

Borrowed tools Andrew Milner

It's noticeable that when people in non-producing jobs (in the strict sense) talk about what they do they often use the language of the manufacturer or the artisan. There are toolkits and toolboxes for everyone from grantmakers and policymakers to community organizations, mechanisms for implementing this or that initiative, workshops for debating this or that question, and hands-on experience. Why do we resort to these metaphors of the concrete? Lack of invention? Possibly, but I believe there are other reasons, too.

First, somewhere at the back of our minds, we suffer from the anxiety that we don't actually *make* anything or have anything palpable to show for our efforts and we need these things to justify what we do, to ourselves and to others. People who work in development appear particularly prone to this, perhaps because, in an area where need is so great and so clear, it seems almost criminally frivolous not to have something equally apparent to set against it.

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So we have appropriated the idiom of the artisan. After all, objects of sense perception are much easier to conceive and to describe than abstractions. Secondly, I believe there is an element of memory, perhaps even of nostalgia, at work. Even in a supposedly post-industrial age, the prevailing imagery of work and utility in Western societies (who have bequeathed this legacy to others) is still that of commerce and industry – a society's success and wealth are measured in terms of production: steel, ships, electrical goods, machine tools. Many of us will be first-generation 'non-producers', and our parents and grandparents will have used the words 'tool' and 'toolbox' literally, not figuratively.

So what next? The metaphors of the computer age already coexist with the largely outdated ones of

a manufacturing economy. The application of the terms 'end-user' and 'user-friendly' is already much wider than their original usage. We can talk about our own programming (evolutionary psychologists are much given to doing so) and we have sound-bytes. Maybe over the next generation or two, the metaphors of the information age will become dominant and we will describe ourselves, our relation to the world and to others, through the imagery of a phase of the electronic communications revolution which will already be obsolete. Maybe the metaphorical way in which we now use the word 'tool' will be its principal usage, and those objects that you use manually to perform a specific task will have come to seem impossibly exotic.

European Venture Philanthropy Association launched

Officially launched in Berlin at the European Venture Capitalist Association conference on 3 June, the European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) is the brainchild of founders Michiel de Haan, Luciano Balbo, Stephen Dawson, Serge Raicher and Doug Miller. These private equity practitioners are each involved with a different European venture philanthropy fund, and united in their resolve to promote the application of venture philanthropy methodologies in the charitable and non-profit sectors.

The European Venture Philanthropy Association (EVPA) is a membership association designed to support its members in their philanthropic activities and to promote the expansion of venture philanthropy and social enterprise in Europe while fostering cooperation with the venture philanthropy community in the US. UK charity registration is expected shortly, at which time EVPA will be ready to accept its first membership applications.

Founding sponsorship has been secured from Barclays Private Equity (www.barclays-private-equity.co.uk) and 3i (www.3i.com), two of the leading pan-European private equity

groups. Additional five-year funding commitments are being pursued from other sponsors, which may be private equity groups, banks, foundations or professional services firms.

To raise EVPA's profile, a group of around 20 individuals will set out to climb Mount Kilimanjaro on 29 January 2005. The purpose of the eight-day expedition is for each trekker to raise a minimum of €5,000 in support of the EVPA and various charities.

For more information on the trek and much else, please visit the EVPA website at www.evpa.eu.com or contact Chairman Doug Miller on info@evpa.eu.com

To join the trek or register as a sponsor, please contact Ian Simpson at ians@helix-associates.co.uk