberating and challenging process.

4. **Developing political literacy**

Politics needs to be made more educational and education made more political. Learning to analyse, argue, collaborate, and take action on issues that matter requires a systematic educational process.

5. **Working at the grassroots**

Democracy lives through ordinary people's actions; it does not depend on state sanction. Professional workers should be in everyday contact with people on their own terms and on their own ground.

6. **Listening to dissenting voices**

Achieving a participatory democracy is a process of creating spaces in which different interests are expressed and voices heard; in which dissent is valued rather than suppressed.

7. **Cultivating awkwardness**

Democracy is not served well by the conformist citizen. This means that the educational task is to create situations in which people can confront their circumstances, question deficit definitions of their experience and take action.

8. **Educating for social change**

Progressive change comes about through collective action. Learning for democracy can contribute to this process by linking micro level experience with macro level explanations and processes.

9. **Exploring alternatives**

Learning for democracy can provide people with the opportunity to see that the status quo is not inevitable; that 'another world is possible'.

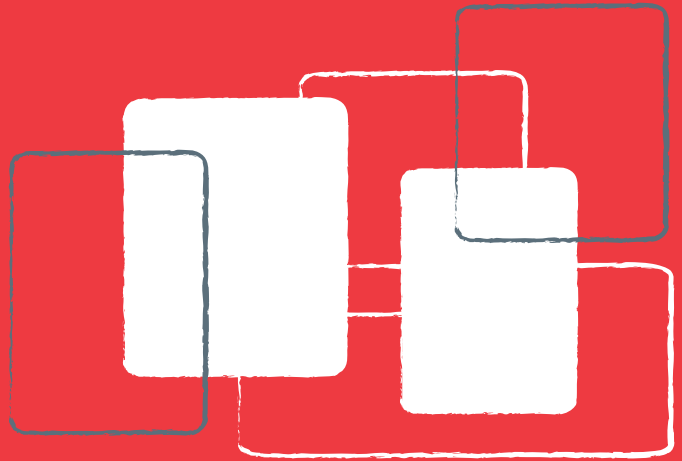
10. **Exposing the power of language**

The words used to describe the world influence how we all think and act. Learning for democracy involves exploring how language reproduces discriminatory attitudes, norms and values.

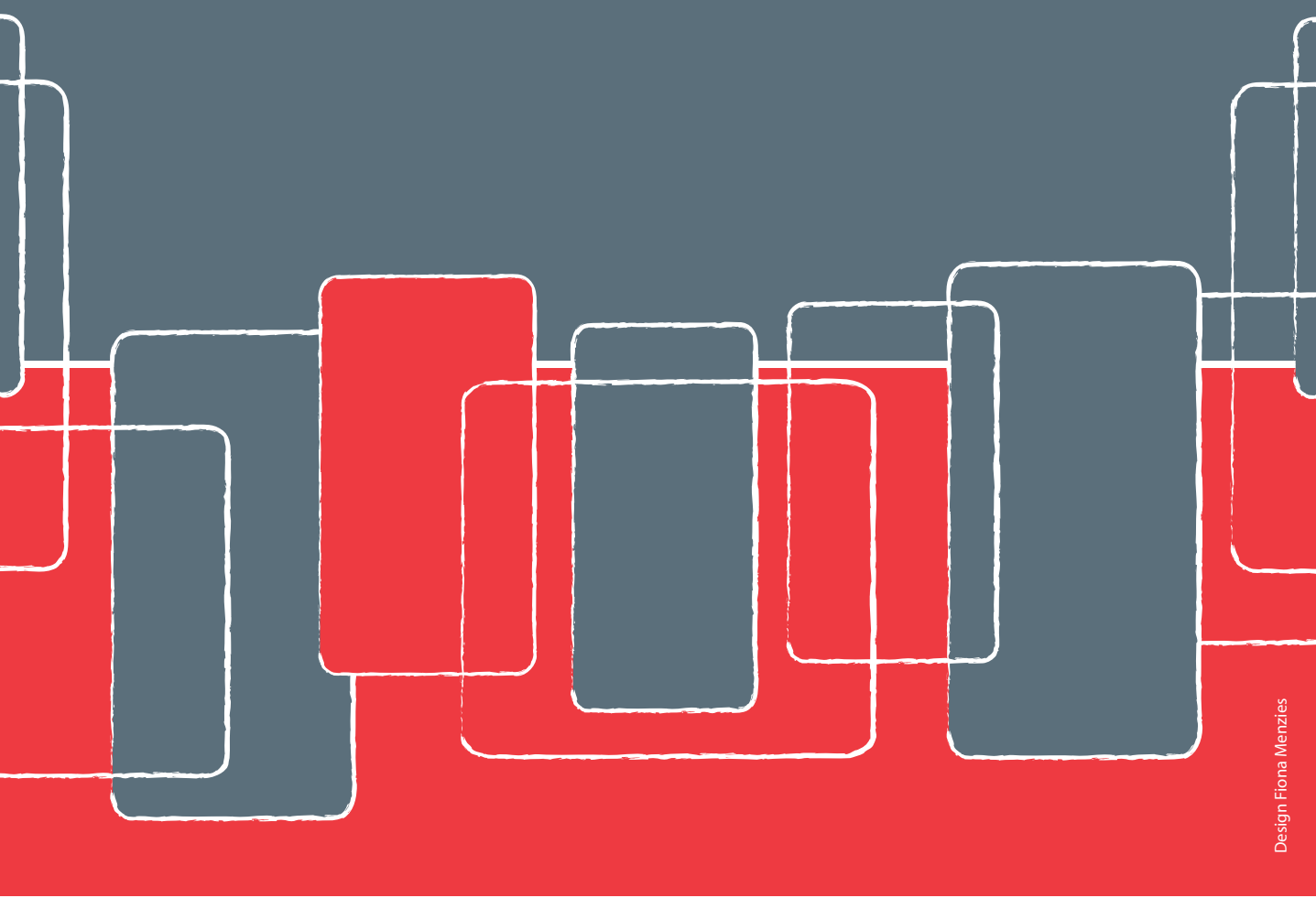
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