
Winston Churchill Memorial Trust 2012 Fellowship Report

Exploring social change documentary film outreach, engagement and impact campaigns.

Alex Kelly November 2013



Wires, London April 2013. Alex Kelly

Winston Churchill Memorial Trust Fellowship

<http://www.churchilltrust.com.au/>

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Indemnity Statement

THE WINSTON CHURCHILL MEMORIAL TRUST AUSTRALIA REPORT BY ALEX KELLY CHURCHILL FELLOW 2012

Exploring social change documentary film outreach, engagement and impact campaigns

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DATE 7th November 2013



Glossary

Impact creating a a marked effect or influence on someone or something.

Impact Space the emerging sector of the film industry engaging in the practice of creating social impact and social change with film.

Impact producer devises and executes a strategic campaign, including distribution, communications, outreach, engagement and marketing to maximise the impact of a film.

Social change significant alteration over time in behavior patterns, and cultural values and social norms.

Social change film films which seek to create social change on a particular issue.

Introduction

The purpose of my Churchill Fellowship was to look at how documentary filmmakers and producers in the United Kingdom, Canada and the United States are working to achieve social change impact with their films. I met with a range of people who produce, fund, partner with or direct films with a focus on social issues and a social change agenda.

I have had considerable experience in working in the field of advocating for and achieving social change through my background in media activism and work with acclaimed arts and social change company Big hART in Australia.

I have a deep and abiding passion and interest in the power of story, arts and media in encouraging and promoting justice. I was involved in a range of media-activist organisations in Melbourne in the late 1990s including SKATV's weekly community television program *Access News* and was part of the founding collective of online open publishing news website *Melbourne IndyMedia*¹. From media activism to work with Big hART and film projects I have always been inspired by the power of story.



Through this fellowship I wanted to explore social change outreach and engagement in the specific field of documentary filmmaking. I wanted to see the strategies, tools and methods that were being used elsewhere to maximise the social impact of films that had at their core the desire to make change.

¹ Global Indymedia network <http://indymedia.org/>

² Queen of the Desert 2012 poster, designed by Josephine Wright <http://www.360degreefilms.com.au/queen-of-the-desert>

I wanted to see what lessons and insights I could bring back to Australia to inform practice here, in documentary filmmaking in particular and in arts and culture practice more broadly.

I also undertook this research to seek out new networks and peers and to be able to reflect on my own and Big hART's practice, and to understand where our work sits globally.

Special thanks

Thank you to everyone I interviewed who was so open with their knowledge and ideas and particularly to those that shared networks and made introductions. I am grateful to Andrew Lowenthal and Rebecca Lichtenfeld who were especially generous with their networks.

And gratitude goes to my wonderful workmates at Big hART for being such a risk-inclined, values driven and innovative company to work with. I deeply appreciate their generous support in allowing me to take 3 months' time out for this Fellowship, and the scope to bring these ideas home and introduce new ways of working into our structure and culture.

Thanks to Martha Ansara, *OzDox*, William Head, *Don't You Have Docs?* and Shannon Owen, *VCA* for hosting lectures so soon after my return to Australia. This was a great way to disseminate my ideas and learning and to force me to collate and articulate them.

A big shout out goes to Rachel Maher, Carol Peterson, Pip Kelly, Amber Hammill and Rosemary Kelly for their support during the compilation of this report.

And finally massive thanks go to Scott Rankin and Rachel Maher for deep and rigorous conversations about the practice and philosophy of social change arts and media. These conversations are critical to my thinking. I value them, and your friendship, deeply.

Executive Summary

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Project description: ***Exploring social change documentary film outreach, engagement and impact campaigns***

Documentary films, alongside clever strategies, have an enormous capacity to drive social change. In this time of global expansion in digital distribution, we are witnessing a dynamic new approach to documentary filmmaking emerge internationally. It is known as “impact producing”. This emerging approach is an exciting hybrid of activism, movement building, community organising, grass roots event management, marketing and distribution. This emergence is happening in parallel with advances in technology that innovate and enable new ways to fund, make, watch and distribute content that seeks to effect social change.

As the documentary field develops and creates a language and approach for this work, it is important that we recognise that there are no templates and guarantees to create tipping points for social change.

Deep and lasting social change is brought about when diverse tactics are used effectively by a broad coalition of campaigners -- alongside luck and an often-elusive combination of zeitgeist and timing.

Filmmakers, producers, funders and researchers who are creating and defining this burgeoning “impact” space benefit from drawing on the wisdom of social movements in the development of methods and tactics to bring about social change.

This report summarises the research undertaken into the new and emerging “impact” space and approach in the global documentary film making community. It finds that in order to reach their goals, filmmakers, storytellers and cultural producers need to harness their creative and strategic power, learn from -- and collaborate with -- activists and organisers and think big so their films can be part of creating deep and lasting social change.

Program

London April 4th – May 2nd 2013

Toronto April 30th – May 6th 2013

New York May 6th – June 2nd 2013

San Francisco June 2nd – June 24th 2013

Hot Docs Film Festival, Toronto

Tara Brach, Radical Acceptance Retreat, Massachusetts

Centre for Story Based Strategy, San Francisco

Full list of interviewees in Appendix A

Highlights

- Meeting deeply inspiring filmmakers, directors, producers, funding bodies, community organisers, media activists and impact producers.
- Discovering the newly coined term “impact producer” – producers who oversee the design and implementation of the outreach and engagement strategy of social change films.
- Discovering new funding avenues for this kind of filmmaking.
- Exploring new methodologies to measure the impact of film and arts on communities, audiences and social change.
- Attending the *Centre for Story Based Strategy* advanced training retreat in California.
- Affirming the knowledge I already have in impact producing.
- Establishing that Big hART is really at the cutting edge globally of culture lead social change projects.

Dissemination of learnings

As I was travelling I produced regular online blog post based on my research, including interviews and reflections at www.echotango.org/blog. I shared these blog posts with peers and friends as I was travelling. This served as a great way to document my research and reflect on the conversations as I was travelling.

Since returning to Australia I have given a number of public presentations and internal presentations to my colleagues at Big hART. Big hART is integrating some new ideas in to our practice.

Presentations to date

While I was on the road I presented a lunch time ‘brown bag’ presentation at Witness, New York NY May 8th, an overview of the Big hART model to Harmony Institute, New York NY 20th May and a workshop on Big hART at Centre for Story Based Strategy – Advanced Training, California June 3rd – 9th

Since completing my trip I have given the following lectures:

- OzDox “Lights Camera... Action” Sydney July 10th (archived on YouTube at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uQm6xw2oO_8).
- Don’t You Have Docs? / VCA Melbourne August 10th “Films with Social Impact” (archived podcast dontyouhavedocs.com).
- Melbourne International Film Festival “Resistance is Futile? Film and Activism” panel 31st July.
- Screen Territory lunchtime presentation, Alice Springs, NT 9th August.
- VCA Making Movies Course Film and Activism Lecture Melbourne, VIC 21st August.
- Griffith University, Queensland lecture 17th October.
- NYU, USA Film students’ guest lecture 18th October.
- Margaret Mead Film Festival, New York, USA 19th October.

I have been invited to contribute a chapter in a forthcoming book “Film Festival Activism: Actors, Spectators, Social Change” Monash University 2014.

I am also likely to be presenting some of my findings at the Australian International Documentary Conference in March 2014.

Background on Big hART

Since 2004 I have worked with Big hART on a number of projects and was Creative Producer of the award-winning *Ngapartji Ngapartji* project from 2005-2010³.

Big hART is a prolific producer of critically and publicly acclaimed performing, visual, and media art derived from rigorous, deep and lengthy processes in some of Australia's most remote, marginal and challenging communities.

This street-smart cultural not-for-profit organization was incorporated in 1996, launched at Parliament House, Canberra, by then Australian Prime Minister John Howard MP, enjoys Deductible Gift Recipient status and is the subject of an increasingly large body of international research and academic evaluation⁴.

³ Ngapartji Ngapartji <http://www.ngapartji.org/>

⁴ Big hART evaluations available to download at <http://www.bighart.org/public/?p=86>

Big hART is a multidisciplinary and intercultural company specialising in making art with communities for high profile arts forums and arts festivals.

In 2013 Big hART celebrates 21 years of highly-awarded internationally-acknowledged best practice in the field of community building and effecting social change through the arts.

Big hART achieves arts-driven social change, through unique bespoke approaches to community diplomacy that involves non-welfare arts-based community development projects that take place over a minimum of 150 weeks, involving investigations into areas such as justice, democracy, cultural identity and social inclusion.

Excellent outcomes have been generated from this participatory art practice in a variety of communities, through ongoing social policy engagement, leveraging sustained change, engaged communities and making powerful art.

