

Red, Black & Shiny: Building Bike Culture in the Urban Environment



by

Keltie Craig

A PROJECT SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTER OF ARTS (PLANNING)

in

THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES

School of Community and Regional Planning

We accept this project as conforming
to the required standard

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THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA

May 2008

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"I get up every morning determined to both change the world and have one hell of a good time. Sometimes this makes planning my day difficult."
– E. B. White

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Acknowledgements

Thanks to all the lovely ladies in red, black and shiny! Thanks to Penny, Jen, & my project group for all their input and suggestions. And to my family, friends and my sweetie: all your love and affection give me the energy to create spectacle in life.

1. INTRODUCTION

i. What is Bike Culture?

Homemade bikes that stand 6 feet tall; dancers that perform on mini BMX bicycles; group rides of fantastic costumed characters, 1000 cyclists strong; paintings, photographs, and collages showing images of bicycles, tricycles, unicycles and those that ride them: what is it that spurs these events and creations to occur? Bike culture is a social movement, a passionate community of people who view their human-powered pedaling machines as not just a form of transportation, but an extension of their identities. It is the social events, the friendships and relationships, and the activities that revolve around the two (or more, or less!) wheels that keep them moving. Bike culture is public art, economics, politics, ideology and more.



(Photo: K. Craig, 2007)

Wikipedia describes bike culture as a social movement that advocates for an increase in bicycle use in society:

Recognizing that bicycling for transportation represents a significant departure from a more established automobile-centered how-to-live archetype, and therefore requires a strong emotional basis, Bike Culture artists, musicians, and organizers seek to use their offerings and events to embolden these emotions, and push people farther along in their own personal transformations. Through music, art, and shared group

experiences such as rides and events, bike culture aims to hit the emotions that can bring us to the point of making changes in our daily habits and lives.
(Wikipedia, 2008)

Bike culture is building around the world. Groups dedicated to combating climate change, auto-centric transportation policies, and gasoline subsidies are joining forces to advocate the benefits of cycling. The significance of the bicycle to the discourse and practice of the contemporary environmental movement is becoming increasingly evident (Horton, 2006). More than just angry environmental protests, bike culture events are often celebrations of life: “Critical Mass, the World Naked Bike Ride, and the idealogues of Effective Cycling noisily protest the car, big oil and your right to be traffic...They give the cycling counterculture its passion, righteous indignation, and joie de vivre” (Luton, 2007, p.11). However, within mainstream culture, these voices are still largely unheard.

It is time things changed. Bikers, both men and women, are in the public realm on a daily basis—they see and experience urban public life in all its glory and its hideousness. Travis Hugh Culley, author of *The Immortal Class: Bike Messengers and the Cult of Human Power*, suggests that

Next to probably the printing press, the bicycle is the most civilizing machine in history and yet it's hardly anywhere in sight. There is a prejudice built into our transportation systems that prefers the automobile to the bicycle and it is this prejudice which is responsible for our cities being dangerous and unclean, being no more than...brick piled up between high-speed avenues. In cities built for cars, appreciation for public space is lacking and the bicyclist feels the brunt of that disregard.
(Bold Type website, 2007)

Research has drawn attention to the weakening of ties to public spaces (Banerjee, 2001; Gehl & Gemzøe, 2000; Mitchell, 1995; Safdie, 1998; Sennett, 1990; Sorkin, 1992). Life in the automobile-oriented city has become a cycle of driving to physically disconnected spaces – house, work, shopping mall – without ever spending time in the public realm. In essence, citizens begin to suffer a subtle and subconscious ‘collective identity crisis’ (Artibise, 1996): with no ties to common physical spaces, we wonder who we are as citizens of this city.

In the literature on space and place, two distinct areas have been suggested: “representational space” – appropriated, lived space – and “representations of space” – planned, controlled, ordered space (Mitchell, 1995, p.115). Richard Stedman (2005) suggests that “a place is a spatial setting that has been given meaning based on human experience, social relationships, emotions and thoughts” (p.121).

I suggest that the ways in which bike culture engages with the urban environment is an example of Stedman’s place, or Mitchell’s representational space—non-manufactured, chaotic, and essential to creating a vibrant, identifiable urban city. By changing societal views regarding who rides bikes and what their status in society is, bike culture can empower individuals to make sustainable and celebratory choices about transportation, community-engagement, and life.

ii. Research Context

There is a diversity of reasons that cause people to get on a bike. People may ride their bikes for exercise, because it is a practical way to move around, for environmental reasons, or simply for the inherent joy of it. Some may ride 200km a week through rain and snow; others might bring their families along for the celebratory monthly Critical Mass bike rides. Increasingly, sub-groups within the biking community are forming to reflect this diversity—bike gangs, group riders, polo teams, performance troupes, and more. These groups play a large role in changing societal norms and images of what “biking” is, who does it, and even what bicycles are for.

In a recent study, 30% of respondents expressed the belief that most Canadians view people who cycle to work as “a little odd” (National Active Transportation Report, 2006, p.13). Many consider cycling as an untrendy, and principally childhood, activity. A recent campaign (Figure 1) uses this youthful reference to try and remind former riders how much they once enjoyed bicycling (Bikes Belong, 2008).

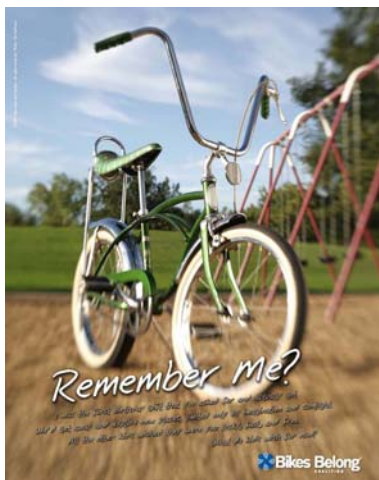


Figure 1: Bikes Belong Ad Copy
“Remember Me? I was the first birthday gift that you asked for and actually got. We’d get away and explore new places, limited only by imagination and sunlight. All the other kids wished they were you: lucky, fast, and free. What do kids wish for now?”

While bike culture may play a role in recruiting those less likely to bike by changing their perceptions or inspiring them with creativity – as well as validating the choice to ride for people that do cycle – very little formal infrastructure exists to support bike culture. The bike culture community is largely DIY (“Do-It-Yourself”), meaning organizations and events are primarily volunteer-driven and self-organized. As a result, these groups and activities meet with a variety of success: some operate effectively using the DIY model; others could be more successful if they had additional support (planning, financial, infrastructure).

Within Vancouver, some formal entities do exist. *Momentum Magazine* is a free magazine that reports on bike culture, and “reflects the lives of people who ride bikes. Momentum provides urban cyclists with the inspiration, information and resources to help them fully enjoy their riding experience and connect with their local and global cycling communities” (Momentum website, 2008). The Vancouver Area Cycling Coalition (VACC) is an advocacy group that aims to make cycling “an integral part of the transportation culture” (VACC website, 2008), while Better Environmentally Sound Transportation (BEST) expands its advocacy work to all forms of alternative transportation—cycling, walking, taking public transit, and carpooling (BEST website, 2008). PEDAL (Pedal Energy Development Alternatives), as a non-profit organization, runs a community bike shop, a bicycle-building depot, and encourages and creates bicycle culture through events run by PedalPlay (PEDAL website, 2008).

While the contributions and effectiveness of these groups and others in creating a climate that supports cycling cannot be overemphasized, the number of grassroots, DIY groups in the city vastly outnumber these formal organizations. Critical Mass, Midnight Mass, KABMLAMO!, Mini-Bike Army, Hey Fixie!, Fixed Vancouver, Velolove, Electric Moon Bananas, The Brakes, The B:C:Clettes, Margaret Charles Chopper Collective, For Bikers By Bikers, East Van Bike Polo, Bicycle Bee, CARcass—these are just some of the groups, events, and undertakings of bike culture’s DIY community.

iii. Research Question

While undertaking this project, I had an overarching goal of exploring how bicycle culture can be supported and improved in the urban environment. More specifically, I had the following two questions in my mind as I worked:

1. How can strategic planning be used to build capacity for expanding bike culture?
2. What role can bike culture play in empowering individuals and building community?

In order to narrow my research down, I decided to partner my existing involvement with the B:C:Clettes – a women’s bicycle-inspired performance collective – with this project. By treating the B:C:Clettes as a case study, I hope that our experience with this project can provide examples and resources for

other groups and individuals within bike culture (and beyond) to expand their capacity and build a stronger community.

iv. Presenting...The B:C:Clettes!

The B:C:Clettes are an all-lady, bike-inspired, street-performance collective in Vancouver, BC. Their performances are a celebration of bikes and those who ride them. The group is non-hierarchical, voluntary, and works on consensus. Created after an inspiring visit from a similar group in Portland called the Sprockettes, the B:C:Clettes formed in 2005. Over the last several years, the membership has had some changes, and the group has evolved in terms of organization and goals. But one thing has remained constant—a desire for a supportive collective of female cyclists that celebrate a love of bicycles. The collective has written a ‘Clette-a-festo,’ that can be performed with background theatrics, to help describe the vision and intentions of the B:C:Clettes.

The Clette-a-festo

The **B:C:Clettes** are a **B**ikers **C**ollective, **C**reating **L**ove, **E**quality, and **T**oughness **T**hrough **E**ngaging **S**pectacle!

We will not be defined by words alone; instead you will find us perpetually in motion, taking back the streets for revolutionary use as bicycle ways and dance floors. We're revolutionary, yes, like our wheels. Hot, tough, and shiny — like the sexy steeds we tame and ride.

Pedal, pump, coast and fly: we ride in all weather. Swing, shimmy, strut, and jive: we dance in all weather. We weather all storms as a collective, together.

We are artists, mechanics, scientists, students, designers, teachers, writers, and baristas; jokers, inventors, leaders, neighbours, family, friends, lovers, and sistas.

This is a lifestyle of agility, sustainability, of respecting all ability. Our bodies don't end where our bikes begin. We're beauty, we're pride; we dance hard, roll fast, and tread lightly, loving life.

We take risks; we're a little different. We are a spectacle, a show, a delight.

We are that giddy feeling you get riding pedal-powered for the first time: Exhilarated with newfound fun, you can't wait to share your amazing secret with the world. We want to ride and dance and share our secret with you.

And one last thing: we won't *technically* be able to be part of your dance-dance-party revolution, if there's no bike parking available. So get on it!
(B:C:Clettes, 2007).

Performances highlight the inspiring, humorous and playful elements of cycling; they combine music, theatre, props, and costumes of red, black and shiny to create an environment of spectacle. The B:C:Clettes are largely self-taught, working together to create choreography and theatrical performances. Ideas of women's empowerment, Do-It-Yourself culture, celebratory activism, environmental sustainability, and community-building inform the collective. The group practices outside in public places, taking over side streets or using existing open plazas to dance, celebrate and share ideas.



(Photo: 7-how-7, 2007)



(Photo: T.Sturm, 2007)

Relationships among the women in the collective have been strengthened through time and shared experience. As a result, members of the group feel a close connection to their identity as B:C:Clettes and to each other.

Personal Reflection¹

The 'clettes to me are so much more than just a "performance collective." I see our group – the individuals in it and our combined energy – as the embodiment of positive female strength. As a 'clette and with the 'clettes, I can do anything. I can ride, I can dance, I can celebrate life and being a woman. I think that this spirit shows when we are together, when we are performing and also when we are riding our bikes together, which is a performance in itself. And as a result we inspire people, men and women, kids and grown-ups. We remind them how easy and simple it is to have fun, we show that cycling can be sexy and a lifestyle choice, not just transportation for the middle-aged Gore-Tex crowd. I think that in our own way, we are activists. We advocate through our performances and through our individual interactions for sustainable alternative transportation, for strong female power, and for spectacle/celebration/embracing life. All of these things are good in my mind, and I am proud to be encouraging them through my activities with the 'clettes.

But being in this collective is not just for the good that it does others. It is also for me, for the friendship and fun I get from everyone here. Also, for the challenge of making a group of individuals function well, despite our differences. And for the rush and thrill of being a rockstar for brief moments. I think we all learn from each other; I am continuously amazed at the talent, creativity, skills and insight that comes from all of us. Not just learning about being in a "bicycle-inspired performance collective," but about life and human interaction.

