***Harnessing the Bohemian: Artists as Innovation Partners in Rural and Remote Communities* by Peter Skippington, Australian National University Press, Canberra, 2016, xxvi + 327pp., PRICE??? (paperback), ISBN 9781760460525.**

Peter Skippington has deliberately narrows his focus on rural and remote communities in order to inspire an enhanced version of their community identity that is driven by locals and artists in their communities. He stipulates that the advice in this book is best applied for communities with fewer than 4,000 people, located more than 400kms from a major population centre (268),and he aims to reduce these community’s reliance on “the dump and run” by artists from large metropolitan cities (Hume in RAI, 2017).Regional Arts Australia and the Australia Council of the Arts, as well as state-level arts sectors and local government already provide opportunities for the arts to grow and thrive in regional and remote areas; yet Skippington resists auditing these. He chooses, instead to concentrate on cutting through the often confused nomenclature of CCD (Community Cultural Development), CCB (Community Capacity Building), CA (Community Arts), which, he points out, are now CC (Creative Communities) . As neither a practising artist nor a local government agent, this lack of allegiance allows Skippington the freedom to encourage a new model of creative community development that encourages practical ways of proceeding towards strategic change enablement in regional Australian towns.

Although not critically discussed, the use of the term “bohemian” is no doubt linked to Richard Florida’s *Bohemian Index* (2002). Leonie Pearson calls this a “proxy indicator for the creative economy” (2017) designed to measure the concentration of working artists across (specifically) metropolitan areas (2017). Recent applications of the Bohemian Index in regional Australia have been published by the Regional Australia Institute (RAI) which aims to reduce the patronising rhetoric around regional Australians as “victims of change”. Citing the research of award-winning festival and opera director Lindy Hume, entitled *Restless Giant: Changing Cultural Values in Regional Australia* (2017), a “vibrant regional arts and culture scene” is already an increasingly demonstrated phenomena which correlates with the RAI Bohemian Index data to suggest there is no “statistical difference between the scores for regional and metropolitan cities” (2017). Skippington’s model, therefore, provides an exemplar strategy for how rural and remote towns might exploit pre-existing rich arts culture in order to promote renewed identity and liveability of regional areas.

*Harnessing the Bohemian* is part audit, part analysis of community arts and creative economy debates. A strength of this publication appears in Chapter 3 (37-66) where Skippington helpfully dissects the vagaries of Community Capacity Building while Chapter 4 (67-90) discusses correlations between the creative economy and the role of the arts as a driver of innovative community practice. The combined chapters provide salient reasons for regional towns to engage localism with creativity. A large percentage of this book is a guide for local governments and other citizen-based capital (chamber of commerce, local schools, sporting clubs) to see themselves as co-culture-makers with local artists in communities. There are several sections providing case-studies to in the creation of a new way “to critically survey the environment, and to identify and build on existing community strengths” (250).The Creative Community Development Pyramid (CCDP) is a deceivingly simple model from Skippington’s own research that is a non-prescriptive, broad guide for communities to harness the arts for innovation and growth. It engages existing community strengths (via an audit) to then create a set of integrative practices or applications, which then result in healthy, creative and sustainable outcomes. Specifically, the application of the model for towns is built from the ground up, using the specific idiosyncratic needs of the community (250-251).The four specific case studies in Barrington, Wangoola, Jabbaroo, and Waratah, which appear in Chapter 10, successfully applied the stages of the CCDP and provide compelling reading for those wishing to adopt the model (253-275).

This book is a solid advocate for efficacious localism; it does not provide a critical overview nor comparison with similar international studies and this results in the research presenting a thorough and detailed guide to innovation. Another drawback is the age of the resource material and citations (none of which are any older than 2010).Skippington converted his PhD into this book, but does not update resources nor examples of practice in this field since 2010. Recent work on links between urban (and regional) renewal, resilience and wellbeing, community capacity building, as well as the re-calibration of regional arts as something that is thriving and contributing to the national cultural sector are omitted, as are references to the *National Arts and Health Framework* (2013), the Institute for Creative Health (2006) or Regional Australia Institute (2012). Engaging with these recent sources may have provided further evidence to the timely value of Skippington’s CCDP model.

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