The art made, the skills and participation involved, and the narratives it highlights, focus new forms of attention on the identity of a local community, which is then presented intelligently in national forums, with local participation, often transforming the community's narrative and creating deeply authentic and critically acclaimed work. The profile of this work is then used to achieve lasting legislative and policy change pertaining to the aspirations of the community in which the work was created.

Spirit of the company

Rising out of the economic rubble of Burnie - a mill town in its death-throws in 1992, on the North West Coast of Tasmania - the spirit of the company has always been one of tenacity and *never say never*. Against a backdrop of cultural isolation, rural disadvantage, invisibility in the arts, increased travel and transport costs and an underlying disbelief that anything culturally interesting could come from there, the company has grown exponentially, breaking through all the barriers to become one of Tasmania's largest cultural and intellectual exports.

Having expanded nationally to work in 45 communities, with over 8,000 participants, Big hART is company in residence at the Canberra Theatre Centre (2012-2015) - giving it access to federal politicians and decision makers in Australia's national capital and is currently negotiating an international co-operative residency in London, United Kingdom.

Big hART has:

- Produced 14 theatre works that have toured domestically and internationally.
- Produced 6 feature-length films.
- Developed over 24 unique, arts-based community projects.
- Produced over 400 short films in collaboration with community participants.
- Recorded over 300 songs with community participants.
- Been represented at over 16 major national and international arts festivals.
- Engaged audiences of over 3 million people in Australia and internationally.
- Impacted on government policy at a local, state, & federal level.
- Worked in 43 communities.
- Worked with over 7500 individuals.
- Had works seen by over 3 Million Australians.
- Won more than 25 Awards – including 8 COAG Violence Prevention awards, a World Health Organisation Award, a Helpmann Award, and Sidney Myer Performing Arts Award⁵.

Research Approach

The methodology which I used in this exploration of social change documentary film outreach, engagement and impact was informal rather than academic. I wanted to be able to get in to guts of the philosophy of what works, how and why and what doesn't and why and felt that a more conversational and collegiate approach would best enable this. I also didn't want to identify individuals when they were speaking reflectively about their own projects or other practitioners in the field, this confidentiality I think invited more candid discussions.

I spent more than two and a half years prior to my trip tracking the social change documentary field. This included reading reports, watching films, reading film credits, looking up websites of producers, researchers, films and filmmakers and getting a sense of the social change film sector, prior to undertaking this Churchill Fellowship.

⁵ Big hART awards list <http://bighart.org/public/?p=76>

Before I travelled I made contact with many people in my existing networks and key people I had identified as doing interesting work, requesting a time to meet with them. As I travelled many people generously introduced me to other people they thought I should meet and so the network grew.

I met with more than 100 people and interviewed over 65 in person on the trip. For the most part I would meet individuals in cafes or in their workplaces for around two hours. I made sure I had watched their films, read their impact statements and any background materials before we met. This ensured that we were able to quickly move into rigorous and interesting explorations of their work in these conversations.

I did not record the conversations, but I did fill many notebooks with links, comments and ideas. As such this report does not quote extensively from individuals I met with, but gives more of a reflective overview across the conversations as a whole. In this way it is a kind of subjective informal survey.

As part of this research I also undertook a five day advanced training retreat in innovative social change communications strategies with a social movement training organisation *The Centre for Story Based Strategy*⁶. I learnt an enormous amount at this training and I would like to see more exchange of ideas between activist organisers and impact producers than is currently happening.

I also took part in Hot Docs Impact Workshop presented by Bay Area Video Coalition and Harmony Institute in Toronto, Canada, which was part of the Hot Docs Film Festival and the Tara Brach Radical Acceptance Workshop over three days in Massachusetts, USA.

Power of story

The destiny of the world is determined less by the battles that are lost and won than by the stories it loves and believes in - Harold Goddard

Story and cultural activity can influence social, political, behavioural and cultural change. This document is a report of my research into the work of people around the world that aims to increase the impact of social change documentary films. In the course of this research I looked for examples where social change documentaries have changed public communication about and perception of an issue, and for instances where this may, in

⁶ <http://www.storybasedstrategy.org/>

turn, have driven a change in policy, legislation, attitudes or behaviours on a range of different scales and levels.

This report is a summary of my findings, an overview of successful ‘outreach’ and ‘impact’ campaigns and a way to share my conclusions about how this approach and these techniques can potentially influence the work of Australian producers and filmmakers.

My work as a producer with Big hART and my interest in this area is based on a fundamental confidence in the premise that stories can change the world: and is underpinned by two strong ideas; ***It is harder hurt someone if you know their story***⁷ and ***Nations are Narrations***⁸.

It was through meeting Sandi DuBowski from *Films That Change the World*⁹ and the late Robert West of *Working Films* that I became aware of this exciting new field of practice that many are now referring to as “impact space”.

This new impact sector excites me because it draws together two strands of my expertise and passion. That is, the world of activism and movements for social change and the world of film and media production. It is interesting to me that effective social impact film production utilises many of the techniques that have been developed and refined by social movements, particularly with the growth of new media.

Story shapes our world

We are the stuff of stories – society, culture, behaviour and therefore policy and governance are based on the stories we hold to be true. The stories we include and exclude from our national narratives define us as individuals, communities, societies and nations and global citizens.

Being visible or invisible, having a voice or not, being included or excluded from these narrations deeply affects the identity of individuals and communities, their cohesion, and their self-worth.

⁷ John Bakes and Scott Rankin, Big hART 1996

⁸ Edward Said - Source

⁹ <http://www.filmsthatchangetheworld.com/>

The stories, ideas and voices we include and give space to as part of our national narration change the way that we see ourselves and see each other.

Stories can be protective, they can be illuminating, they can be transformative. Cultural product such as social issues documentaries can shift narrations and therefore create impact on a social issue by changing the way people understand and relate to themselves and other people, by changing the story or the framing of a story or community. Stories can provide us with new possibilities, new visions, expose and introduce us to new truths or new ways of seeing ourselves and each other.

One interviewee candidly reflected that the hit television series *Glee* has probably done more to discourage homophobia and promote tolerance than any documentary film. However, in highlighting the ecology of stories she argued that this does not make documentary redundant. To be illustrative she suggested it was likely that the writers of *Glee* had been influenced by documentary films such as *Paris Is Burning* (a seminal 1990 documentary which explored the “vogue ball” scene).

Documentary plays an important role within this ecology of media and story. Drama, comedy, theatre, art, poetry and social activism and a range of other forms and campaign strategies all have value. However, for my Churchill fellowship I looked squarely at the overt things people are doing to maximise the impact of their documentary films, and at the emerging “impact space” and practice of “impact producing” around social change documentary film.

After the lights come up

Often independent filmmakers and artists expend a huge amount of energy, both personal and organisational, making their content - be it film, theatre, visual arts or literature out of sheer motivation to change the world. When the work is completed we launch it, exhibit it, perhaps tour it, or screen it, but we have often run out of resources and are on to the next project before the full potential outreach and distribution of the project has been realised. We might make an education pack for schools, give the film to a couple of not for profits and then send it off to distributor, but we generally see this as the end of the job. This is partly driven by the lack of funding for any further work beyond the making, and partly because until now there has not been as much focus on the value of the distribution and outreach of films.

My research revealed that there is a growing movement that has changed this and has explicitly focused on the distribution and outreach of films; how this is done, with which partners and audiences to reach to achieve the greatest impact.

Until the advent of this way of working there was traditionally a more simplistic approach by socially conscious filmmakers. That is: that it was enough to expose wrongs, share a story and then release the film in to the world. Enough to make a film about an injustice and put it out to the world and expect change to happen through the exposure. An exciting marriage of social change organising with film distribution is starting to emerge as a body of practice and a distinct sector within the film industry.

What if we planned from the start to leverage off our content, if we were far more strategic about how our content was distributed, which audiences we targeted and our social change goals? Often filmmakers want “everyone” to see it – or have a broad sense that by making the work and “putting it out there” into the culture that this will create ripples enough. What if we got really savvy about these next stages and made targeted decisions about audiences, locations, and key people we want to reach and influence with our work?

Many artists and filmmakers don’t always see themselves as activists and sometimes fear that moving in to this terrain will compromise their artistic integrity. Making beautiful poetic works of art and film are not mutually exclusive from running a social impact campaign with your film. In fact I would argue the more beautiful, unusual and engaging the film the more potential impact is possible with your work.

Given what’s at stake and the urgency of social justice issues at play across the globe – we can’t afford *not* to get the greatest leverage and impact we possibly can from all of the work that we do.

Social change film

There are many contexts where film and documentary are produced and deployed for the purpose of social change.