The performance of 'bicycle dance' is spreading along the west coast, as communities of bike culture get together and share their experiences and creativity. The Sprockettes of Portland, Oregon, were the first such group, followed by the B:C:Clettes. Since then, the Brakes (all boy mini-bike dance crew in Vancouver), the VeloVixens (female bike freaks and dance group in Victoria,

¹ Reflections will be included throughout this paper. These introspective pieces demonstrate the learning that can occur during an Action Research project such as this (Action Research will be explained in the Methodology section, p.18). Reflections are written by the author as well as other members of the B:C:Clettes; some have chosen to be acknowledged, others remain anonymous.

BC), and most recently, Chain Reaction (male mini-bike dance troupe in Portland) have all joined the bicycle dance movement. In an effort to push this momentum even further, the B:C:Clettes went on a west coast tour in the summer of 2007. The Velo:City Tour stretched from Vancouver to Los Angeles and back, with the B:C:Clettes performing at farmer's markets, public parks, organized parties, and other venues while 'spreading bike love' in 9 different cities.

As a group, the B:C:Clettes have already put a lot of time and mental energy into working through group process. But in the last six months, the group has discussed being ready to move forward, to grow and change as a collective. The relationships with each other that have already been established are built on trust, equity, and creating a "safer space" where issues of women's identity, creativity, and sustainability as it intersects with bicycle culture can be explored. This provides a strong platform to move collectively towards organizational transformation. It is within this context that this project is situated.

v. Goals and Objectives

My primary goal is to demonstrate how strategic planning can build both internal and external capacity within bike culture, using the B:C:Clettes as a case study. As previously stated, this can be a resource to other groups (bike culture and otherwise) to enhance and expand on their capabilities. In addition, this work will add to the body of knowledge and research surrounding bike culture, a relatively new and unknown cultural phenomena.

Beyond just the goals of this paper, other objectives included in building bike culture are to:

- *Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions*

In a recent national study, 76% of Canadians reported they had never cycled to work in the 12 months prior to the survey being conducted; 64% had never cycled to do errands or go shopping; 48% never cycled to visit friends and family; 80% of students had never cycled to school (National Active Transportation Report, 2006, p.5). These stats are horrific when coupled with the reality of climate change.

More than just a future possibility, impacts from human-induced global warming are already being felt around the world (Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, 2007). Actions that can reduce the amount of greenhouse gas emissions released into the atmosphere are imperative. One of the most effective methods of accomplishing this is through choosing alternative forms of transportation to the automobile (David Suzuki Foundation, 2007). Cyclists do this every time they get on their bikes.

If more people can be encouraged to bike, not just for exercise but as a mode of transportation (termed “commuter” cyclists), we are well on our way to reducing greenhouse gas emissions. Creating an urban environment that supports bike culture is one way of improving the chances that people will choose bikes over cars.

- *Increase Health of Citizens*

Studies show that 30 minutes or more of moderate to vigorous physical activity per day contributes to healthy living (Secretariat for the Intersectoral Healthy Living Network, 2005). The promotion of active transportation is a promising path to improve public health, addressing the widespread levels of inactivity in the population (Badland and Schofield, 2005) and simultaneously reducing air and noise pollution through the replacement of car trips by walking or cycling (Cavill and Davis 2007). Currently, fewer than 10% of working Canadians commute by these active transportation modes (Statistics Canada, 2003). Of these active transportation modes, the cycling mode shares in Canadian cities – about 2% of trips – are much lower than walking (about 10% of trips) (Winters & Teschke, 2008).

With some limitations due to climate and topography, the provision of infrastructure that makes it easy to cycle and the encouragement of bike-related groups and activities will make more people bike on a daily basis, improving their health and well-being.

- *Create a Climate of Creativity and Playfulness*

People are increasingly in the city just to be in the city, not only because they have errands to do, shopping, etc. They want the experience; they want to watch other people, and be watched. They want to check out culture. Public space in many cities has changed from being a place to fill necessities of life to a place

where optional activities are undertaken, where people choose to go because they like the feel, the smell, the energy of city spaces. People-watching is the number one tourist attraction in any city (Gehl, 2008).

Cultural performances and events take all forms: from an opera in a formal theatre to unlicensed street performers playing music on a sidewalk. This diversity of expression requires an equally diverse interpretation of what makes up a 'creative space.' At a recent dialogue put on by Simon Fraser University, the idea of spontaneity and ground-up creativity was examined (Centre of Expertise on Culture and Communities, 2008). What counts as a 'valid cultural institution' and where does this leave the artists and groups who don't get acknowledged in this process? As a group of performers that use both traditional and non-traditional creative spaces, the B:C:Clettes have experience with 'interstitial spaces', or the spaces in between. Streets, alleys, empty parking lots, public squares: all of these can create interesting and dynamic stages for performance art.



(Photo: P. Kemble, 2008)

.More than just creating environmental and health benefits, bike culture injects a spirit of spontaneity and creative celebration of life into the city. In a place such as Vancouver where winters can stretch on, gloomy and depressing, it is particularly important to have groups and activities that can produce smiles on a rainy day. People dancing with mini-bikes in a park; fantastic tall-bikes and home-made choppers riding through the streets; costumed antics powered by two wheels—all of these break the status quo of day-to-day life, providing both participants and observers with an avenue of creative resistance to the daily grind.

- *Empower Women to Cycle*

If we look briefly at the history of women in cycling, we see that women's adoption of cycling in the 1890s represented

not the continuity of a craze so much as a fundamental change and reversal of accepted norms. If elite women were ever diffident regarding their publicity, the bicycle helped transform timorousness and recidivism into confidence and respectability. Most women such as Women's Christian Temperance Union President, Frances Willard, rode their bicycles free of care...Not only did women ride bicycles in public but also were encouraged to ride them (Mackintosh & Norcliffe, 2006, p.19).

Fast forward to the present day. In a report on utilitarian cycling in the *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*, data showed that within the Canadian urban population, women were much less likely to cycle for utilitarian purposes than men (Winters, 2007). These findings are similar to results from the U.S. National Household Travel Survey, and market research in Toronto and Vancouver. Winters suggests that these differences "highlight an opportunity in North

America for recruitment of women to cycling as a mode of transportation” (2007, p.5).

- *Build Community*

The bike community is strong within Vancouver, and is expanding beyond the city limits. Bike culture events in Portland, Seattle, Bellingham and Victoria – in addition to Vancouver – routinely draw visitors from throughout the Cascadia/Pacific Northwest region. During their Velo:City tour in the summer of 2007, the B:C:Clettes visited cities from Vancouver to Los Angeles and back, performing and engaging with bike communities along the west coast.

The Velo:City tour was an experience of inspiration and challenge. It was to viscerally experience a community, specifically the biking community. It was about sharing our energy and connecting ideas and people throughout the coast.

Thanks to all the beautiful people that we met along the way because now we are even more energized and inspired to dance, to ride and to make dreams come true. Thanks to all our friends and family who supported us and sent us on our way. Thanks to the bike community for being an oasis of creativity and love in this beautiful world.

Somebody told me that we would touch a lot of hearts along the way. I hope this is true, because our collective heart is swollen and beating feverishly from all the kindness and love we have received on the Velo:City tour.

- Melissa (Velo:City Tour Blog, 2007).

2. METHODOLOGY AND METHODS

i. Action Research

I am a member of the B:C:Clettes. I am also a Master's student of Urban Planning. When I thought about my Professional Project, I knew that I wanted to work on a project that meant something, that had some use beyond 'a contribution to academic knowledge.' I've always been interested in seeing how seemingly disparate interests and undertakings in my life can eventually coincide. When the B:C:Clettes began discussing a series of retreats where we would try and come up with a long-term vision for who we are and where we want to go, the idea came to me: use the experience of a strategic planning process to build capacity for our group.

Praxis, a term used by Aristotle, is the "art of acting upon the conditions one faces in order to change them" (O'Brien, 1998, p.1). Used in real situations, rather than in manufactured, experimental studies, Action Research – much like praxis – has as its primary focus the solving of real problems. This concept of 'real world praxis' was very appealing to me when considering a methodology to use for this project. Reason & Bradbury (2001) suggest that Action Research "seeks to bring together action and reflection, theory and practice, in participation with others, in the pursuit of practical solutions to issues of pressing concern to people, and more generally the flourishing of individual persons and their communities" (p.1).

The idea of translating knowledge into action requires planners to expand “the language of planning, to become more expressive, evocative, engaging, and to include the language of the emotions” (Sandercock, 2003, p.196). Action researchers reject the notion of researcher neutrality, understanding that the most active researcher is often the one who has most at stake in a situation. By using the research methodology of Action Research, the ability to reflect – to express thoughts and feelings and experiences – is facilitated.

Personal Reflection

A major part of "Action Research" is reflection. The idea being that one of the goals of action research is for participants to learn: about themselves, about the process, and (hopefully) experience some sort of transformative change through the process. This may be the main difference between "Action" research and more traditional academic research--the goal of positive change, both for the organization and for the individuals involved. This being said, obviously some action research projects are more successful at this than others. I guess the bottom line is honesty.

The goal of my project is to help build capacity for our group--both "external" in terms of what we are capable of doing as a group (shows, workshops, etc), but also "internal": how we interact, learn, grow from our own involvement in the group and with others. The process of going through a Strategic Planning exercise can be seen as a way to expand our external capacity (e.g. what are our goals, how can we reach them, etc.). Doing this process in the form of Action Research, where the group works together to accomplish something and learns about themselves in the process, is the way I hoped we would be able to expand our "internal" capacity. But there is also overlap for both.

In planning and many other kinds of participatory processes, learning occurs not just through the reframing of ideas or through the critique of expert knowledge, but “through transformations of relationships and responsibilities, of networks and competence, of collective memory and memberships” (Forester, 1999, 115). The

work that the B:C:Clettes do allows us to learn as both individuals and as a collective group. As Forester suggests, "...conversational or storytelling rituals can produce or reproduce, strengthen or weaken, the public senses of self we call social identities" (1999, p.137), and our identity as B:C:Clettes gets reinforced every time we meet for practice, or put on a show, or conduct a workshop. Our social identity as performers and dancers, activists and feminists, radicals and artists gets rebuilt when we discuss our common stories and goals.

As a member of the group, I am both a participant and a researcher; an insider familiar with the nuances, dynamics, and history of the B:C:Clettes but also a student working on an academic project. This "pre-understanding" and "role duality" (Coghlan, 2003) leads to both benefits and points of caution—a knowledge of how an organization works and its 'jargon' can lead to richer data and allow the researcher and other participants to participate freely due to a pre-existing comfort level. However, this situation can also lead to assumptions, as the researcher thinks they already know the answer and may not probe as deeply. The role of introspection and reflection throughout an insider action research project is therefore highly valuable, to allow for critical thinking about the impacts of a dual role.

Personal Reflection

This process leaves me feeling a bit torn in two. Balancing the demands for time dedicated specifically to this project – to the strategic plan – with the many demands from just functioning as a group. Today I facilitated practice, and introduced in more detail the Action Research project. I felt rushed, like I had to get through the description quickly because we had so much else to do already,

and because as always people feel pressed for time. It had the feeling of asking for a favour from the group to listen and participate, and yet this is not what my intention is. I think we've all identified that we want to move forward as a group, both with what we accomplish as well as the process we use to do things. And these workshops are intended to help us do this. But from some people, I get the feeling they view it as something extra, rather than something that fits in with these goals. Did I not explain the project well?

The frenzy of the rest of life left me with not as much time as I wanted to prepare for this facilitated practice, to gather and organize my thoughts about what information we needed to discuss. The project is supposed to be collaborative, and so far I feel it has been, but now that things are more formalized in a way, it is as though it is more led by me than co-facilitated. I don't like the feeling of trying to push an idea through; it leaves me feeling patronizing, "I know what is best for the group, so I will just organize it as such."

