

# WCPUN

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## SUMMARY: WCPUN WORKSHOP "Current Practices and Innovative Approaches in Community Revitalization and Social Entrepreneurship"

Thursday, 28 August, 2014; 11:45 am - 1:00 pm; United Nations, Conference Room B, 65<sup>th</sup> Annual UN DPI/NGO CONFERENCE

Why link community revitalization with social entrepreneurship?

In various cities internationally, inclusive approaches and local employment opportunities are often lacking in communities targeted for "revitalization" or investment, with policies and practices that neglect indigenous resources of the community and overstep their right to participate in the processes that will affect them.

How to ensure that infrastructure development and the increased presence of public and private sectors in underserved areas do not act as a motor of further marginalization?

How can these factors become vehicles for engaging the local community instead, valuing and strengthening the community's existing skills and insights, and generating training and jobs?

The workshop presented three perspectives, beginning with **Wilfried Eckstein**, Director of the Goethe-Institut Washington D.C. who was also speaking on behalf of **Barbara Holub** of Transparadiso regarding their recent collaboration with the TRANSIT program and the "First World Congress of the Missing Things" in Baltimore, Maryland.

Referencing the process of "creative placemaking", he described the Goethe-Institut's "bottom-up NGO style" approach to development projects in urban areas, in line with EUNIC (the European Union National Institutes for Culture) guidelines. Recognizing Baltimore's issues of shrinking population, vacant buildings and unemployment, the goal of his project was not to "change the DNA of the place or socially engineer an area". Rather, he has implemented a process-oriented approach, centered on communication with neighbors and passersby.



Wilfried Eckstein and Renée Niño de Rivera

A key objective is to "reclaim public space for public use".

To this end, he facilitates international artistic collaborations that are guided by the community's interests and leverage the artists' perception, expertise and creative skills. The collaboration with artist/urban planner Barbara Holub for the "First World Congress of the Missing Things" enabled a setting in which all community members were invited to participate in determining what is missing in their community and to make recommendations.

#15 affordable housing and living wages.  
#17 vibrant public life: music + dancing + love + politics + commerce in the streets + squares  
#18 non-athletic public venue for aggression & completely unrelated to productivity  
#21 empathy, compassion, friendliness,  
#22 transparency in government  
#23 homes for homeless, food for the hungry  
#24 state attorney who will prosecute killer cops  
#27 a government that's not for sale

Partial list of "Missing Things"

The resulting Charter of Missing Things was communicated to Baltimore City Officials. A brief clip from video footage of the Congress highlighted a community member recommending that, along with the budgets for rebuilding houses, training be provided for the local community so they can participate in the rebuilding process.

**Shamina de Gonzaga**, (Moderator) WCPUN Director / Main Representative to the UN, recalled that Barbara Holub had also noted that there is no reason for a city like Baltimore with massive amounts of vacant houses to have a high rate of homelessness.



Shamina de Gonzaga

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Thinking about ways to advance income generating socially relevant opportunities, the next presenter, **Renée Niño de Rivera**, Social Entrepreneur, explained the challenges of developing social-entrepreneurial ventures with communities that are traditionally excluded from such endeavors due to illiteracy and other factors. Her project, which is now a full fledged brand, began by reflecting on the textile production of indigenous women in Mexico, where the talent of embroidery didn't translate into successful businesses, as the women were competing for the same market with limited demand. To take the production to a higher level, and transform traditional skills into business opportunities, she first had to address the women's lack of financial planning background and overexposure to microcredits. A business plan is key, even when partnering with NGOs and maintaining a social objective. Her priority was on product development. Rather than sell clothing that isn't wearable for an international market, Renée examined what products could be developed that would both harness the women's skills and be attractive to a broader base of clients. Recognizing that millions of dollars are spent on dish cloths per year in the US alone, she found a niche and engaged the women as entrepreneurs in viewing media, such as "telenovelas" with the objective of thinking about who their potential clients could be and what they could sell. Success for a social enterprise is when the producers have their own business.



Renée Niño de Rivera

Reflecting on WCPUN's recent collaborative meeting with the Barcelona City Council and local social entrepreneurs, the Moderator reported on participants' input:

- production can be very costly, especially as larger companies tend to monopolize primary materials;
- information about how to become more socially responsible must be more accessible to small and medium size enterprises;
- the market for socially responsible products remains very limited, there is a need for strategies to generate more interest and demand.