They include:

- NGOs who make their own film and media content to tell the stories of their campaigns. For example, Do the Math¹⁰ (350.org); Kony 2012¹¹ (Invisible Children).
- Human Rights and Film organisations that use film as a means to protect human rights defenders - bearing witness and exposing injustice. For example, Witness¹²; Engage Media¹³.
- Activist filmmakers, self-publishing and live streams. For example, Indymedia¹⁴; Gezi Park Turkey¹⁵; Occupy live streams¹⁶.
- Drama films and TV series with a social bent. For example, Glee¹⁷; 8MMM¹⁸ (forthcoming ABC2 Australia).
- Traditional documentary film on a social issue (without a dedicated impact and outreach campaign).

¹⁰ <http://math.350.org/>

¹¹ <http://invisiblechildren.com/kony/>

¹² <http://witness.org/>

¹³ <http://engagemedia.org/>

¹⁴ <http://indymedia.org/>

¹⁵ <http://www.livestream.com/revoltistanbul>

¹⁶ <http://occupystreams.org/>

¹⁷ <http://www.fox.com/glee/>

¹⁸ <https://www.facebook.com/8MMMradio?ref=stream>

What is impact?

At its most basic impact refers to the process of one thing have an effect or influence on another thing; changing it in some way. In a filmmaking context this refers to ripples, influence and change; be they cultural, behavioural and / or political influenced by the dissemination and distribution of a social change film.

CREATIVE MEDIA DIMENSIONS OF IMPACT



The Bay Area Video Coalition and Harmony Institute in defining impact says:

The simplest synonym for impact is “change”.

Every media project or story changes some aspect of the world. Impact is the sum of these changes. Underlying this abstract definition is a set of more complex questions: Who or what changes? How can media makers distinguish between change in individuals, groups, organizations, governments, societies, and other possible actors? Over what time frame does impact occur? Is it possible to untangle the role of media from all the other complex factors that contribute to social change?

The Fledgling Fund¹⁹ created this diagram on the dimensions of impact in their paper “Assessing Creative Media’s Social Impact”;

¹⁹ <http://www.thefledglingfund.org/resources/impact>

Assessing Impact

With the emergence of this field of practice loosely grouped under the term “impact space” an increasing number of new funding agencies and programs are emerging for this kind as well as new partnerships with philanthropists, not for profits and organisations who are coming to understand the capacity of film to leverage social change. This, as well as the field itself wanting to understand what works and why, has led to a greater need to evaluate the impact of this kind of work and a range of new organisations and academic research institutes moving in to the business of impact evaluations. This is not a new approach for those who work in community cultural development (CCD) or government reporting in any kind of service delivery in Australia or those who work in international aid or the creation of behaviour change campaigns but it’s new for many filmmakers.

It is important in the context of measuring social change for definitions of impact to be based on much than metrics. Impact is not necessarily about volume and reach; it is about depth of engagement and shifts. An assessment of impact should not be limited to how many people saw your film, joined your social media platform or signed your petition, as useful as that data is. Instead I’m interested in how effectively the film and its distribution strategy introduce new narratives, frames and/or concepts to audiences, the level of engagement from these audiences and finally what this engagement is able to leverage in terms of deep lasting change: in policy, legislation or cultural and behavioural norms.

Measuring cultural and attitudinal shifts is a great deal harder than keeping track of metrics, it requires qualitative data rather than purely quantitative. There are a range of approaches to measuring the impact of film and entertainment emerging. Again it should be noted that the not-for-profit, service delivery, aid and welfare sectors have been grappling with how to measure impact for many decades and there is much work here that the film and media sector can draw upon.

Of course neat templates for social change or guarantees that cultural shifts and social change will occur do not exist. However, it’s clear that simply making a film that shares information about an issue is insufficient to ensure that the film causes, enables or inspires social change. We know that if you want a film to have an impact, to shift the debate on an issue and to expand the real world possibilities for change it’s not simply enough to “raise awareness” and “give voice to the voiceless”.

There has been a proliferation of research institutes, some academic and some for profit, in the business of measuring impact. I have included a list of these organisations as an Appendix. It would be a complete and separate thesis to do justice to their approaches in this report: suffice to say that the terms and language to describe this approach to social change are new and evolving, and the field of impact assessment and evaluation will continue to grow rapidly alongside the practice of impact producing itself.

How does change happen?

A critical part of my conversations with people and of this research has essentially been about trying to understand people's theories of change and broadly asking '*how does change happen?*' How do you build a movement and generate a tipping point? How can story initiate or encourage movements and change? How do you genuinely "shift the needle" on an issue? What works consistently? What doesn't seem to work? What works sometimes and what are the conditions and factors you need in place to enable change to take place?



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As many people insist *no film is a silver bullet*, nor does it exist in isolation. It is easy – and also daunting - for filmmakers to think one film can change it all. However tipping points are a convergence of luck, zeitgeist, synergy and magic movement spice. People will always debate and analyse what it was that stopped the Vietnam War or provided the tipping point for the Civil Rights movement or what saved the Franklin River. What is clear is that no one action or film achieved these big changes.

²⁰ Iconic *Stop Jabiluka* logo by Kathleen McCann

When identifying historical success stories, such as the Jabiluka campaign – against the proposed uranium mine in Kakadu National Park – we can see a diverse range of tactics being employed by a broad coalition over a long period of time. The Jabiluka campaign began in the 1970s and was at its peak through 1997-2000 and was successful in 2003. The campaign involved several documentary films including David Bradbury's *Jabiluka*²² and Pip Starr's *Fight for Country*²³.

These films sat alongside inspired leadership by the traditional owners the Mirarr²⁴ people, a hugely successful and high profile blockade in Kakadu in 1998, a shareholders campaign targeting the parent company and the bank financing the proposed mine, international solidarity actions, rock concerts, petitions, lobbying of politicians, a World Heritage listing challenge and more. The films were very important tools to the movements and for the campaign, but clearly they were not the be all and end all in the victory that saw the mine being abandoned and the site being rehabilitated²⁵. In fact as with all social change even in retrospect it is hard to say which of the strategies it was that created the victory; instead I think it is indeed in this constellation of actions and approaches that the success lies.

The acclaimed documentary *Invisible War*²⁶ follows in the footsteps of documentaries that address similar themes; *Lioness*²⁷ and *Semper Fi*²⁸ and premiered at a time when the military is suffering recruitment issues and wants to ensure that women enter the force. *Gasland*²⁹ premiered at a time when there are many other films on climate change being

²¹ Iconic *Stop Jabiluka* logo by Kathleen McCann

²² <http://www.frontlinefilms.com.au/videos/jabiluka.htm>

²³ http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/pipstarr/videos/Fight_For_Country.mp4/

²⁴ <http://www.mirarr.net/>

²⁵ yay!

²⁶ <http://invisiblewarmovie.com/>

²⁷ <http://lionessthefilm.com>

²⁸ <http://semperfialwaysfaithful.com/>

²⁹ <http://gaslandmovie.com/>

released, but it provides a personal perspective on climate change, an issue that many people feel tired of, and it was released at a time when more and more people were being affected by and trying to understand fracking. *Just Vision*³⁰ produce content for an audience that is hungry for real solutions to a seemingly intractable issue in Israel and Palestine. No film exists in isolation and the narratives and issues in the public domain can greatly affect the traction and impact a film can have.

Although it is impossible to predict whether your film will be released at the right time to capture audiences imagination and the attention of the media and policy makers there are some key factors to having success in this domain:

- A good story, well told – a high quality and well-crafted story is essential; if you do not have this it is very hard to make any of the other tactics work.
- Good timing – again, hard to predict, but it pays to have a good sense of the pulse around an issue.
- Clever, well mapped out strategy for how, where and to whom you will release the film.
- Clarity of goals – a clear ask is critical. What is it that you want to achieve with your film beyond raising awareness and beyond ‘everything’ – hone the purpose and goal of your film.
- Clarity about the people you need to move to achieve your goals.
- Clarity of the audience you want and need to reach – not ‘everyone’ – think about the demographics and locations of the key audience you want to see your film.
- Clarity as to how you want to activate audience – what is their journey after viewing the film.

Blog Case Study 1: Invisible War

Invisible War (2012) is a harrowing film about sexual assault within the US military. I caught it at a community screening and discussion night at a university campus in London in April. It has had a huge impact; it is an incredibly powerful film with a very clever and well-executed outreach and an impact campaign that is making waves on a number of levels.

³⁰ <http://www.justvision.org/>

Two days after he screened the film, outgoing U.S. Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta changed the reporting structure so that a service member's immediate supervisor no longer is the only person to whom a victim can report an abuse.