Sometimes I feel confident in my facilitating role. Today I felt stumbly and unsure of myself. Now back at home I am trying to remember what I said, what the group said. Did I remember everything I had to cover? Did I leave space for others to comment and contribute? My familiarity and friendships with these women is both helpful and a hindrance...it is difficult to be serious, to not just laugh stuff off. Again, the idea of balance: between the formality of the ethics process² and the familiarity with the group both as an entity and as individuals.

ii. Strategic Planning Model

Action Research and strategic planning are a good fit. As a "decision-making process that focuses attention on important issues and on how to resolve them" (UN-Habitat, 2005, p.3), strategic planning can facilitate collaborative work towards a common vision. By using a method of strategic planning in an Action Research setting, the group can become empowered to create positive change together, in a direction and using a method that all group members embrace. In practice, for a collaborative strategic planning project to succeed it must be done in an interactive and discursive process, with a "shared desire to work towards

² The project received approval from the UBC Behavioural Research Ethics Board, and all the B:C:Clettes signed consent forms.

common objectives, a high level of mutual trust, a willingness to cooperate, share responsibility, accept accountability, and where necessary to alter the prevailing administrative structures. The articulation of a common vision and the identification of the appropriate objectives and strategies should emerge from a strategic approach to planning” (Scott, 2004, p.50).

During my coursework in the School of Community and Regional Planning (SCARP), I was introduced to a 10 Step Planning Process (Figure 2) that was created in collaboration between UN-Habitat and EcoPlan International, a Vancouver-based consulting firm. While I had no intention of suggesting our group strictly follow this 10-step process, it acted as a useful resource tool while the B:C:Clettes went through our own strategic planning sessions.

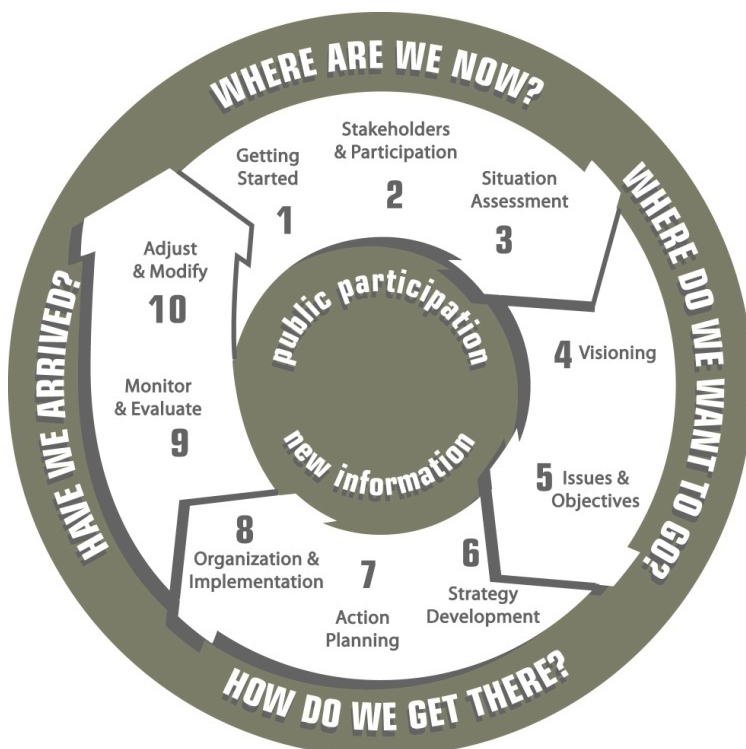


Figure 2: 10 Step Planning Process (UN-Habitat, 2005, p.3)

The process that our group chose to follow was iterative and unique, created in partnership with each other. Having the 10 Step Planning Process as a model proved helpful while organizing the information and discussing what steps we next needed to take, but we used it as a reference, not a guide. In the words of John Forester, “Not any turn taking, sharing of stories, or generating of shared texts will do. If the participants do not have some shared sense of the rules of the game ensuring safety in their meeting together, they may not be able to act together” (1999, p.141). We created these ‘rules’ collaboratively during our strategic planning retreats, and these guided us as we moved forward with the process.

3. DESCRIPTION AND OUTCOMES OF RETREATS

i. B:C:Clettes Strategic Planning Retreats

The strategic planning sessions were organized into three retreats, spread over a five month period. At the onset, we weren't sure how many sessions we would need, or even what we would cover at each one, but we treated the planning as an organic process and worked collaboratively to decide when and what we wanted to happen. Our overall goal was to expand our capacity, both internally as a collective group, and externally as performers and activists. Throughout the retreats, we asked ourselves: how do we improve our group processes, long-term sustainability and expand on what we do?

Reflection

Pre Retreat: September and the ladies are tired. Tensions are high, and as a 'clette who didn't do much of the [Velo:City] tour I'm feeling a little disconnected, but not as burnt-out as some of the ladies. It feels like we are a professional dancing group that can tumble out of a van anywhere and provide a top notch show, but our internal processes are falling apart. Communication is fragmented and we've resorted to a place where strong voices rule conversations and confidently presented whims turn previously consensus-made decisions on their head. I'm starting to get a knot in my stomach when I hear about the sadness of some of our ladies. I want to "make it better" and reconnect us to the shared joy of dancing and creating and being silly that brought us together in the first place.

I'm excited to be putting our needs on the table and collectively addressing them. I'm nervous that we won't meet our own expectations. As a troupe of twelve I often feel like there are more words and ideas and hopes and dreams than there is space to share them. I don't know how to democratically include everyone and have meetings end before midnight. I want members to acknowledge that being part of a collective means trusting the people around to do the best they can, and knowing when to let go of your own personal needs for the good of the collective.

(Jeanie, 2008).

For each retreat, we began by having several members work together to write an agenda. This was created using input and suggestions from the rest of the group, and then was sent out as a draft for comments and additions. Although each retreat covered different items, there were some similarities for all of them in terms of format and process. Because we are a dance group and didn't want to forget this, at each retreat we built in time and space for break-out groups to dance, move, have fun, plan new dances, etc. These acted as a break from the intensity of sitting and talking, as well as a forum to explore our external 'performance' capacity.

We wanted as many of the B:C:Clettes as possible to be able to attend each retreat, so we worked to find a date that fit for all of us. In addition, we scheduled the agenda so if people knew they had to leave early or come late, they wouldn't miss the sections that were more important to have 100% attendance. In keeping with our non-hierarchical structure and collective organization, several members of the group volunteered to assist in setting the agenda, and then people signed up to facilitate different sections of the agenda, make meals, keep minutes, etc. so that all those present participated in running the retreat. New topics that arose were put on a 'bike rack' to be re-visited later.

As mentioned previously, the 10 Step Planning Process proposed by UN-Habitat was used as a rough guide for our process, although issues and discussions that were unique to our group – such as our decision-making mechanisms – were

also put into the strategic planning process (Figure 3). One of the B:C:Clettes described the division of work during our retreats, saying:

Retreat #1 helped us develop as a functioning group, able to make decisions and respect the participation of all members. In doing so we solidified as a group of highly effective women engaged with our communities and world.
Retreat #2 helped us to dream and negotiate our direction.
Retreat #3 helped us start getting it done.
 (Red Sara, 2008).

Figure 3: Comparison of Strategic Planning Processes

Strategic Planning Processes		
10 Step Planning Process (UN-Habitat model)	Information Covered	B:C:Clettes Planning Process
Step 1: Getting Started	- Why are we doing this? - What resources are needed?	Discussions Pre-Retreats
Step 2: Participation	- Who will be involved? - What does this involvement consist of?	Discussions Pre-Retreats
Step 3: Situation Assessment	- Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats - Current reality - Decision-making tools	Retreat 1, 2, 3
Step 4: Visioning	- What is our future? - What is our reason for being?	Retreat 1, 2
Step 5: Issues & Objectives	- What do we want to do? - Projects	Retreat 2
Step 6: Strategy Development	- What are short & long term strategies? - What are our priorities?	Retreat 2, 3
Step 7: Action Planning	- Decide who is responsible, what they need for help, and when the time frame is	Retreat 3
Step 8: Organization & Implementation	- Do we need new sub-committees to help progress? - Additions to policy manual	Retreat 3
Step 9: Monitor & Evaluate	- What progress are we making? - Reflections	On-going
Step 10: Adjust & Modify	- Do we need to make changes to our plans?	On-going

ii. Retreat 1

The first retreat was focused on our internal group processes. We had all expressed a commitment to operating as a consensus-based collective, but many members of the group had different opinions on what this actually meant. In order for us to move forward as a group, we had to feel strong in our internal operations. We also started thinking about what our future goals might be. The following agenda (Figure 4) was created for the first retreat, to help guide us through the process.

Figure 4: B:C:Clettes Retreat 1 Agenda

	Agenda: Decision-making, Communication & Operating Logistics	Time
	BREAKFAST	8:30 a.m.
1.	Decision-making <ul style="list-style-type: none">- How do we make decisions: consensus?- Re-learn the hand signals for group talking- Group structure- Expectations for performances, practices- Thoughts on new members and future growth	9:30 a.m.
2.	Communication <ul style="list-style-type: none">- What are our procedures for running practice and meetings?- What is the best way to communicate to the group?- We need to be able to demonstrate respect- Individual feedback / constructive feedback- How to deal with new items / off topic items- Group Focus / Effectiveness: punctuality, cellphones, email- Dealing with conflict and tension: mediator? Outside of practice?	10:30 a.m.
3.	Practice Schedule <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Weekend practices: Saturday or Sunday?- Plan for re-blocking, understudies	11:30 a.m.
5.	Financials <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Create financial manifesto- Review current financials	12:00 p.m.
	LUNCH	12:30 p.m.

6.	Goals & the Future - Where do we see ourselves going in the future? - New song ideas, specific song goals - Collaborations (with the Brakes, others) - Euro Tour? - Grant-writing / more heavily-funded performances	1:30 p.m.
7.	Dance Session - Let's put on some booty music and shake it!	3:00 p.m.
8.	Future Workshops - What would we like to do for ourselves for prof./personal dev't?	3:30 p.m.
9.	Posi-Jam Closing Activity -positive contributions made by all the 'clettes, written on a personal card	4:30 p.m.

Retreat 1 Outcomes

Our initial retreat, as the first 'formal' gathering to think about our shared long-term future, set the stage for how we would proceed. By spending time discussing how our group would operate, and creating guidelines for expectations and protocol, we dramatically improved our efficiency and capabilities as a functioning group. As a result of the work we did during this session, we drafted a "B:C:Clettes Policy Manual" that could serve as a resource tool for our group (See Appendix 1).

Although we laugh at the idea of having a policy manual for a ladies dance group, the reality is each member leads a busy life filled with other commitments and projects; having a set of guidelines to follow in order to make our group more enjoyable and effective makes the large time commitment we all give to the collective seem all the more worthwhile. By structuring some of our group processes, it allows us more time to spend being creative and organic when it comes time to create new performances.

Personal Reflection

By the end of the afternoon, the living room smelled: of hard work, sweat, and ideas for the future. We'd spent a lot of time sitting and talking, and the 'dance break' we took to loosen ourselves up both physically and creatively was a welcome change of pace. So much has been covered today, and although I think we are all exhausted, the overall mood seems to be one of optimism about our future and the continued growth of our collective. We were able to resolve some underlying tension through our discussions, especially regarding communication and respect for our fellow members. One of the most interesting parts of the day for me was when we all contributed what being part of this group meant to us, and what we got from it. This list, including activism, fun, physical movement, sustainability, community-building, feminism, celebration, caring and support, mental and emotional personal development, collective processes, and the opportunity to perform, resonated with many. While people gave different reasons for why they were part of this group, none were mutually exclusive, and I think it made us realize how much we get personally out of our involvement with the 'clettes, as well as what our group can give back to society in the work that we do.

We didn't get through all the material we had originally set out to cover. This wasn't a huge surprise, and is a common occurrence for our group. We set our sights high with what we can accomplish, but the reality is we are human, a group with strong personalities and many leaders, and we often get side-tracked. Is this a bad thing? Generally no. Our diversions often lead to new insights about intentions and visions, or bring up unresolved conflict or trouble that we may not have known was there. But sometimes, personal stories take us far away from our supposed topic. As a facilitator, this can be challenging. Stories contribute to relationship building and the honouring of individual experiences; to creating a climate of support and friendship. With our packed agenda though, it often means we end up scrambling to get through our items, and this can cause frustration and mental exhaustion.