Alexandra Abrams

In that connection, the floor was given to **Alexandra Abrams**, President, the Society of Young Philanthropists / WCPUN UK, who explained her approach to youth engagement in social issues and partnership with entrepreneurs in the United Kingdom. Noting that the "culture of giving" is not prevalent in London (as compared for example to New York where there is a long history of charitable giving), she wanted to understand why, and found that it was due primarily to lack of trust in charities, and in not knowing how to give. Interested in "what makes young people tick", she sought ways to make charity attractive, leveraging the influence of technology and the ability for people to successfully develop their own platform. Fostering an environment of cross-pollination and connecting with public personalities to inspire people to investigate causes, The Society is presently developing the "GIVE London" app to facilitate access to existing opportunities for social engagement; incentivize action through a rewards system in partnership with luxury brands; build on "peer pressure" in a positive sense, allowing people to be recognized for their contributions and compete for a cause. The Society of Young Philanthropists / WCPUN UK will be partnering with the UN Foundation to help bring their '#GivingTuesday' program to Europe, through a three-day festival to promote charitable giving and sustainability in the luxury sector, and launch The Society's app, scheduled for December 2014.

## Questions, comments and recommendations for "sustainable development" post-2015 in community revitalization and social entrepreneurship:

The Representative of Friends of Matamla / Haiti recommended the organization/website [greatergood.org](http://greatergood.org) which has raised \$30 million for charity, all Internet based by providing sites of issues that people are concerned with, and a bucket of things to buy, that support such causes.

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The Representative of the Black Holocaust Museum in Philadelphia sought advice for social media strategies that could be accessible for the elderly Founder of the Museum to better publicize his Collection. Instagram was suggested as the easiest way to access social media across the generational spectrum.



The Representative of Solar Cookers International cited the challenge for people to develop social enterprises when charitable organizations give away certain products for free. He questioned how NGOs can become more involved in training activities.



The Representative of the Joyful Joy Foundation noted the importance of local authorities, such as the current New York City Mayor and Brooklyn Borough President, being supportive of cultural diversity and recommended increased use of Internet based marketing and sales to reach a global market for goods made by Indigenous Peoples.



Michaela Walsh, Founder of Women's World Banking, emphasized the need to move from "micro" to SMEs, noting that only a tiny percentage of capital goes to women run businesses. As the cost of training opportunities is often prohibitive, she is putting together a list of hundreds of people who want to make training accessible. She urged that all think of ways to work together, rather than through individual projects, as "women will remain a minority in the financial community until we build bridges."

## **Other comments and questions throughout the discussion addressed:**



The challenge of sustaining interest in philanthropic work through social media, when trends are subject to continuous shifts; it was suggested that, when social causes stop being fashionable, it will be because the behavior of social responsibility has become ingrained;

How to drive development from within a community, leveraging internal resources;

We need to think in terms of cooperating with communities, not "helping"; all can contribute their own insights and expertise;

Community-led organizations, such as Redes da Maré in Rio de Janeiro's Maré favela, which has created a directory of locally-owned businesses in Maré, demonstrate how to go about

acknowledging and strengthening the resources that exist within the community;

As organizations grow and require grants, how to reconcile donor demands and reporting expectations with the real needs of the community;

We have to tell donors what reporting mechanisms do and don't work and not allow the integrity of programs to be subjugated to cumbersome and costly evaluations that don't adequately represent the activities in question;

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How can organizations encourage donors to develop long term relationships with communities and facilitate community-driven programs; the Goethe-Institut's example was cited, as its motivation is not "to do good", but to talk to each other and learn from the local community as a point of departure;



Arts institutions can be a pipeline for education provided that they interact with neighborhoods; a project about "future perfect" was mentioned as a helpful approach for strategizing, beginning with the premise that the "perfect future" has been achieved, and inviting participants to work backwards and figure out the steps required.



For more information:

[www.missingthings.org](http://www.missingthings.org)  
[http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/was/enindex.htm?wt\\_sc=washington](http://www.goethe.de/ins/us/was/enindex.htm?wt_sc=washington)  
<http://www.reneeninoderivera.com>  
<http://theyoungphilanthropists.com>  
[www.wcpun.org](http://www.wcpun.org)

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