"Clearly this film has changed the conversation," former federal prosecutor and U.S. Sen. Richard Blumenthal told Woodruff, adding that at his request, the military is expected to release more reliable data on sexual assault in the military this spring. – [PBS Article - Invisible War](#); changing the conversation on rape in the Military

Invisible War had great strategy; they brought influential and well-connected Executive Producers on board, engaged a Washington D.C based dedicated media team, [FitzGibbon Media](#), who specialise in leveraging policy change with media, worked with [Film Spout](#) to build a community screening outreach campaign which targeted students and military and managed an [online campaign](#). FitzGibbon provide a good [case study](#) of their work and the impact of the film and Film Spout publish a [discussion guide](#) on their site.

The online campaign [Invisible No More](#) (#notinvisible) invites viewers to take action by signing a petition, hosting a screening, donating to the campaign or spreading the word via social media or email. It also encourages audiences to 'Stand With Survivors' and it's three aims are to; raise awareness, effect political and cultural change and serve as a means of healing for survivors of Military Sexual Assault.

Through their partnership with the wonderful [Film Spout](#) the film has been seen by over 266,000 service people (this is the conservative estimate) at over 350 screenings on military bases across the country. The film is now being used as a training tool within the military, which is huge. This community distribution was part of a yearlong community screening campaign that involved over 950 screenings across the US.

Invisible War also had great timing. The film was released at a time when there were US senators who needed a way to amplify long-standing campaigns to address sexual assault in the military and as the military was facing recruitment issues and need to bring more women in to the force to bolster numbers.

There is no doubt that the team behind Invisible War have done a remarkable job of generating impact with powerful film, but it is also important to place their campaign alongside other ideas and events in this space to really be able to understand how the tipping points came about.

Obviously there is an incredibly long continuum of activism, body of writing and film work responding to sexual assault, not just within the military, that is part of the ground on which Invisible War builds. At the moment I am focusing on how documentary films sit within the culture, so I have asked a number of people about films that came before Invisible War that also contributed to this debate and ability of this film to make such dramatic change.

[Semper Fi: Always Faithful](#) (2011) uncovers the outrageous water contamination at an army base and its impact on service people.

Between 1957 – 1987 an estimated 750,000 to 1,000,000 people may have drunk and bathed in tap water containing extremely high concentrations of toxic chemicals at Marine Corps Base Camp Lejeune in Jacksonville, North Carolina. It is believed to be one of the largest water contamination incidents in US history. – Semper Fi Website

The film and subsequent campaign resulted in President Obama signing the Honoring America's Veterans and Caring for Camp Lejeune Families Act into law in 2012.

*Another important recent film regarding women in the military is *Lioness*.*

Lioness (2008) tells the story of a group of female Army support soldiers who were part of the first program in American history to send women into direct ground combat. – Lioness Website

*Official policy barred the armed services from assigning women to direct ground combat units in most situations, regardless of how well they perform under fire. Instead, when commanders want to put talented women soldiers on combat teams, they must do so by temporarily "attaching" them to those units, or sending them in a support role, rather than an official combat role. While *Team Lioness* was "attached," but not "assigned" on paper, to combat arms units, they performed effectively in combat even without the combat MOS training that was exclusively available to males. As a result, the women performed in direct combat operations with less accolades, opportunities for advancement, recognition, and deserved VA benefits upon return. -Lioness Wikipedia*

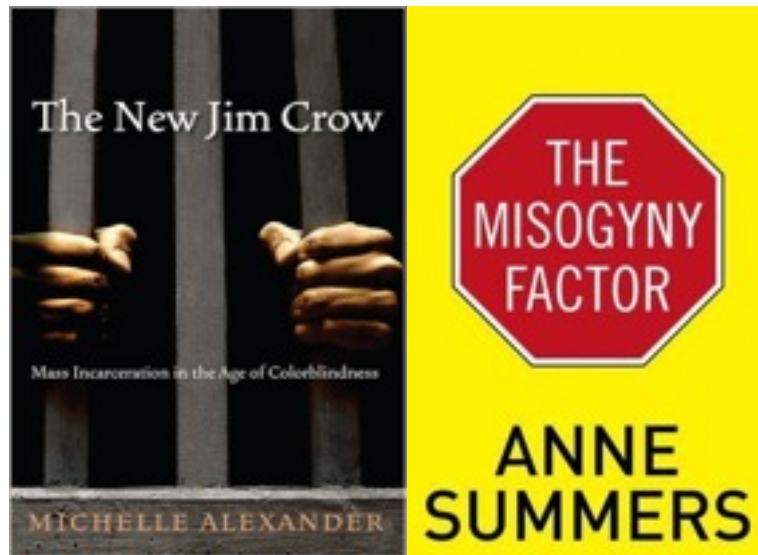
*Being 'attached' and not officially assigned to combat resulted in these women not having access to the same post conflict support as their male counterparts. *Lioness* is now being used in Department of Defense training for military healthcare personnel, and was responsible for two new pieces of legislation, and played a pivotal role in improving women veterans' access to healthcare in the Veterans Affairs system.*

It is important to point to the work of grass roots organisations and social movements organising against war and their impact on the narratives around conflict and the military. Of particular note is the inspiring veterans groups Iraq Veterans Against the War (IVAW) and Service Women's Action Network (SWAN). SWAN has been very active in campaigning to change policy and running campaigns on military sexual trauma.

**Invisible War* is a great example of a powerful film whose makers lined up their strategy and hit at just the right time to really send sparks flying.*

Battle of the Story - Making Cultural Shifts

There are a number of great examples that point to the importance of a narrative and culture shift to creating sustained social change along with shifts in legislation and policy.



In two fantastic books *The New Jim Crow*³¹ and *The Misogyny Factor*³² authors Michelle Alexander and Anne Summers respectively make the argument that even when discriminatory laws are dismantled if deeply held cultural behaviours and beliefs in society do not shift then discrimination and disadvantage may well continue. Michelle Alexander points to the dismantling of racially discriminatory laws in the USA, but the fact that incarceration has continued to disproportionately affect people of colour and Anne Summers notes that even though laws that impeded equity between men and women were removed that this has not resulted in equality for women in Australia. Both explore the importance of a cultural shift alongside legislative change to embed new values and ensure change happens.

³¹ <http://newjimcrow.com/>

³² <http://annesummers.com.au/books/the-misogyny-factor/>

Reinforcing the relationship between media and policy a Canberra University study on indigenous policy and the media - *Australian News Media and Indigenous Policy 1998 – 2008* released in July 2013 states:

“(There is) a significant manifestation of media power in the policymaking process ... (We) conclude that the way Indigenous issues are portrayed in mainstream news media does impact on the way Indigenous affairs policies are developed, communicated and implemented.”³³

Alongside the often conservative mainstream media there have been substantial shifts in the national narrative around indigenous affairs where film and theatre have played an influential role alongside social movements and key campaigns such as Jabiluka mine blockade, the movement for reconciliation and inspiring indigenous lead organisations and campaigns. In particular works such as *Rabbit Proof Fence*³⁴, *Bran Nue Dae*³⁵, *Redfern Now*³⁶ and *Samson & Delilah*³⁷ and the critically important television series *First Australians*³⁸ have successfully diversified the dominant narrative about Aboriginal people.

This example of contested narratives that have a direct impact on policy and public opinion demonstrates why storytellers and cultural producers need to think very strategically about the way in which creative work is placed because so that creative work can intervene in the dominant narratives to achieve the greatest impact. Creating and distributing new narratives and reframing existing narratives, debates perception and policy is critical to encouraging lasting change and justice.

We can see then that intervening in the narrative however is not just about making or providing coverage of stories that have been excluded or counter a dominant narrative. *Centre for Story Based Strategy* have taken this theory one step further by developing an approach known as “Story Based Strategy” that teaches campaigners how to undertake

³³ http://www.canberra.edu.au/media-centre/attachments/pdf_folder/MIP-Report_Combined_Final.pdf

³⁴ <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0252444/>

³⁵ <http://www.brannuedaemovie.com/>

³⁶ <http://blackfellafilms.com.au/>

³⁷ <http://www.samsonanddelilah.com.au/>

³⁸ <http://www.sbs.com.au/firstaustralians/>

what they dub a narrative power analysis, intervene in the dominant narrative and creative narrative breaks to win what they call the *battle of the story*.

The technique they call 'story based strategy stems from a specific theory of change that argues that change happens when ideas and meanings become embedded in culture; through images, memes, language, vernacular, habit, behaviour and narratives.



Blog Case Study 2: Story Based Strategy Advanced Training Blog:

In early June I took part in the [Centre for Story Based Strategy's Advanced Practitioner Training](#).

I have taken to calling it 'Activist Camp' or 'Activist School' – and whilst there were S'Mores (marshmallows, chocolate and biscuits, crazy American camping cuisine!) and it was at a Christian holiday camp in the Sierras complete with red woods, deer and squirrels, it had a lot more depth and rigor than me flippantly calling it 'activist camp' suggests.