Within our group, we have a diversity of personalities: some are out-going, energetic, outspoken, while others are more introspective and less prone to taking up space with their voices and opinions. We have ladies that want to be efficient and task-oriented, and those that want to talk more about process and philosophy, and everything in between. The 'protocols' we set today for communicating within our group may be able to help us create more space for those that are quiet, and direct the focus and energy of those that are more vocal.

This morning I was a bit nervous about how our session would go. Now, with the first retreat successfully behind us I feel optimistic about moving forward.

Some time was spent during this retreat in brainstorming ideas for future projects and performances. Although this was effective for generating overall momentum and excitement about where we can go, it may not have been the best use of time. What resulted was close to a ‘wish list,’ with little direction or detail regarding next steps for turning the ideas into action. Because of the creativity and confidence of our group, we could easily have spent hours generating this list—we believe we are able to do anything, and often I think we are.

The Velo:City Tour last summer helped prove we are capable of organizing and realizing major projects, and our success has expanded the belief in our abilities. But with no mechanism set up to organize and ‘delegate’ our dreams and ideas, we weren’t well supported to follow through on them. Many of the suggestions remain in the same state—that of ideas—6 months after we came up with them. Action planning, a strategic planning step we didn’t get to until the third retreat, is a useful tool to turn wish lists into action items. While I acknowledge the enthusiasm and energy our brainstorming created, it may have been more useful to save this for a subsequent retreat where we were more able to move forward with the suggestions.

iii. Retreat 2

Following the first retreat with its stress on logistics and operations, we wanted to have a more creative component of the strategic planning process. Scheduled to

cover a weekend as we stayed at our host's house in Pitt Meadows, we had much more time to delve into things during this retreat. The majority of this retreat (Figures 5a & 5b) was focused on looking at our current and desired future situations, asking ourselves what roles our group plays, and how these might expand or change in the future. The group had also identified some troubling issues that had come up at past performances concerning sexiness and representation, and we wanted to spend some time discussing our role in the community and what the implications our gender identity had on this. During this two-day retreat, we made use of small group breakouts to enable us to work in more detail for some of our ideas and brainstorming, and then report back to the whole group.

For this retreat, we also had some 'homework' to think about in advance of the retreat. Each member was asked to consider the following:

- Why are you in the B:C:Clettes? What do you get out of it? What do we think others get from us? What is our identity?
- Consider sexiness / representation / safe spaces as they pertain to the B:C:Clettes.

Figure 5a: B:C:Clettes Retreat 2 Agenda--Day 1

	Agenda: Visioning--Who Are We & Where Do We Want to Go?	Time
	TRAVEL: Skytrain to Braid Station, then group ride to Pitt Meadows	12:00 p.m.
1.	Check-in - Expectations for the day / Agenda review - Assign note-takers	3:30 p.m.
2.	Current Reality - Who are we and what do we do? - Where are we now? - Expand the 'clettes manifesto?	3:45 p.m.

3.	Membership and New Members - Revisit new members: are we ready?	4:45 p.m.
4.	Walk along Pitt Meadows	5:30 p.m.
	DINNER	6:30 p.m.
5.	Sexiness and Representation - Discuss how we all feel about this	7:30 p.m.
6.	Safe/Safer Space - What does this mean? What do we need to feel safe(r)? - Within the group - At performances - Develop strategy for dealing with inappropriate comments from audience members	8:00 p.m.
7.	Dance Party & Movies	9:00 p.m.

Figure 5b: B:C:Clettes Retreat 2 Agenda--Day 2

	Agenda: Visioning--Who Are We & Where Do We Want to Go?	Time
	BREAKFAST	9:00 a.m.
1.	Where do we want to go? - Euro / Future Tours - Financial Manifesto - Open Practices - Media Projects - Other	10:00 a.m.
2.	Session One Dancing <i>breakout groups</i> - Skill Share (breakdance, contact dance, etc.) - Teach Trade (learn new / unknown positions in our songs)	11:00 a.m.
3.	Session One Brainstorming <i>breakout groups</i> - Develop future ideas and projects	11:30 a.m.
4.	Report Back from breakout groups	12:15 p.m.
	LUNCH	12:45 p.m.
5.	Session Two Dancing <i>breakout groups</i> - Choreographing new songs or revisiting old	1:30 p.m.
6.	Session Two Brainstorming <i>breakout groups</i> - Concrete Planning / Next Steps	2:00 p.m.
7.	Report Back from breakout groups	2:45 p.m.
8.	Heart Circle Closing Activity - Time for everyone to speak honestly and from the heart	3:00 p.m.

Retreat 2 Outcomes

Visioning: the B:C:Clettes do a lot of this, daily. We dream big, we constantly take in things we see, hear, and discuss, and then consider how the B:C:Clettes can benefit or contribute. But during this retreat, our visioning was more focused. We revisited from our last retreat the idea of who we are and our current reality. “A sense of doing something to make the world better; to be part of something bigger than each person in the group” was one answer to the question of why each member joined the group. “To create space for women in the male-dominated bike scene” was another response. “Meeting new people,” “community involvement” and “role modeling,” and “becoming a minor celebrity!” were other answers. Leanne (one of the B:C:Clettes) suggested “Society tells us knowledge and skills are specialized, compartmentalized. Only if you are a ‘master’ should you do this. The B:C:Clettes breaks this down. We can do whatever we want.” Certainly a sense of empowerment and community-building were common themes throughout the room.

Reflection

The B:C:Clettes are here to inspire you.

*We are here to affirm your knowledge and choice to live healthier,
with a gentler impact on the future of the world around you.*

We dance together

We ride with you

We act in consideration of others beyond ourselves.

*My heart swells with the freedom, fun and everyday every-weather joy of getting
from here to there, knowing I am not alone, in riding, in making this choice.*

*Everyday I continue to do what I know in my heart is correct. Everyday a new
stream dries up somewhere, or a salmon does not make its way up a blocked
river home to spawn. Another war is started to fuel our relentless demand for
farther faster richer. With all these losses, the doom and despair.*

I know I am living right.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

*particularly ladies, women, mothers and daughters **from now until time immemorial:**
this intention, this dance is for you.*
(Red Sara, 2008)

However, creating common visions is a challenging task, and while it was good to hear what everyone felt, it was obvious that there was not just one reason or vision that we all shared. For some, this was acceptable; for others, seeing the differences that had arisen during our early visioning was challenging.

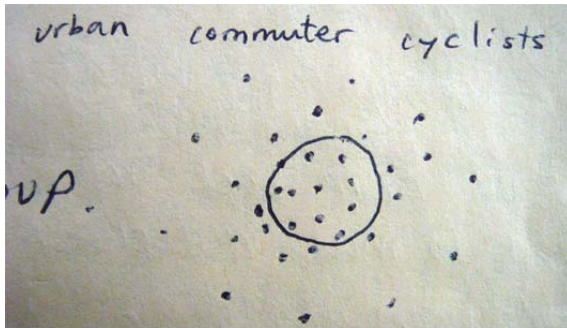
Reflection

After the first retreat I felt less excited about my future with the 'clettes. I left feeling my interests and vision were not necessarily matched with other members of the group. I realized we are a broad mix of people (good of course), but that we are not necessarily bonded over our politics and feminist principles. I know this isn't 100% true as we share similar values around the environment, sustainability and others. But that was one thing that stuck with me. On a positive note from the first retreat, I think people did express a need for voices to be heard. I think there has been some change around this, but this still needs work. Partly it comes down to people's communication style.
(Fish, 2008).

Reflection

As an artist I have made the choice to only work 3 of 7 days per week outside of the home. I take my creative work seriously and strive for consistent excellence in my creations. With the 'clettes I often find myself having to content myself / accept something which is positioned at the balance of time and artistic product. This conflict was articulated by myself and others at our retreats. Articulating the tension helps us to remember that we make decisions with the good of the group in mind. The tension doesn't go away, but we can all live with our collective decisions better.

Alignment with intentions determines whether someone will feel like they belong in the group or not. Our intentions are fluid. The group is the circle. Some people are on the edge, but continue to influence the group. Others leave the group or never join, even though they are closely aligned.
(Red Sara, 2008).



***Negotiating Primary Intentions
within our Collective Group***

EDGES of group

DIVERSITY within the group

(Red Sara, 2008).

At our first retreat, we had decided that the issue of new members would be revisited later. Now, we felt ready to discuss the idea again. A lot of the hesitation towards expanding our group was due to the fear that taking time to teach our dances and bring new members up to speed would slow us down from the other things we wanted to accomplish. Another fear was the potential that a new member would disrupt the existing strong relationships that we had worked so hard to create within our collective, and wouldn't share our common visions and intentions. However, many of the B:C:Clettes also expressed how much being in the group had benefited them personally, and how we should consider sharing this experience with others; the hypocrisy of having an 'exclusive' club with a goal of community-building was also discussed. Others pointed out that in the coming year several members would be leaving and so for the sustainability of the group we would need to grow.

After every member present had a chance to voice their opinion on taking new members into the group, it was decided that we were ready for a slow integration of several new B:C:Clettes on a trial basis. We were ready for a new beginning,

re-energized after the exhausting Velo:City Tour during the summer, and the timing was good as we had very few performances on the horizon in the next three months.

At this point, we used a creative process to determine people's feelings on the number of new members we would consider having. Each B:C:Clette put up their hand, and we began to call out numbers starting at one. If people felt okay with that number of new members, we kept our hand up. As soon as the number got too high for what we thought a realistic and acceptable number of new members would be, we put our hand down. This organic process of decision-making worked surprisingly well: all hands stayed up for one and two members. At three, several hands went down; at four, almost all the remaining hands were lowered. This process allowed us to come to a consensus that three new members was the right number to aim for. This discussion on new members would form the basis for a subsequent addition to our B:C:Clettes Policy Manual regarding new member policy.

Discussions surrounding the idea of sexiness and representation, and how our gender identity impacts our audience and vice versa, allowed us a chance to deal with some conflict that has arisen in the past when some members of the group felt threatened and unsafe with the atmosphere during a performance. Ideas to create safe/safer space for ourselves, both within our group and externally, helped the group feel that we could better deal with inappropriate comments and

attitudes. The fact that a group of young women dancing can elicit catcalls and shouts of “show us your tits” despite our best efforts to demonstrate strength, courage and women’s empowerment is a sad reality of our society; trying to balance the power inherent in our bodies with our goals and intentions is likely a struggle we will continue to face.

Reflection

When I think of how dude-esque the bike scene can be, how we do family shows, how sometimes we perform at things where we are constantly making first impressions on folks: I think the ‘clettes walk a line of resistance against the commodification of the female body, that we refuse to allow ourselves to be forced into being classically ‘sexy’, which is a powerful thing. We can be sexy while being dressed in rain gear, sexy when acting silly, sexy when being tough mamas. I think sexy is great in heels and lingerie, but sexy is also great in toe clips and helmets.

(Laura Boo, 2008).

The second retreat was a two-day affair, and after the emotional and visioning work we did during the first day, we spent the evening hanging out and building our relationships with each other over movies, beer, sharing food, and dancing. The absence of several members of the group was felt, as whether due to illness, personal choice, or prior obligations several people had been unable to attend. Phone calls to check in during the retreat as well as notes shared with all afterwards were the group’s strategy to be inclusive; this is not the same as physical presence, however, and I think there were some feelings of missing out and being left behind by those that could not be present.

Reflection

After the first retreat I became less interested in participating in the subsequent retreats. I recognize that this has not helped in my connection to the group – it is a catch 22 – I wasn't interested in discussing vision, future, etc. based on difference. But I think not participating has left me less connected to the group and this now has perpetuated a cycle (miss one retreat, disconnect, miss another retreat, disconnect).

By retreating from the group I have been trying to assess where my interest, energy and time fits with the crew. Also, I felt I needed to take a step back in order to ensure others were participating in ways they wanted. I know I often have strong opinions and vision and I felt back burner was a good place for Fish for a time. I have energy and time for the creative process of the B:C:Clettes. I have less interest in strategic planning and our growth and development as a group.

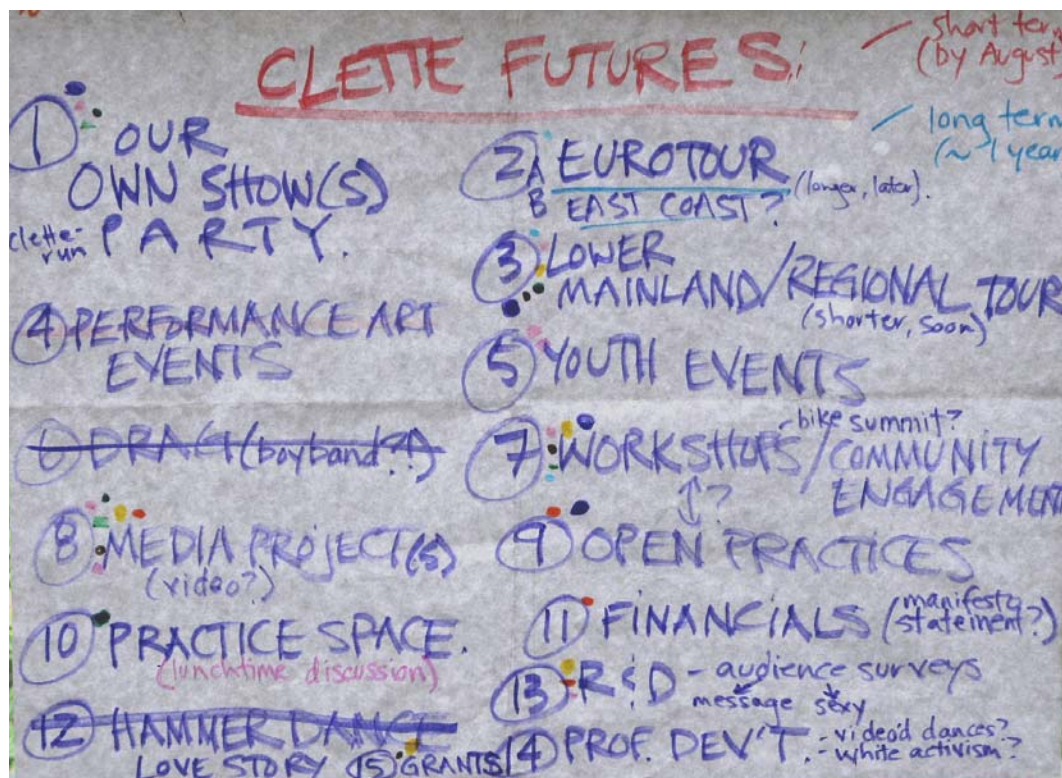
(Fish, 2008).

Day Two was spent brainstorming, with the whole group and in smaller break-out groups. The initial large group brainstorm on future projects and group development created a list of topics. From this list, each member was given a certain number of 'dots' that they could allocate to the items they felt were most important or resonated most strongly with them; this 'dot-mocracy' then allowed us to organize our smaller break-out groups into working groups for the topics that had generated the most collective energy (Figure 6).

These working groups brainstormed in more detail some initial ideas related to the chosen topics: transitions for a song we had started choreographing recently; subject and intention for a video project; initial 'fooling around' for a brand new performance piece; planning some potential workshops the B:C:Clettes could run; a local performance tour for the summer; and organizing our own event rather than just being a part of someone else's line-up. Periodically, the small groups

would come together and report back to the collective what they had been discussing or to showcase some of the choreography and performance brainstorming that was being done. We recorded everyone's interest in the different projects we had brainstormed, and left this as the beginning of multiple 'working groups' to move the projects forward. Some topics had designated action items to report back to the large group at a certain date; others were left more open to work on as opportunities arose.

Figure 6: Dotmocracy List of Topics



The retreat ended with a Heart Circle, where each B:C:Clette was given space and time to talk about their feelings and thoughts arising from the retreat. The

overwhelming response was one of positivity and optimism. The minutes from the retreat describe the overarching themes that were discussed as “celebration / making ‘clettes and our performances celebratory; acceptance of where we are in terms of process; making mistakes and trying over again.” This acknowledgement that we weren’t perfect, that we would likely make mistakes and fail at some of our projects, was a good grounding point for the group. We are proud of all we have accomplished so far as a collective, and are optimistic about all we will do in the future; we also accept that this whole undertaking is a work-in-progress and we are learning as we go.



B:C:Clettes on a walk break during the retreat, Pitt Meadows 2008
(Photo: C. Woodworth, 2008)

iv. Retreat 3

With our final retreat, we looked back at what our goals were, and discussed how we could reach them by developing strategy options and an action plan. We also looked to see what had been missed so far in our strategic planning, or what still needed more work. With this part of our planning process, UN-Habitat's 10 Step Planning Process played a larger role, as we used the division of steps in this model to examine what we had done and what still needed to happen (Figure 7). This retreat was far more analytical and action-oriented than the previous two sessions. It also required the most preparation, as I went back through all our notes, agendas, and reflections from the previous two retreats and organized our information into a presentation.

Figure 7: B:C:Clettes Retreat 3 Agenda

	Agenda: Action Planning	Time
	LUNCH	12:00 p.m.
1.	10 Steps of Strategic Planning - Presentation of what we've already done with our retreats, and what we will do to finish off the process	12:20 p.m.
2.	Filling in the Gaps: Stuff We've Missed - Resources: what current skills does our group possess? - Are we missing any goals or objectives?	12:40 p.m.
3.	Strategy Development - Choosing and prioritizing our options	1:00 p.m.
4.	Action Planning - Develop an action plan for our prioritized strategies	1:35 p.m.
5.	'Mythic Story' Closing Activity	2:55 p.m.
6.	Ride to Dream Dance Studio	3:15 p.m.
7.	Dance Practice in Mirrored Studio! - Polishing, reviewing, blocking, etc.	3:30 p.m.

Retreat 3 Outcomes

The group came to the third and final retreat with the knowledge that we would be covering a lot of material, and trying to get some very tangible results from the day's work. To start, I presented the strategic planning process we had undertaken up to this point. Using UN-Habitat's 10 Step Planning Process as a template (refer to Figure 1), I organized the information and discussions we'd had so far and then showed where we still needed some work to complete the process. The PowerPoint presentation (Figure 8) I used for this was an attempt to balance the formalism of the process with the humour, creativity, and empowerment that is present within our group: images of New Kids On The Block accompanied the slides as we talked through the process 'Step – by – Step'.

Figure 8: Slides from B:C:Clettes Strategic Planning Slideshow



Following the presentation, we started 'filling in the gaps,' re-visiting some planning steps we had missed or hadn't covered adequately. The first of these

was looking at the group's resources and strengths. People seemed a little embarrassed at first to share with the group their talents and skills. But as the list grew, people opened up, indicating they could solder metal, create HTML, sew costumes, write grants, speak German and French. Most people were surprised when one member told us she had a law degree; others were shocked to hear of the previously undisclosed singing strength we had within the collective. The resulting 'Library of Skills and Resources' (described in Appendix 2: B:C:Clettes Strategic Rad Plan) covered two full pages, and we stopped before we had run out of things to contribute. This activity did two things: it made the common skill set and resourcefulness of the group transparent so we had a sense of what we could draw from; it also reinforced our philosophy of DIY empowerment, as we discovered the wealth of talent we had within us.

The final part of the 'talking' section of the retreat had the B:C:Clettes look at our identified objectives and prioritize which options we would put into an action plan, and which we would leave to revisit later. These objectives (Figure 9) had some of our more detailed projects grouped within them.

Reflection

I've done quite a lot of action planning before. However, this was the first time I've done this as a participant with an 'informal' (i.e. non-professional) group. The fact that the 'clettes undertook this process, I think, really speaks to the level of commitment felt towards the group.

I really think it [Retreat 3] is/was essential – if you want to have a bunch of people working together on substantial projects such as the ones the 'clettes are undertaking, you either need a leader to delegate//keep people accountable or (if you work on consensus/diffuse leadership like the 'clettes) you need to intentionally work on that process (i.e. the process of getting things done!)

together. If we didn't have a forum such as the workshop you organized, I think it would be really hard to 'kick it to the next level' (i.e. we'd be stuck just with weekly rehearsals and shows)... I think that the most important impact on the 'clettes group dynamics would be that the workshop helped make us all 'happier group members' by helping to diffuse work load - and thus investment, ownership and ultimately opportunities for personal development. It also helped us all feel good about what we were doing (no one likes to be part of an ineffective group!)....which then ultimately feeds back into our group's external capacity. (Anonymous, 2008).

Figure 9: Objectives and Projects

Increase Internal Development	Expand Performances
Bike Repair Workshop	Vancouver Island Tour
Conflict Resolution Workshop	European Tour
Facilitation Workshop	B:C:Clettes Production
"Professional Development" Fund	Other local tour
Mountain Bike Lesson	Car Free event
Create Opportunities for Community Building	Continue Dance/Skit Development
Open Practices	Fantastique
Film Night	Abdominal
Collaborations (non-dance)	Clette-a-festo
Networking with non-bike entities (arts, DIY, etc)	Bike Riding (Ping Island)
Workshops: TCC, Urban Transportation	MC Hammer
Expand Youth Engagement, Women, Senior	Swing dance
Build Multimedia/Promo Components	Skits
JT/Helmet Safety Video	Rechoreography
Tour Video	Props/Costume extras
Swag and Buttons and Trading Card	Lifts/Acrobatcs
Zines (consensus, collective, DIY, etc)	Collaborations (brakes, vixens, etc)
Sound slideshow	
Website	
Public Relations System (including mailing list)	
Enhance Organizational Development	
Financial Manifesto	
Indoor Practice Space--once/month?	
Stereo	
Grants/Funding	
R & D: surveys, evaluations	
Non-profit status?	
Dances on video for learning, polishing	
Teach old songs to new members	
"Logistics" meeting--once/month?	
Policy Manual updates	

Once we agreed that all our major objectives and projects were listed, one of the members proposed we create a matrix of four quadrants, with categories of important, not important, urgent, and not urgent. We went through our list of projects and placed each in a quadrant (Figure 10).

Figure 10: Importance and Urgency Projects Matrix



Because we realized we could not create an action plan for every one of our projects, we decided that those in the important and urgent quadrant would be prioritized to move forward into action planning. An action planning spreadsheet was used, where priority projects were listed followed by specific tasks, who was responsible for these tasks as well as additional people that would help with it,

what support or resources (if any) they needed, and the time frame to accomplish the task or report back to the group. An example of this is seen in Figure 11.

Figure 11: Action Planning Spreadsheet Example

Objective	Expand Performances			
Project	Van Island Tour			
Task	Responsible	Support	Time	Required Resources
duncan folk fest	RS		ASAP	workshops: info
metchosin	JM		ASAP	
victoria	LK		ASAP	
Ganges farmers market	EG		ASAP	
ruckle park	RS		ASAP	
promotions	RS	EG	24-Apr	flyer April 25, posters mid-June
breakout group planning	RS		4-May	
bike built	LK		20-Jul	dimensions
holidays booked	all going on tour		ASAP	

We had booked an indoor dance studio with mirrors for two hours as the final component of our retreat, an opportunity we don't often have as generally we practice outside in public spaces. This booking meant we had a firm end time for the talking session, and we barely finished the action planning exercise before we had to gather up and ride to the studio. We didn't have time to do the creative closing activity we had planned, but my sense was that people were mentally exhausted from all the logistics we'd just gone through, and it was okay to skip this part in order to get the group moving our bodies and having fun in the studio. After two hours of dancing, I think many of us had physical exhaustion to match

our mental states. Compared to the mellower pace of the second retreat, this one had been a whirlwind. Perhaps too much had been packed into insufficient time.

Personal Reflection

I'm feeling better about the project right now. After today's workshop, I think people have a lot better sense of where we are going with this process, and we got a lot of work done. Though like always, we ran short on time and didn't get quite as far as we'd hoped. But the balance feels better right now—I always am afraid of either overloading the group with too much “background,” or leaving them in the dark which would compromise the whole participatory aspect of this. Also, of being too “professional.”

Our group is not mainstream, although when we take stock of all our skills and roles, we are, overall, a highly-educated and professional group. But I think one of the big appeals of what we are doing is that it takes many of us outside our day-to-day roles: it lets us play, challenge ourselves and others, be political or silly, depending on our moods. And so I am reluctant to introduce or present this project in a traditional or mainstream way. This group is unique, we value DIY, and we don't do things “by the book.” Yes, I am looking at an established 10-Step Strategic Planning model, one with a documented and prescribed process to follow. But while I want this template to inform us and support our process, I don't want our “round” group to try and force ourselves into a “square” process.