Centre for Story Based Strategy are a communications and strategy training organisation. In their own words:

Center for Story-based Strategy (CSS) is a national movement-building organization dedicated to harnessing the power of narrative for social change. CSS uses the power of narrative to advance a holistic vision connecting struggles for democracy, peace, justice, and ecological sanity.

We offer social justice networks, alliances and organizations the analysis, training and strategic support to change the story on the issues that matter most.

We've trained over 4,000 activists since 2002. Through collaboration consulting, and direct partnership we've supported over 200 innovative social change organizations to win critical campaigns.

I have followed the growth of Centre for Story Based Strategy (formerly known as Smart Meme) since its inception through a close friendship with one of the founders of CSS, Doyle Canning. Doyle came to Australia shortly after the Seattle protests in 1999 with a bundle of passion and a VHS tape of the 'Battle of Seattle' film. I was involved in [Access News](#) at the time and we screened the film at our regular Monday night event.

CSS have developed a methodology they call 'Story Based Strategy' which involves understanding the narratives, frames and stories at play around a given issue. Breaking down the dominant narratives, underlying assumptions, roles, conflicts and stories allows activists and movements to develop their messaging, stories and frames to intervene and create breaks in the dominant narratives and win the 'Battle of the Story' – which is critical to achieving change.

The training was rigorous and very cleverly designed. There were 40 of us from a great range of movements from unionists, to environmentalists to community organisers; including [Iraq Veterans Against the War](#), [National Immigrant Youth Alliance](#), [Grass Roots Global Justice Alliance](#) and many more inspiring folks. Most people had undertaken some training or engaged CSS in their campaigns before and were in communications or leadership roles within their orgs. So basically an unbelievably kick-ass crew to be hanging out with for a week!

Over 5 days we were taken through a range of practical tools from the 'Story Based Strategy' by a fantastic group of facilitators. We practiced them in a range of campaign simulation scenarios, facilitating the tools on issues we were working on ourselves and then spent a day and a half applying them to real life campaigns which we presented to a panel of expert judges on the final day of camp. There were a range of case studies and worksheets and lots of lots of butchers paper and textas (coloured markers)!



I gained great working knowledge of a bunch of practical tools that I look forward to applying to my own practice and am happy to share with anyone who is interested. Most of all I loved having critical discussion on the nuts and bolts of media, story and narrative for 5 days.

I highly recommend CSS's great book [Re: Imagining Change](#) which is now in its 3rd print run and is available in hard copy from [PM Press](#).

Pru Gell of [Space for Change](#) (Sydney) and Holly Hammond from [Plan to Win](#) (Melbourne) have also taken this training, so there are now three of us in Australia as part of the Story Based Strategy Community of Practice, which is very exciting. I would love to see CSS run some training in Australia in the future as I think their approach is invaluable to social change movements and organisers.

The camaraderie and solidarity that was developed over the short but intense time we spent together was priceless and filled me up big time. I left with a strong sense of

'we've got this!'; that collectively we have the smarts, reach, passion and commitment to make profound impact on a broad range of issues. I left with a very full heart.

This strategic approach to narrative asks activists and communication strategists to do more than simply present new facts. To engage in the *battle of the story* the filmmaker must ask themselves how the dominant narrative, assumptions and frames that they wish to challenge actually work and then communicate their message as a strategic intervention into that dominant frame.

For example the idea that natural gas is a clean alternative to dirty coal has been a frame created and pushed hard by big gas companies. *Gasland* offered and promoted an alternative frame: that fracking and gas extraction is not a low cost, clean energy solution. The film became a major tool in the mobilisation against coal seam gas around the world. One of the most memorable images from *Gasland* was of tap water being set on fire this became a 'meme', went viral and was a became a powerful image in galvanising opposition to hydraulic fracturing internationally.

Blog Case Study 3: Films That Change The Climate

Social movements of all kinds use films as tools to advance their campaigns and in some instances films can be encourage campaigns to start up; such as [Bag It](#) (about plastic bags) and the [Bag It Town](#) campaign.

As the movement voicing concern about the climate crisis grows, so does the body of films in this space.

[An Inconvenient Truth](#) was a breakthrough documentary for the climate change issue, released in 2006 it went on to win 2 Academy Awards, reach an audience of over 4.9M people, launch the [Climate Reality Project](#) and train over 1000 activists to deliver the climate science presentation featured in the film. In 2007 Al Gore was jointly awarded the Nobel Peace Prize for his work on climate change.

In the USA, [An Inconvenient Truth](#) took just over \$24 million at the box office and became the 6th best-selling documentary of all time. [Brit Doc](#) published this great [impact evaluation](#) of the film.

[An Inconvenient Truth](#) demonstrates the power of celebrity, good backing (funded by Jeff Skoll former eBay president, founder of Skoll Foundation and Participant Media) and good timing on the success of a film. Personally I didn't really feel deeply engaged by [An Inconvenient Truth](#) – I felt like I should watch it, even though I already knew the story and message; but then I probably wasn't the target audience. There is no argument that this was an extremely high reach film that led

to a range of actions outside cinemas and lounge rooms, but I am not sure of its impact on culture.

Participant Media who produced An Inconvenient Truth make “entertainment that inspires and compels social change” and have gone on to make features and docs, launch a TV network and an online engagement portal Take Part. They recently produced Promised Land a feature film directed by Gus Van Sant with Matt Damon about fracking, which unfortunately is not a fantastic film (it rates 51% on Rotten Tomatoes, a renowned film review site). This is a good example of the need for a story to well told to make impact on an issue – I don’t think Promised Land is making waves in the climate change debate in part due to the fact it is not winning audiences.

Gasland was made for only \$32,000USD and has gone on to have huge success in festivals, theatres and through movement and community based distribution. Whilst Gasland doesn’t boast high end production values it is a good story, well told and had fantastic timing; launching just as the issue of fracking was gaining traction and arguably contributing in part to the issue gaining traction.

The campaign around the film has cost at least \$204,000USD to date – over 6 times the cost of making the film – and is ongoing. Gasland 2 is currently being launched in a grass roots tour before premiering on US television in July.

According to the Brit Doc impact evaluation Gasland hoped to:

- *Put fracking as an issue on the map*
- *Enable viewers to connect with activist/grassroots organisations via social media*
- *Lobby elected officials and institutions at the highest levels in order to curtail fracking*

I’d say it has done a remarkable job of doing that; with over 250 screenings across the United States alone, 100,000+ petition signatures, celebrities enlisted, media appearances, etcetera.

Due in part to the massive movement that grew around the film, hydrofracking bans were enacted in Pittsburgh, PA; Tompkins County, NY; Cooperstown, NY; Licking Township, PA; Baldwin, PA;. France, Quebec and extended hydrofracking moratoriums were placed in NY State and South Africa. – Gasland website.

Age of Stupid is a remarkable example of a well-executed crowd funding and crowd distribution and a film which launched additional campaigns including 10:10. Age of Stupid was a pioneer in many ways and I have been deeply inspired by their work. More info on this project follows below.

Additional films in this space worth checking out:

Chasing Ice is a visually stunning film (wish I had seen it on the big screen). It’s a good character driven doco which follows National Geographic photographer

James Bolag on his ambitious and obsessive mission – the [Extreme Ice Survey](#) – to capture the melting and ‘calving’ of glaciers on film.

[The Island President](#) is a great portrait of the charismatic former President of the Maldives Mohammed Nasheed with a particular focus on his role in the negotiations at the UN climate change meeting in Denmark in 2009.

[Carbon Nation](#) is a documentary about carbon change solutions with unusual suspects such as former CIA staff and the US military which demonstrates ways we can respond to the issue. I found this film a relief when I watched it as it was framed in a very positive light, but I don’t think it has been very well received and not sure about its impact.

[Bidder 70](#) is an inspiring film which follows the non-violent action and subsequent legal battle of climate activist Tim DeChristopher. The filmmakers are building an outreach & impact campaign around the film which includes a speaking tour alongside it is theatrical release. The film is very much geared towards encouraging civil disobedience and community organising as a response to climate change and is very connected to grassroots movements, however I think the way that it tells this story will reach beyond ‘the choir’.

[End of Suburbia](#) ‘Oil depletion and the collapse of the American dream’. End of Suburbia was a significant film in bringing the discussion around peak oil to a wider audience. Launched in 2004, I think this film had a considerable impact and was distributed widely by grass roots activists.

[Do the Math](#) is a bit different from the other films as it was commissioned by an NGO within the climate change movement, 350.org. Two independent filmmakers made the film which has now become a major campaign tool for 350.