Today's workshop was as close to this happening as I want to get...after looking through all the information and exercises we've done so far, I used the 10-Step model to identify what gaps we have and where we need to spend a little more time. This gave the workshop today a more institutional feel than the previous two, slightly less organic and instead more focused. But I think it worked—we were at a place with our planning where we were ready to enter into a more organized structure, to use spreadsheets and think of details. And some of the feedback, particularly when [a member of the group] brought up her discomfort with some of the language that I'd used in the presentation and her fears of this being too corporate, make me believe even more strongly that this is a group that wouldn't allow anything to happen that we are not comfortable with, be that substantive or process-oriented. If things don't jibe with the B:C:Clettes goals and identity, these opinions are voiced clearly. This makes me feel more confident that when I don't hear criticisms, it is because we are in agreement and not that people are silencing their doubts. I know that some members are more open with their views than others, but I also sense that if there were major problems these would make themselves heard one way or another.

v. Next Steps

While I am satisfied with the results of our strategic planning project to date, the process isn't over. Like most things, our group will change. The vision, goals and even the way we operate will likely shift as time passes and new experiences bring new perspectives. The first three retreats are officially complete, but there is a need to continually re-adjust and monitor our status. As a group, we need to set up a mechanism for revising our strategic plan. Currently, we are discussing having semi-annual retreats to keep our momentum going, and in the meantime having regular check-ins once a month where we can discuss our status and make changes to our action plan.

It will also be valuable to check in with the group about some of the reflections and comments that were written during this process. Some issues, such as communication and clearing space, likely need revisiting. Although we theoretically have a system in place to assist us with communication, in practice often this doesn't get played out, and some voices continue to be talked over. It may be a matter of periodically reminding ourselves of our 'policies,' of discussing them again as a group to ensure that our theory and practice are aligned.

Reflection

Maybe there could have been some way to 'democratize' the process of the action planning a bit more i.e. when we were assigning the 'priorities', it was often the same people who named the priorities for each one...which means that sometimes the things which were most important to some people may fall off the map i.e. for me, the most important action item listed on that sheet at the moment was [particular objective]...which we listed as 'important and urgent', but then the

action fell off the spreadsheet of action items... anyways, maybe it would have been good to open up the session with a little go-around about what we were really wanting from our involvement with the 'clettes at the moment. Because I know some people (like me!) are not going to speak up unless that space is created.

(Anonymous, 2008)

A strategy for sharing the experiences of our planning process might also be a useful next step. As a group, we can discuss what this may look like, but some ideas include a downloadable file on the B:C:Clettes website, an article in *Momentum* magazine or other bike culture publications, DIY zines with graphics that can be distributed at shows, lectures and workshops. By making this information available, we can assist other groups that wish to participate in their own planning sessions.

4. REFLECTIONS

At every retreat, we spent some time generating ideas for our future goals. And at each retreat, the level of responsibility and delegation increased: from the first retreat with its open-ended, large group brainstorm - no names attached to follow up with the ideas - to the final retreat with its organized action plan that listed names, dates, and requirements. One month later, some of the action items remain untouched. However, others are moving along. If we were to have followed the UN-Habitat's 10 Step Process more carefully, would we have gotten more of our action items accomplished? Would we have a clearer and more concise "Strategic Plan"? It's possible. But more than just the final output, I think it was the process that was important to our group. We did things in a way that felt comfortable to us, tackling steps of strategic planning when they made the most sense for us and diverting from a prescribed process when we needed to explore things that were important to the group.

The main objective of this project was to demonstrate how strategic planning can build both internal and external capacity within bike culture, using the experience of the B:C:Clettes as an example. In addition, I wanted to look at how bike culture – particularly, involvement with the B:C:Clettes – can empower individuals and build a sense of community. Upon reflecting on the process, I think the project met both these goals. As the B:C:Clettes progressed through the three strategic planning retreats, our ability to function as an organization expanded, demonstrating enhanced internal capacity. In addition, the projects and

involvement with the surrounding community have become clearer in scope, and more targeted as well as farther-reaching; this is an example of our enhanced external capacity.

I also believe that as individuals and as a collective, we all grew from this process. Spending time considering and discussing our vision and intention, how we operate, what is important and what our goals are: all of these contributed to feelings of empowerment, success and shared values.

Reflection

The B:C:Clettes, reflections, reactions, directions.

Unity, Community, Creativity. Home → Om, the universal sound.

We are trying to find ourselves amidst the chaos, the confusion, the white noise inside. Om reverberates through body + soul, searching for connection.

Connection to *life*
 love
 acceptance
 laughter

Connection to fire – to the power of the peaceful. The power to change, to learn, to teach, to create. The power to be different, to dance to a different cadence.
To be BRAVE.

“There is more in us than we know. If we can be made to see if, perhaps for the rest of our lives we will be unwilling to settle for less.” – Kurt Huhn

The B:C:Clettes liberate perspectives
And Strengthen Communities

Cycling, Bicycling, Cycling, Bicycling
Home.

(Melissa, 2008).

As both researcher and participant, I made my fair share of assumptions, and no doubt continue to make them. Occasionally, the Action Research methodology that encouraged participants to write reflections on the process caught me out in these assumptions; upon reading the reflections of others, I was sometimes surprised to see a viewpoint or emotion that I hadn't known was present. I learned from these, and I hope others did as well. With this project, I tried to encourage a participatory planning approach, making the process as inclusive of all the members of the collective as possible. Sometimes this worked better than at other times.

Reflection

I guess from my viewpoint, some parts of the process seemed a bit truncated, like maybe we were skipping some really important parts. i.e. in your introduction power point, you mentioned the mission statement, and said that you would argue that our mission statement would be the Clette-a-festo...which is totally a fair assumption probably (especially given the fact that in the previous sessions you guys had discussed your 'visions'), and also in keeping with realistic time constraints (i.e. it seemed like it was kind of pulling teeth just to get people to allocate a few hours to the action planning session – I doubt people would've been into a day-long session to talk about mission statements). At the same time though, that struck me as one instance where really, if we were going to do this, and do it completely, then we'd need to allocate a lot more time to it and work through those things together.

(Anonymous, 2008)

Occasionally, the 'happy & wonderful' group vibe that we may have thought we all possessed had some holes exposed in it. We tend to operate in this 'everyone is rad, we are rad, everything is beautiful and great' mindset. And it is true! But I think if we are honest every one of us can also think of times, incidences, or feelings where things weren't that smooth. Some things that have arisen during

the planning process may be beneficially addressed as a group; others may be brought up more appropriately one-on-one or left as personal reflections that stand on their own without the need for further discussion. I think we can learn from these, even if it is just self-learning. Genuine reflecting is very valuable to get people's honest thoughts and impressions, even if it's not always what we want to hear.

Personal Reflection

Bike culture is so much a part of my identity. In this community are my closest friends, my social life, and my support network for those days when it is cold and raining and I dread getting on my bike. For me, it is a wonderful thing, empowering and supportive. But sometimes I question how other people feel about this "sub-culture." Is it seen as being elite and exclusive, open only to those who pass the unspoken test of being dedicated bikers, or cool enough to be invited to parties or rides? I look around me at the events and gatherings, and I see homogeneity.

I want to believe that bike culture supports women, encourages our presence and our actions. But sometimes I wonder if it instead objectifies us (if we are straight) or ignores us (if we are not); if, despite its self-identity of being counter-culture and subversive, it perpetuates the same mainstream stereotypes of youth, beauty, race and sexual orientations. Is this community homogeneous because others aren't interested in belonging, or because they don't feel welcome? I fear it's the latter.

5. CONCLUSION

Leonie Sandercock (2003) writes about the power of storytelling and creativity in public. “Organizations like WSI and PDS, [two community-based activist performance groups] working in and with residents and planners, have the capacity to build community, to cross cultures, to confront fears and nurture hopes, and to transform public spaces through their magic and mystery, their intuitive and visceral methods, their ‘celebratory excesses’ and ‘radical criticism’” (Sandercock, 2003, p.220). The B:C:Clettes, using their own variety of creative activism, perform a similar function.

The experience of strategic planning has helped clarify the B:C:Clette’s purpose and its working model, and has allowed the group to move forward confidently. This growth can reflect back on the community; by hearing about this process, other groups may see the benefits of undertaking a similar strategic planning exercise, and thus increase their own capacity. In order to encourage this sharing, it will be useful to have a summary of this project more widely available than simply as an academic write-up stored in the university library.

It is my wish that through this research project, bike culture in Vancouver becomes even more visible, celebratory, and supportive. By expanding the capacity of a prominent group within Vancouver’s bike culture – the B:C:Clettes – encouragement, support and inspiration may be shared. As a group, the B:C:Clettes reach many people, be it during performances, at workshops, or in

one-on-one networking. These points of contact will increase the visibility of bike culture both within and outside the community. Red, black & shiny—let's get more energy and excitement on our bikes, in our streets, and in our hearts.



(Photo: P. Bogaert, 2007)

APPENDIX 1: B:C:Clettes Policy Manual



This guide to being a B:C:Clette emerged from two years as an evolving group, and a workshop session in October 2007. The following guidelines are meant to improve group dynamics by solidifying responsibilities that members have towards the group.

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Purpose

The purpose of the B:C:Clettes is ever-evolving and not at this point defined indefinitely. We do know we want to dance, have fun, support our bicycle communities, support each other, and bring the best parts of bicycle culture to new audiences.

Communication

The B:C:Clettes are asked to balance their needs as individuals with the needs of the collective. Some of the tools that will facilitate communication to this end are:

- sharing the airspace;
- listening from the heart;
- and speaking from the heart. (Ex., Using "I" statements to express an objection rather than relaying a direct criticism or criticism of "you.")

Tools

Some of the tools the Clettes identified for listening to each other are:

- heart circles (could or should happen once a month);
- opening and closing circles or check-ins;
- and small group breakouts after practice.

Inter-Clette feedback

We are so lucky to have the opportunity to know each other well and work together closely. These conditions are optimal for personal feedback and growth.

All individual feedback should be delivered personally, not via group emails, not in front of other group members, and not on behalf of other people.

We need to be aware that people have different levels of comfort within the group and with receiving feedback.

When conflict attacks

We are a diverse group, differing opinions are necessary for growth. Making the group work effectively requires give and take from each of us. When individuals feel too many of their personal needs are being folded-in, we need to acknowledge that as a group.

When conflict happens and we are all together, we need to acknowledge that it is happening. As a group, we can either give the individuals directly involved a chance to work through it right then, or we can ask for everyone to take a breather with the intent of dealing with the conflict after practice.

If a Clette feels conflict and approaches one of us, we can become that Clette's liaison to the group. Take time to ask that Clette what you can do, if anything, or if what that Clette is telling you is confidential.

Conflict between individuals can be resolved with small conversations, but even conflict between a few people can impact the entire group.

Email Communication

General Guidelines

- Email is not an effective way to communicate last minute changes to the group.
- Group email is not the forum for sending directed feedback meant for one individual.
- Emails communicating changes to locations/practice times need to be sent out 48 hours prior to the event happening.
- Specific topics should have their own emails, so that Clettes may better sift through them.
- Please keep emails brief and list-like where possible.
- Include a deadline for response.

Directions

Emails will be sent from group members to the google groups email address in order to communicate minutes, to issue invites to Clettes to an event, to communicate decisions that have been MADE or are CONFIRMED, or when a DECISION IS NEEDED.

Subject headings will be labeled appropriately, and the default via the mail server is [bcclettes]. For example, a subject heading will be:

[bcclettes] Invite: Come to my birthday!
[bcclettes] Minutes from Oct. 19 practice (no action required)
[bcclettes] Minutes from Oct. 25 practice (PLEASE RESPOND)
[bcclettes] URGENT DECISION: Work Less Party Nov. 11 show
[bcclettes] DECISION MADE: Spending \$500 on a soundsystem
[bcclettes] CONFIRMED: We will buy the \$500 BoomboxXTacular!
[bcclettes] BLOCKED: Work Less Party show (too last minute)

Please Note: When replying to an email, where possible reply only to the original sender so they can gather responses, unless you feel it is a group discussion or you need to share your thoughts, comments, or ideas with the group.

Decision Making

Definition of “consensus”

One-hundred per cent consensus is defined as that all present are in general agreement for an initiative; and those dissenting agree they “can live with it” (or, don’t feel the need to block the decision).

One-hundred per cent consensus on a decision can only occur when SIX (6) or more Clettes are present at a meeting.

When consensus is required

One-hundred per cent consensus is required for decisions

- of a major financial investment (dollar value TBD) or change to financial policy;
- about sponsorship or public associations or public performances where another group is involved in a collaboration piece with the Clettes;
- requiring major changes to policy or manifesto;
- about which performance invitations we would like to accept
(**Note:** Even with a group ‘ok,’ actual confirmation and commitment from FIVE (5) or more Clettes who are willing and able to attend that performance is required before an invitation is accepted. Four is too few Clettes for *most* performances.);
- involving final song approval (Clettes are encouraged to prepare numbers and choose music to present to the group on their own,

but the group must decide in the end if the song or concept somehow contravenes or does not improve upon the Clette vision and mission);

- and in setting practice times. (Unfortunately, not everyone's schedules can be accommodated at all times, and some Clettes may have to sacrifice a degree of participation for a period of time in order to allow the group to go forward.)

Following 100 per cent consensus reached at a meeting, the decision is considered **made**.

However, the lead on that decision must then still seek confirmation from the other active Clettes (those who self-define as "active" and that the group can easily agree have a vested interest in the group) that they do not need to block that decision.

These absentee Clettes need to remember their responsibility to the other Clettes who have already made the decision at a regular practice or meeting. Absentee Clettes ought not to unnecessarily delay action because they feel the decision made was merely *not the best solution*. At the same time, Clettes also do not need to feel pressured into OK-ing a decision that may later hinder their full participation and inclusion as a Clette.

Once confirmation (i.e. no vetoes or "blocks") is achieved, the decision is considered **confirmed**.

Exceptions to consensus

Small purchases, small socials (e.g. inviting Clettes to birthdays or rides), sub-committee decisions or meetings (e.g. swag nights, song workshopping, informal skills shares, or rehearsing) can be arranged and decided on independently. Most Clette-oriented activities will be open invitation.

Membership

Active Clettes

An active Clette is mostly self-defined (within reason). An active Clette is likely in regular contact with some or all of the group, has not opted out of receiving communications from the group, and is not on an temporary or extended leave from group activities.

All reasonable efforts must be made to secure an active Clette's confirmation of a decision that requires full consensus.

Group size

In order to balance creative input with group cohesion and decision-making ability, the Clettes have proposed to set a tentative maximum group size of 14. This is a goal, rather than a strict regulation, and has been the historic (2 year) maximum number of participating and performing Clettes at any one time.

Trial member policy

When the Clettes collectively decide that there is a need for new members, any people that express interest and want to join go through a trial period. This trial period is so that both the trial members and the Clettes can get to know each other and see if there is a good fit. During this trial period the default assumption is that trial members are going to become full members.

The trial period will last for 8 practices, which is approximately 2 months. During the trial period check-ins are encouraged so that trial members and Clettes can raise issues/concerns/questions along the way. The trial period will end with a Clette meeting. This meeting should take place on the 8th practice late (after trial members leave) or on the 9th practice before trial members arrive. Full consensus is needed for the trial members to become full members.

Trial members can:

- Participate in practices.
- Learn new dances.
- Be added to the listserv.
- Take their own initiative to learn old dances.
- Represent us in Red, Black and Shiny.
- Come on trips (eg. Portland).
- Participate in decision making but are not allowed to block a decision during the trial period.
- Participate in performances in skits or helping, but not dancing during trial period.

Performance Participation Policy

Blocking practice

In order to be included in any particular Clettes performance, you must attend the blocking practice, where the set list is finalized along with roles and physical placements.

There are no exceptions.

If a Clette strongly feels the need to be included in a performance but can not make the blocking practice due to work or family demands, that Clette may coordinate with the other Clettes who are scheduled to perform to find a better time for blocking practice. There is no guarantee that the practice can be moved or that the Clette needing the practice moved can be accommodated.

Pre-show run-through

Before a show, there will usually be a run-through on site. All performing Clettes must be there in order to make the run-through useful and confidence-boosting for the group.

If a Clette can not make the run-through — for example, the Clette gets off work too late and has communicated this to the performing group beforehand — it is not a deal-breaker; that Clette can still be included in the performance.

If a Clette is MIA during the run through and no one has heard from her, it is possible and likely that the songs will be re-blocked during that run-through and that Clette may not get to perform as a result. Communication is key.

Practices

Conduct

Your conduct and attitude towards practices is a primary means for you to demonstrate your respect for the other Clettes.

Practice time should be thought of no differently than a sit-down meeting around a table, where everyone's presence and commitment is necessary and appreciated. Okay, practices will be more fun than the average meeting. Still, you are expected to be conscious that:

- Practices will start on time, and will be advertised as starting 10 minutes earlier.

- Cell phones should be turned off during practice.
- Each Clette should allow the practice's facilitator to facilitate.
- Each Clette should be conscious of her practice of listening.
- Each Clette should be prepared at each practice, with materials she is ready to bring forward, relevant agenda items that are delivered beforehand to the facilitator, and a willingness to give full attention to the other Clettes.

Practices ought to begin with something physical and fun right: for example, memory dance chain. If the facilitator is late, the on-time Clettes should take initiative to begin on their own.

Facilitator's role

Each practice will be run by a facilitator.

Facilitators are on a rotating schedule (which has been distributed via email), and each member of the Clettes is responsible for knowing when to facilitate.

The facilitator has several tasks to do before and after practice, and a number of purposes to fulfill during a practice.

The facilitator is expected to:

- Collect agenda items for discussion and for practice (e.g. new songs, skill-share, re-choreographing, re-learning or re-blocking a number)
- Send out via email an agenda for practice and a reminder of the practice time and location **two** (2) days beforehand.
- Begin practice **on time**, with a warm-up physical or creative activity.
- Keep time throughout practice, to make sure the practice's goals are met or attended to, and keep the Clettes on task to ensure practice can end easily on time.
- Open the agenda for additions at the beginning of each talking session.
- During the practice's discussion time, keep the discussion to agenda items.
- Keep a "bike rack" list for other ideas that come up during the discussion that fall outside its scope.
- Take minutes, or find a volunteer to take minutes.
- Email out the practice's minutes (what was discussed, accomplished, decided on, left on the agenda) in a timely manner afterwards.

- If necessary, and where possible, stop practice to acknowledge conflicts that are slowing practice, creating group frustration, or causing potential personal rifts; suggest cool-down time or activity (e.g. ride bikes around the block) and moderate discussions that need to be had, when possible and if time permits: some discussions may have to be put off, and yet the conflict still needs to be acknowledged.

The facilitator is not meant to take charge of every activity during practice — for example teaching a new song's dance moves to the group — but will delegate authority to another Clette where appropriate throughout practice.

Document history

V1.0: March 1, 2008

Changes: Added trial member policy (4.3)

Draft B:C:Clette manual, created October 24, 2007.





B:C:Clettes

Strategic RAD Plan (draft)

This Plan arose from 3 retreats we held between October 2007 & April 2008. Its purpose is to enable the B:C:Clettes to take our current radness and expand it exponentially.

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1. WHERE ARE WE AT?

In order to get a sense of where we can go, it's nice to know where we are at. The following sections help place us in our current reality. Like most things about the 'clettes, this information is liable to change as we grow and transform.

1.1 LIBRARY OF STRENGTHS

The B:C:Clettes are a talented bunch of ladies. It's useful to know where these strengths lie, so we know what we have to draw on in order to reach our goals. While this is by no means an exhaustive list, this is a start to what we've got in our bag of tricks.

(Alphabetized List of Strengths)

Skill	Specialty	Go-to Individual(s)
Communication	Interpersonal	Leanne
Computer	AutoCad	Lori
Computer	InDesign	Keltie, Erin
Computer	File Transfer/File Types	Rhiannon
Computer	Microsoft Office	Lori, Red, Erin, Keltie, Jen
Computer	Photoshop	Lori, Erin, Rhiannon
Computer	Web/HTML	Red, Erin, Rhiannon
Cooking	Vegan/Gluten Free	Melissa, Leanne, Nina
DIY	Bike Jewelry	Jen
DIY	Silkscreen	Red, Erin
DIY	Soldering	Rhiannon
DIY	Gardening	Keltie, Jen, Red, Erin
DIY	Flat Tire Change	ALL
DIY	Bike Mechanics	Leanne, Red
DIY	Bike Touring While Amazing	ALL
DIY	Welding	Red, Cara
DIY	Painting, Sign-making	Red
DIY	Costumes	Polly, Erin
Facilitation	Dialogue Program	Rhiannon
Facilitation	General	Jeanie
Facilitation	Group Development	Red
Language	German	Lori
Language	French	Rhiannon, Melissa, Jen, Leanne, Jeanie
Mapping	Map Making/Interpreting	Jen, Red
Music	Ipod	Jen
Performance	Acrobalance	Cara
Performance	Backstage	Rhiannon
Performance	Cheerleading	Nix
Performance	Clowning	Nix, Nina
Performance	Swing Dance	Nina, Rhiannon
Performance	Tap Dance	Nix

Performance	Stomp Dance	Nix, Jeanie
Performance	Clogging Dance	Lori
Performance	Fire Dance	Polly
Performance	Breakdance	Cara, Nix, Melissa
Performance	Directing	Rhiannon
Performance	Drag	Leanne, Nina, Red
Performance	Gymnastics	Nina, Erin, Nix
Performance	Hula Hoop	Lori
Performance	Improv/Theatre	Rhiannon, Nina
Performance	Juggling	Keltie, Erin
Performance	Polo	Polly, Cara
Performance	Singing	Polly, Rhiannon, Nina, Erin
Performance	Stunting	Cara, Rhiannon
Performance	Trackstand	Cara, Leanne, Red
Organization	Delegating and Planning	Keltie, Red, Jen
Organization	Small Details	Nina
Teaching	Lesson Planning	Jeanie, Polly
Workshops	Youth	Leanne, Jeanie
Writing	Grant/Report	Cara, Jen, Keltie
Writing	Creative, Journalism	Rhiannon

1.2 LIBRARY OF RESOURCES

Similar to the Library of Strengths, these Resources are listed so we know what we have to work with. There's probably more...an ever-expanding list!

(Alphabetized List of Resources)

Resource	Details	Go-to Individual(s)
DIY	Art Supplies	Erin, Nina
DIY	Cargo Bikes/Trailers	Erin, Red, Keltie
DIY	Computer/Scanner	Nina, Erin, Keltie
DIY	Free-ish Photocopies	Jen, Jeanie
DIY	Studio for Swag-Making	Erin
DIY	Video Camera	Nina, Jeanie
DIY	Welding Equipment	Red
Facilities	UBC	Jen
Funding	UBC	Jen, Keltie
Performance	Bike Props	Leanne
Performance	Book Box	Lori
Performance	Freak Bikes	Keltie, Red, Cara, Lori Melissa, Erin, Leanne,
Performance	Mini Bikes	Rhiannon
Performance	Pedal-Powered	
Performance	Sound	Leanne
Performance	Unicycle	Lori, Nina
Practice Space	Schools, Organizations	Cara, Leanne, Nina, Polly

Touring/Travel Transport Workshop Audience	MEC Rental Car (Possible)	Nina Jen, Lori Jeanie, Nina
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1.3 FINANCIAL MANIFESTO

Once we've got this thing written, it will help guide us in how we get money and spend money, as well as help decide what events we would like to give our support to. As it stands, we have a loose policy of "Ability to Pay": if we like what a group or event is doing and think it fits with our goals and intentions, if they can't afford an honorarium or payment for us we will happily perform for smiles. If a group wants to show their support for the work we do by donating some money for a performance, we are happy to accept.

2. WHERE DO WE WANT TO GO?

This next section describes our visions for who we are and our goals for the future. As a creative bunch of ladies, there are a lot of these, and they don't all necessarily coincide. While our group may not have just one specific, agreed on vision, most of our members see the value in working towards these ideas even if they may not identify each as their main reason for involvement with the 'clettes. It may be that our 'Clette-a-festo' best describes our vision and intention; other ideas also expand this.