I haven’t seen these, but also worth looking at; [How Cuba Beat Peak Oil](#) (a break through movement film, 2006). [Hungry Tide](#) (Tom Zubrycki’s film about the impact of climate change on pacific island Kiribati) and [Everything’s Cool](#) (which looks at messaging around climate change).

Coming soon is [Cooked](#) (by Judith Helfand who made [Everything’s Cool](#) and works with [Chicken and Egg](#) and [Working Films](#)).

[Cooked](#) is a feature documentary investigation into extreme heat, the politics of disaster and survival by zip code. This story is framed by two heat waves, one that Chicago was ready for and the other that took the City by surprise – when 739 residents, most of them old, poor, and African American died over the course of one very hot week. – [Cooked Facebook page](#)

And lastly I am really looking forward to the release of Naomi Klein’s book and Avi Lewis’s film [The Message](#) in 2014. My understanding is that this film and book will frame the climate crisis as an opportunity to respond to the interconnected issues we face and radically change our systems to create more justice for all. “Climate change is more than an issue. It’s a message telling us that our ideas about our place in the world are no longer viable. By threatening our very survival, climate

change can serve as the catalyst for us to finally rise to the challenge.” – Naomi Klein’s website

All of these films seek to raise awareness, share the science and potentially shock or inspire audiences to action. Many of them have associated campaigns which filmmaker teams have built and coordinate themselves and/or are connected to climate change movements, grassroots organisations and NGOs. Some try and engage audiences in petitions or link in with local campaigns who often host community screenings. Many climate change activist groups will screen these films at campaign fundraising screenings and use them as tools to inspire and engage more people in their campaigns.

*There is a long tradition of environmental campaigns and activists using films, books and art – from Rachel Carson’s *Silent Spring* to *An Inconvenient Truth* – as tools to get their message out to and activate the broader the community. It’s is a great demonstration of the power of story – especially when coupled with strong grassroots movements, face to face meetings and actions in day to day life.*

I think that these films have to have a connection to hope, either in the film itself or through the connection to an inspiring movement or campaign, for them to really gain traction with audiences. There is a saturation and compassion fatigue at play and very few audiences want to be hit with devastating facts without an avenue for responding or a sense of possibility.

Films and media are great tools. The hard work is in harnessing the inspiration that people feel as they leave the cinema and building community to respond to these issues.

Given the fact that I think the domain of culture and story is where the deepest and most critical change happens, I see media makers, cultural producers, storytellers and artists as having an extraordinarily powerful role to play in creating change. I think we have disproportionate capacity, and therefore responsibility, to make change and to create ideas that become part of culture – we want our frames, our language, our ideas to become self-replicating, be taken up as memes, to go viral, to influence and shift dominant narratives.

Using the techniques and tools of *story based strategy* developed by and for social movements could significantly expand the strategic capacity of filmmakers and producers to run successful impact campaigns for their films.

Over the past few years the practice of making impact with social change films has EXPLODED! Particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom where a whole industry has sprung up around this kind of work including;

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- Impact Funders – Fledgling Fund³⁹, Just Films⁴⁰, Bertha Foundation⁴¹, Brit Doc⁴².
 - Impact producers – including Six Foot Chipmunk⁴³, Borderline Media⁴⁴ and Civic Bakery⁴⁵.
 - Grassroots distributors - Picture Motion⁴⁶ and Film Sprout⁴⁷.
 - PR firms specialising in policy campaigns alongside film and media like Fitzgibbon Media⁴⁸.
 - Impact evaluators such as the Harmony Institute⁴⁹.
 - Impact research institutes and research projects; Norman Lear Centre⁵⁰, MIT Open Doc Lab⁵¹, Video4Change⁵² project etc.

Impact producers are intelligent, creative, critical and strategic about how they place their stories to maximise their impact. They teach us to think about whom we are targeting, how to get our material in front of them, who we want to shift, what we want them to do once they have seen our work.

³⁹ <http://www.thefledglingfund.org>

⁴⁰ <http://www.fordfoundation.org/issues/freedom-of-expression/justfilms>

⁴¹ <http://berthafoundation.org/>

⁴² <http://britdoc.org/>

⁴³ <http://sixfootchipmunk.com/>

⁴⁴ <http://borderlinemedia.net/>

⁴⁵ <https://twitter.com/civicbakery>

⁴⁶ <http://picturemotion.com/>

⁴⁷ <http://filmsprout.org/>

⁴⁸ <http://fitzgibbonmedia.com/>

⁴⁹ <http://harmony-institute.org/>

⁵⁰ <http://blog.learcenter.org/>

⁵¹ <http://opendoclab.mit.edu/>

⁵² <https://www.v4c.org>



The *Age of Stupid*⁵³ was created before the buzzwords of crowd funding or impact producing were coined and the filmmakers pioneered some amazing practice in impact;

Spanner Films pioneered the “crowd-funding” finance model, which allows filmmakers to raise reasonable-size budgets whilst retaining ownership of their films - Age of Stupid is one of the most successful known example, raising £900,000+ from 300+ investors. In March 2009, the solar-powered Age of Stupid “People’s Premiere” set a new Guinness World Record by being simultaneously screened in 63 cinemas across Britain, whilst only producing 1% of the emissions of a standard premiere. It also hit No 1 at the UK Box Office, backed by zero pounds spent on advertising. Then in September 2009, a million people watched Stupid’s Global Premiere event - featuring Kofi Annan, Gillian Anderson & Radiohead’s Thom Yorke - in 700 cinemas in 63 countries, linked by satellite.

In September 2009 Franny and the team behind The Age of Stupid founded the 10:10 climate campaign which aims to cut the UK’s carbon emissions by 10% during 2010 and which has amassed huge cross-societal support including Adidas, Microsoft, Spurs FC, the Royal Mail, 75,000 people, 1,500 schools, a third of local councils, the entire UK Government and the Prime Minister. 10:10 launched internationally in March 2010 and, as of July 2010, has autonomous campaigns up and running in 41 countries, where some of the key sign-ups include the French Tennis Open, the city of Oslo and L’oreal. 10:10 estimates that organisations doing 10:10 have so far cut 500,000 tonnes of CO2.

These are the aspects of impact that are easy to track – the numbers and the reach of the film. What is harder to capture, as I’ve noted earlier, are the lasting and deeper impacts of

⁵³ <http://www.spannerfilms.net/films/ageofstupid>

the film and broader project. Whilst the filmmakers haven't undertaken a formal evaluation of what the deep impact of the film was they are fairly certain they made big waves. Producer Lizzie Gillett is regularly approached by people who have seen the film and express how much it changed their lives and behaviour in some way. The filmmakers brought a positive frame to the climate change debate and through their 10:10 campaign⁵⁴ created a practical way for institutions and individuals to engage with climate change, which can often seem an abstract and intractable issue.

Thinking about audience

Many filmmakers when asked who their film is for answer "everyone" – we often have an urgency about the issue and such passion for the story that we are loathe to hone in on one audience in particular. Thinking critically about who you want to reach with your film is not about excluding particular audiences, it's about thinking critically about what your goals are and who you need to reach, engage and move to action to achieve those goals.

It is also important to note that in a time when people can access a wide range of media very quickly many audiences often feel bombarded by a range of pressing social issues; wars, droughts, famines, conflicts and environmental catastrophe. This can lead to a disengagement and 'compassion fatigue' where people will choose to spend their leisure time watching less intense or political content.

There is a resurgence of box office success and interest in documentary films. I expect that outreach and engagement will continue to encourage this growth as engaging audiences to respond to issues provides a direct antidote to compassion fatigue. Giving audiences a sense of hope and agency is very different from simply sharing information about something unjust.

Some ways to think about audiences and how you can work with them:

- Connect audiences to existing local campaigns and action groups already working on the issue your film explores – such as *Gasland* approach.

⁵⁴ <http://www.1010global.org/uk>

⁵⁵ <http://www.notinvisible.org/>

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- Engage them to become lobbyists through social media – tweeting to target politicians, organisations, corporations, such as the #not invisible⁵⁵ campaign of Invisible War.
 - Petitions and pledges such as the *Bully* pledge and movement⁵⁶.
 - Create offline events such as *The Yes Men*⁵⁷ taking audience directly from a cinema screening to a pre-planned action at a corporate headquarters nearby.
 - Connect audiences with each other through panels and discussions at screening events.
 - Encourage them to promote film to their networks to build your audience further.

Changing media landscape

These developments in impact strategies sit alongside rapid and exciting shifts in the media landscape; in how audiences are engaging with media, how media is and can be broadcast and distributed etc.