2.1 VISIONS

The Clette-a-festo

The **B:C:Clettes** are a **B**ikers **C**ollective, **C**reating Love, **E**quality, and **T**oughness **T**hrough **E**ngaging **S**pectacle!

We will not be defined by words alone; instead you will find us perpetually in motion, taking back the streets for revolutionary use as bicycle ways and dance floors. We're revolutionary, yes, like our wheels. Hot, tough, and shiny — like the sexy steeds we tame and ride.

Pedal, pump, coast and fly: we ride in all weather. Swing, shimmy, strut, and jive: we dance in all weather. We weather all storms as a collective, together.

We are artists, mechanics, scientists, students, designers, teachers, and writers, and baristas; jokers, inventors, leaders, neighbours, family, friends, and lovers, and sistas.

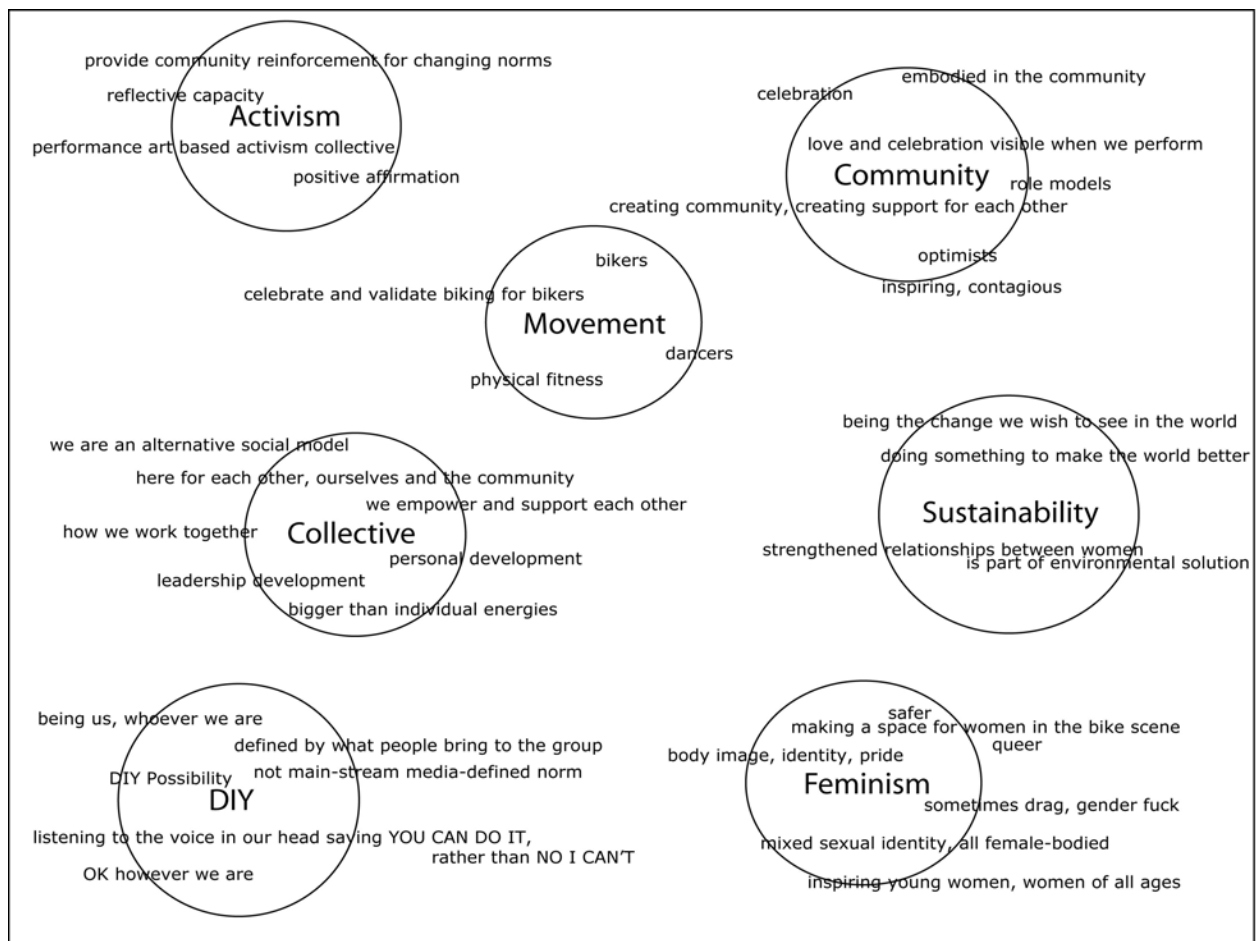
This is a lifestyle of agility, sustainability, of respecting all ability. Our bodies don't end where our bikes begin. We're beauty, we're pride; we dance hard, roll fast, and tread lightly, loving life.

We take risks; we're a little different. We are a spectacle, a show, a delight.

We are that giddy feeling you get riding pedal-powered for the first time: Exhilarated with newfound fun, you can't wait to share your amazing secret with the world. We want to ride and dance and share our secret with you.

And one last thing: we won't *technically* be able to be part of your dance-dance-party revolution, if there's no bike parking available. So get on it!

Visionary Themes for the B:C:Clettes



2.2 OBJECTIVES AND PROJECTS

At one of our retreats, we set about brainstorming all the rad stuff we'd like to do. Some of these are projects we are already involved in; others we might not get to for awhile. Some things will be more for our own internal development and others will have more of an external focus. All of these will add to the exponential greatness and spectacularity of the world.

OBJECTIVE	Increase Internal Development
Projects	Bike Repair Workshop Conflict Resolution Workshop Facilitation Workshop "Professional Development" Fund Mountain Bike Lesson
OBJECTIVE	Create Opportunities for Community Building
Projects	Open Practices Film Night Collaborations (non-dance) Networking with non-bike entities (arts, DIY, etc) Workshops: TCC, Urban Transportation Expand Youth Engagement, Women, Senior
OBJECTIVE	Build Multimedia/Promo Components
Projects	JT/Helmet Safety Video Tour Video Swag and Buttons and Trading Card Zines (consensus, collective, DIY, etc) Sound slideshow Website Public Relations System (incl. mailing list)
OBJECTIVE	Enhance Organizational Development
Projects	Financial Manifesto Indoor Practice Space--once/month? Stereo Grants/Funding R & D: surveys, evaluations Non-profit status? Dances on video for learning, polishing Teach old songs to new members "Logistics" meeting--once/month? Policy Manual updates
OBJECTIVE	Expand Performances
Projects	Van Isl Tour European Tour B:C:Clettes Production Other local tour Car Free event

OBJECTIVE	Continue Dance/Skit Development
Projects	Fantastique Abdominal Clette-a-festo Bike Riding (Ping Island) MC Hammer Swing dance Skits Rechoreography Props/Costume extras Lifts/Acrobatix Collaborations (brakes, vixens, etc)

3. HOW DO WE GET THERE?

It's great to have goals and ideas. But sometimes, it's difficult to actually achieve these things. This is where the next section comes in handy: by prioritizing our objectives, we can focus our energy on projects that need the attention. We can also keep track of the importance and urgency of the other ideas we might not currently be focusing on.

3.1 PRIORITY PROJECTS

We used a process of assigning projects a category of "Important" or "Not As Important", and of being "Urgent" or "Not As Urgent." These designations can help us place our projects according to when we need to get to them.

	URGENT	NOT AS URGENT
IMPORTANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local Tour • PR – systemize • Media/Promo • Swag/Patches/Buttons • Soundslide • Website • Stereo • Women/Clettes Production • Pro-D Funs • Tour Video • JT Video • Teach Old Songs • Car Free Day Vancouver • Non-Bike Networking/Events • Financial Manifesto • Workshops: TCC, • Young Women Workshop • Dancing – Abdominal; Fantastique; Bike Riding; Clette-a-Festo 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth/Women Outreach • Video of Dances • File Transfer • Zines • Conflict Resolution Workshop • Facilitation Workshop • Open Practices • Collaborations • Policy Manual Updates • Regional Shows • Film Night
NOT AS IMPORTANT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indoor Space Discussion + Action • Funding/Grants • Dancing – MC Hammer, Swing, Skits 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike Repair • Lifts/Acrobatics • Euro Tour • Re-choreography • Props • Logistics Meeting • Surveys and Evaluations • Mountain Bike Lesson

3.2 ACTION PLAN

The following Action Plan lays out who is taking the lead on specific tasks, what support they need (people and resources), what the timeframe for completion or report back is, and allows for current status to be added in. These Action Plans can be created periodically to help us along our path to rad.

B:C:Clettes Plan of Action: April 2008

Objective Project	Continue Dance/Skit Development Abdominal				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
New parts	Melissa	Cara, Leanne	Before May		

Objective Project	Continue Dance/Skit Development Fantastique				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Teach to all Song edit	Melissa Rhiannon	Melissa	Before May 24-Apr	Everyone	

Objective Project	Continue Dance/Skit Development Ping Island (biking)				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Teach to all	Lori	Cara? Red?	10-Apr	Everyone	

Objective Project	Continue Dance/Skit Development Clette-a-festo				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Teach to all Create modified version	Red Red		6-Apr 10-Apr	Everyone	

Objective Project	Enhance Organizational Development Stereo				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Source music stores DIY system	Jeanie Red	Jen, Rhiannon	ASAP Ongoing	Choose a time to go source Speakers	

Objective Project	Build Multimedia/Promo Components PR Strategy				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Revamp Myspace Get friends on mailing list Send out mailing list Website improvements Update media kit Archives update	Leanne All All Rhiannon Keltie Jeanie	Lori Erin, Red Red, Erin Erin	End of April Not urgent ASAP ASAP End of April	Send web, email	

Objective Project	Expand Performances Vancouver Island Tour				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Duncan folk fest Metchosin Victoria Ganges market Ruckle Park Promotions Breakout group planning Bike built Holidays booked	Red Jeanie Leanne Erin Red Red Red Leanne All going on tour	Erin	ASAP ASAP ASAP ASAP ASAP 24-Apr 4-May 20-Jul ASAP	More info re: workshops April 25;June Dimensions	

Objective Project	Create Opportunities for Community Building Workshop Development				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Develop	Jeanie	Leanne, Keltie, Melissa	Early May		

Objective Project	Enhance Organizational Development Financial Manifesto				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Develop working group Outline ready Pro-D	Jeanie Jeanie Jeanie	Jen, Leanne, Nix Keltie	End of May Mid-May		

Objective Project	Build Multimedia/Promo Components JT video				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Feedback	Rhiannon	Keltie, Red	12-Apr		

Objective Project	Build Multimedia/Promo Components Swag/button/patches				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Work group	Erin	Polly, Melissa, Nina	Late April		

Objective Project	Build Multimedia/Promo Components Sound slide				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Organize sound slide	Rhiannon	Jen		Tour pics needed	

Objective Project	Build Multimedia/Promo Components Tour Video				
Task	Responsibility	Support	Time	Resources	Status
Making it	Rhiannon				

4. HAVE WE ARRIVED?

How will we know if we've reached our goals, and if we are following our visions and intentions that we set for ourselves? How will we continue to move forward? These kinds of questions form the basis for monitoring and evaluating how we are doing.

4.1 CHECKING BACK

The first three strategic planning retreats gathered a lot of information, resources and plans together. But unless we turn words into action, even the raddest strategic plan in the world is useless. It is important that we periodically, even perhaps frequently, revisit our plan. We can check in on the status of our action items, and add new ones. We may want to revisit our visions in the future to see if the group still feels the same way. Perhaps new projects have come up, and they can be added to our Objectives list. Re-examining our priorities could mean we see a need to create new action plans for the projects that were previously on the back-burner.

As a group, we may want to consider having semi-annual retreats to build and grow on the work we have already done in our first three sessions. A guideline on when and how often planning retreats should occur might fit into our Policy Manual.

In the meantime, using some of our practice time to have quick check-ins will continue to help us move along on our path to rad.

5. DOCUMENT HISTORY

Draft B: C:Clettes Strategic Rad Plan, created May 8, 2008.



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