In a recent report for Internews⁵⁸ independent producer and media trainer Rachel Maher states:

Around the world, media content is increasingly distributed via portable electronic devices and Internet platforms, revolutionising the practice of journalism and creating forms of 'new media'. Technology is now recognised as being inseparable from the practice of media production. Social media – combining publishing, commentating and sharing content and ideas via Internet platforms – has already emerged as a powerful force influencing and challenging traditional media forms. In this context, the term 'innovation' is commonly used to refer to this convergence between technology and media, and is simultaneously encouraged in bringing together 'geeks' or experts from the ICT (Information Communication Technology) sector alongside journalists and political, social and economic commentators and practitioners.

⁵⁶ <http://www.thebullyproject.com/>

⁵⁷ <http://theyesmenfixtheworld.com/>

⁵⁸ <http://www.internews.org/>

In summary these changes in form, production and distribution include:

- Crowd funding such as Pozible⁵⁹, Kickstarter⁶⁰, Indiegogo⁶¹.
- Digital distribution / Video on demand (VOD); Netflix⁶², Hulu⁶³, Distrify⁶⁴ – not yet as big in Australia but becoming increasingly powerful in USA/UK. When we get a decent NBN network we can expect this to grow. Look at Beama Films⁶⁵ and Kanuu TV⁶⁶ in Australia.
- Video embedding monetising platforms for social media.
- Crowd theatrical: Gathr⁶⁷, Tugg⁶⁸.
- Increasingly low barriers to accessing the technology to make content – means more filmmakers making content.
- Development of online and interactive documentaries such as Coal, A Love Story⁶⁹ and Bear 71⁷⁰.
- Audiences evolving with new platforms, the way we consume media changing, more and more channels available, broadcasters working to redefine selves.

⁵⁹ <http://www.pozible.com/>

⁶⁰ <http://kickstarter.com/>

⁶¹ <http://www.indiegogo.com/>

⁶² <http://netflix.com/>

⁶³ <http://www.hulu.com/>

⁶⁴ <http://distrify.com/>

⁶⁵ <http://beamafilm.com/>

⁶⁶ <http://news.kanuu.tv/>

⁶⁷ <http://gathr.us/>

⁶⁸ <http://www.tugg.com/>

⁶⁹ <http://www.poweringanation.org/coal/#>

⁷⁰ <http://bear71.nfb.ca/#/bear71>

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- New funding for impact such as Britdoc Bertha Connect Fund, Fledgling Fund, Just Films.
 - New approaches to partnering with NGOs and non-traditional funding sources as championed by BRITDOC's fabulous Good Pitch⁷¹.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Big change looks impossible when you start and looks inevitable after you've finished. - Bob Hunter

Stories and cultural products are amongst the most powerful drivers of social change and justice.

It is a very exciting time in the evolution of a social change film industry as the intersection between filmmaking and activism grows.

Impact work is creative, iterative and evolving and is an exciting blend of old and new. Age old ideas of community organising, the town hall meeting and collective dissent are blending with new methods to fund, create and distribute films enabled in part by new digital platforms. This make for a very exciting time in story-led social change.

Communities will debate endlessly about how to make change – both retrospectively when we try to understand social movements as well as high impact social change film and art -- and as we look forward and design new strategies and campaigns.

As this becomes an industry and more businesses start up to deliver, fund, broker and measure impact we need to ensure that we are not overstating the capacity of a film to make change and that we continue to see films as sitting within and partnering with broader social movements.

To reach their goals, filmmaking teams need to learn to think more like activists and to understand how social movements and social change can happen.

Social movements that use diverse tools and tactics and work in broad coalition such as *Jabiluka* or the anti fracking movements are the key to change, therefore it is critical that filmmakers join coalitions rather than try to create independent movements in isolation

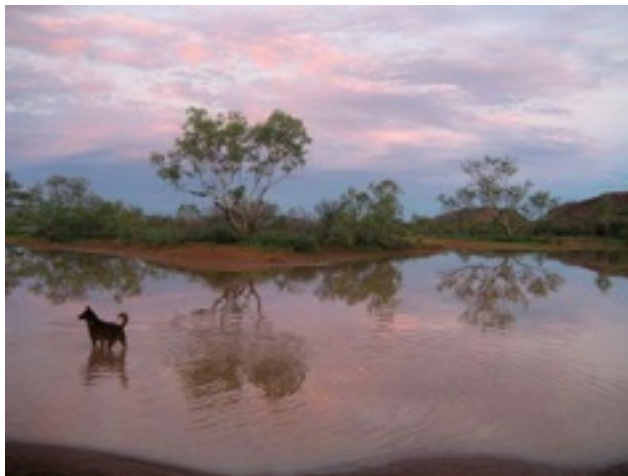
⁷¹ <http://goodpitch.org/>

from existing movements. Building alliances can be tricky, sometimes messy and bring tension, because those involved are endlessly debating the most effective ways to make change. Documentary films can be a brilliant tool in encouraging and driving real lasting change.

Reflections

- No film is a silver bullet.
- There is no one size fits all approach to social change.
- Don't overstate your impact or get seduced by metrics.
- Don't go it alone - connect with experts in the field. You don't have to completely reinvent yourself as a filmmaker to be an impact producer.
- Connect with existing campaigns or movement on an issue.
- Funders can influence how a sector operates – be aware of the relationship between funding bodies and the way you work; don't let your vision and approach limited by their criteria.
- Australian funders are not yet focusing and valuing this way of working – let's lobby Screen Australia and our film interested philanthropies to support impact producing.
- You can still be poetic and artistic *and* political.
- A good grounding in theories of change makes for better practice.
- It is not possible to apply a template to change – every new project needs to carve out its own unique approach and break new ground in some respect.
- Share resources, networks, skills and ideas – yes we are competing for funding, but let's work together to make this field stronger.
- Plan for outreach and engagement from the get go – build it in to your budgets.
- Build rigor of thinking and language around this kind of approach to making impact and sustained long term change with our arts and cultural practice.
- Take risks and experiment – some of the most viral ideas and successful campaigns were dreamed up by small groups of friends who never imagined how far things would go.

Storytellers and filmmakers are far more powerful than we realise. We need to step up to encourage deep change in narratives and therefore nations, hone and share our skills and ideas and build a powerful movement of cultural activists to create a more just, healthy and inclusive world.



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⁷² Roxxy at the Claypans, Alice Springs, pic by Alex Kelly

Appendix A People Met

London April 4th – May 2nd 2013

Rebecca Lichenfeld – Bertha Foundation

Jennifer Robinson – Bertha Foundation

Beadie Finzi – Brit Doc

Mark Atkin – Crossover

Elyse Dodgson – Royal Court Theatre International Program

Kevin Smith – Platform London

Toronto April 30th – May 6th 2013

Hot Docs Film Festival conference & festival attendee

Violeta Ayala & Dan Fallshaw – United Notions Pictures

Kim Beamish – Egypt based, Australian filmmaker

Sam Griffin – Screen Australia

Julia Overton – Freelance executive producer

Allie Hoffman – Picture Motion

Katie McKenna – Working Knowledge

Tim Horsborough – Kartemquin Films

Susan McKinnon – Documentary Australia Foundation

New York May 6th – June 2nd 2013

Stephanie Bleyer – 6 Foot Chipmunk

Sam Gregory – Witness

Mike Bonobo – The Yes Men

Sandi DuBowski – Films that Change the World

Judith Helfand – Working Films / Chicken and Egg

Julia Bacha – Just Vision

Carla Fleisher – Fork Films

Phil Arroneau – 350.org

Jacque Soohen – Big Noise Films

Rick Rowley – Big Noise Films

Debika Shome – Harmony Institute

Fred Myers – NYU

Faye Ginsburg – NYU
Patricia Benabe – Reporter / freelance producer
Paige Raune – God Loves Uganda
Lizzie Gillet – Witness / Spanner Films / Age of Stupid
Wendy Ettinger – Chicken and Egg
Ingrid Kopp – Tribeca Film Festival
Nadav Greenberg – Just Vision
Iben Trino-Molenkamp – Visual Progression
Dee Dee Halleck – Paper Tiger TV
Caitlin Boyle – Film Sprout
Heather Gregory – Purpose
Alice Brennan – freelance journalist
Chris Michael – Witness

Boston May 10-11th 2013

Doyle Canning – Centre for Story Based Strategy

San Francisco June 2nd – 24th 2013

Brianna Cayo Cotter – Change.org
Sahar Driver – Active Voice
Wendy Levy – Sparkwise
Jen Gilomen – Bay Area Video Coalition
Marni Cordell – New Matilda

Centre for Story Based Strategy Training attendees (45 people)

Ongoing critical conversations that inform my practice

Marni Cordell – New Matilda
Andrew Lowenthal – Engage Media / MIT Open Doc Lab
Rachel Maher – Independent producer
Shannon Owen - Documentary, VCA
Scott Rankin – Big hART
All of my co-producers Big hART

Appendix B Films Viewed

- 900 Neighbours Big hART <http://www.smh.com.au/tv/documentary/900-neighbours-3264390.html> 2008
- Age of Stupid Spanner Films <http://www.spannerfilms.net/films/ageofstupid> 2009
- Bidder 70 Gage and Gage Productions <http://www.bidder70film.com/> 2012
- Big Men Rachel Boynton <http://bigmenthemovie.com/> 2012
- Blackfish <http://blackfishmovie.com/> /
- Budrus Just Vision <http://www.justvision.org/> 2009
- Bully <http://www.thebullyproject.com/> 2011
- Chasing Ice National Geographic <http://www.chasingice.com> 2012
- Coniston PAW / Rebel Films <http://coniston.pawmedia.com.au/> 2012
- Cutie and the Boxer <http://cutieandtheboxer.co.uk/>
- Dirty Wars <http://dirtywars.org/> Big Noise Films 2013
- Drive Big hART <http://www.drive.org.au/> 2010
- Escape Fire <http://www.escapefiremovie.com/> 2012
- Fight For Country Pip Starr http://www.engagemedia.org/Members/pipstarr/videos/Fight_For_Country.mp4/
- Free Angela and all political prisoners <https://www.facebook.com/freeangelafilm>
Codeblack Films / Lionsgate 2012
- Free the Mind <http://danishdocumentary.com/site/freethemind/> 2012
- Gasland Josh Fox <http://gaslandmovie.com/> 2010
- Gideon's Army <http://gideonsarmythefilm.com/> 2013
- Granito Skylight Pictures <http://granitofilm.com/> 2011
- God Loves Uganda <http://www.godlovesuganda.com/> 2013
- Hoop Dreams Kartemquin Films <http://kartemquin.com/films/hoop-dreams> 1994
- The House I live In <http://www.thehouseilivein.org> 2012
- How to Survive a Plague <http://surviveaplague.com/> 2012
- The Interrupters Kartemquin Films <http://interrupters.kartemquin.com/> 2011

Invisible War <http://invisiblewarmovie.com/> 2012

The Island President <http://theislandpresident.com/> 2011

Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji Big hART <http://www.nothingrhymeswithngapartji.com/> 2010

My Neighbourhood Just Vision <http://www.justvision.org/myneighborhood> 2012

Pray the Devil Back to Hell Fork Films <http://invisiblewarmovie.com/> 2008

The Punk Singer <http://www.thepunksinger.com/> 2013

Pussy Riot A Punk Prayer <http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/pussy-riot-a-punk-prayer> 2013

Queen of the Desert 360 Films <http://360degreefilms.com.au/productions/queen-of-the-desert/> 2012

Trembling before G-d Films the Change the World <http://filmsthatchangetheworld.vswbdev.com/>

The Trials of Muhammad Ali Kartemquin <http://kartemquin.com/films/the-trials-of-muhammad-ali> 2013

The Yes Men Fix the World The Yes Men <http://theyesmenfixtheworld.com/> 2009

Which way to the front line from here? HBO <http://www.hbo.com/documentaries/which-way-is-the-frontline-from-here-the-life-and-times-of-tim-heatherington>

Appendix C Organisational Profiles

Centre for Story Based Strategy <http://www.storybasedstrategy.org/>

Center for Story-based Strategy (CSS) is a national movement-building organization dedicated to harnessing the power of narrative for social change.

BRITDOC <http://britdoc.org>

We befriend great filmmakers, support great films, broker new partnerships, build new business models, share new knowledge and develop new audiences globally. We aim to lead by example – innovate, share and be copied and innovate again.

Film Sprout <http://www.filmsprout.org/>

Film Sprout consultations provide substantive, practical guidance for filmmakers shaping grassroots, community and campus distribution initiatives and audience outreach and engagement plans. Offering a forum for both tactical and strategic support, consultations may range from a single session to an intensive week of hands-on support, to ongoing guidance over the course of a film's public life.

Working Films <http://www.workingfilms.org/>

Working Films brings persuasive and provocative documentary films to long-term community organizing and activism. We are one of the nation's leading independent media organization focused on the art of engagement. We know that stories lead to action. Our film campaigns are changing toxic marketplaces, influencing equitable public policies, making communities more inclusive, and inspiring principled individual actions.

Kartemquin Films <https://kartemquin.com/>

In 1966, Kartemquin Films began making documentaries that examine and critique society through the stories of real people. Their documentaries, such as *The Interrupters*, *Hoop Dreams* and *The New Americans*, are among the most acclaimed of all time, leaving a lasting impact on millions of viewers.

Harmony Institute <http://harmony-institute.org/>

The Harmony Institute (HI) is an interdisciplinary research center that studies the impact of entertainment on individuals and society.

Stories are powerful tools for creating social change. The Harmony Institute works to understand the impact of films, journalism, television, and games on audiences and pressing social issues. Our emphasis on impact brings together research methods from across the social sciences. We apply these frameworks and collaborate closely with media makers and stakeholders to study the impact of entertainment.

Appendix D Big hART Links

Big hART <http://www.bighart.org/>

Big hART facebook <https://www.facebook.com/pages/Big-hART/97285438731?fref=ts>

Big hART twitter @BighART_INC

Big hART vimeo <https://vimeo.com/bighart>

Current projects 2013:

Yijala Yala:

Project site <http://www.yijalayala.bighart.org/>

NEOMAD <http://www.yijalayala.bighart.org/love-punks-2/neomad/>

NEOMAD download itunes <https://itunes.apple.com/au/app/neomad-interactive-comic-for/id549058981?mt=8>

Love Punks game - online <http://lovepunks.com/>

Namatjira:

Project <http://namatjira.bighart.org/>

Watercolours app <https://itunes.apple.com/us/app/watercolours-of-namatjira/id511590761?mt=8>

Museum of the Long Weekend

<http://www.longweekend.bighart.org/>

Blue Angel – in development

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Blue-Angel/457258927725100?fref=ts>

Acoustic Life of Sheds, NW Tasmania – no website yet

Snowy Stories, Cooma NSW – no website yet

Films:

Hurt

Case study http://www.documentaryaustralia.com.au/case_studies/details/33/hurt

900 Neighbours

Watch online <http://www.smh.com.au/tv/documentary/900-neighbours-3264390.html>

Nothing Rhymes with Ngapartji

<http://www.nothingrhymeswithngapartji.com/>

<http://www.cultureunplugged.com/documentary/watch-online/play/9923/Nothing-Rhymes-with-Ngapartji>

DRIVE

<http://www.drive.org.au>

Watch online <http://www.smh.com.au/tv/Documentary/Drive-4391307.html>

Appendix E Funders and Evaluation

Impact Funders

Fledgling Fund <http://www.thefledglingfund.org>

Ford Foundation Just Films <http://www.fordfoundation.org/issues/freedom-of-expression/justfilms>

Bertha Foundation <http://berthafoundation.org/>

BritDoc Bertha Connect Fund http://britdoc.org/real_funds/bertha-britdoc-connect-fund

Impact Partners <http://www.impactpartnersfilm.com/>

Documentary Australia Foundation <http://www.documentaryaustralia.com.au/>

MacArthur Fund <http://www.macfound.org/programs/media/>

Evaluation reports

Brit Doc impact reports http://britdoc.org/real_good/evaluation

Pray the Devil back to Hell impact tracking <http://echotango.org/2013/03/pray-the-devil-back-to-hell-impact-tracking/>

Fitzgibbon media Invisible War Case study <http://www.fitzgibbonmedia.com/casestudies/the-invisible-war/>

Working Films Impact Films workingfilms.org/article.php?id=291

Centre for Social Media has published 'Social Justice Documentary Designing For Impact' <http://www.cmsimpact.org/designing-impact>

Harmony Institute Bully Case Study <http://harmony-institute.org/blog/cases/bully/>

Impact evaluation papers

BAVC & Harmony Institute <http://bavc.org/impact-playbook>

Fledgling Fund "Assessing Creative Media's Impact" 2009 <http://www.thefledglingfund.org/resources/impact>

Academic research on impact

Norman Lear Centre for Media Impact <http://www.learcenter.org/html/about/?cm=mediaimpact>

Beth Karlin - Centre for Unconventional Security Affairs http://www.cusa.uci.edu/people/beth_karlin/

Open Doc Lab MIT <http://opendoclab.mit.edu/>

Jana Diesner <http://www.lis.illinois.edu/research/projects/social-justice-documentaries>

Berkman Centre for Internet & Society <http://cyber.law.harvard.edu/>

MIT Open Doc Lab <http://opendoclab.mit.edu/>

Measurement tools

Sparkwise <http://sparkwi.se/>

Harmony Institute Impact Space (coming 2014) <http://harmony-institute.org/>

Crimson Hexagon <http://www.crimsonhexagon.com/>

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