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## **Imagination and regeneration: Cultural policy and the future of cities**

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# **Imagination and regeneration: Cultural policy and the future of cities**

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## **Setting the stage<sup>1</sup>**

'Imagination and regeneration' reviews how the debate on culture and cities has developed world-wide over the last decade. Largely this debate has been developed and driven by cities in Western Europe, Australasia, America and more recently Asia, but the perspectives generated and lessons learnt will inevitably over time impact on the cities of East Europe, Africa and South America.

Two forces have catalysed the debate. The first is urban competition as cities have recognized that their cultural distinctiveness is perhaps the unique asset they have to offer the external world. Distinctiveness creates positive images and in so doing makes cities more attractive for their residents, so enhancing their civic pride and in turn it leads to a drawing power that attracts visitors and potential investors or companies that might wish to re-locate. In the longer term this has economic impacts. A second factor in the emerging interest in the culture of cities is that culture defines identity, which in a world that is increasingly becoming homogenous helps generate confidence in what is unique or special about a place.

The policy note seeks to help readers identify and understand the cultural potential of their cities, then to exploit and maximize their cultural resources in order to manage and implement any resulting cultural strategy. A final section suggests how a city might think through a cultural policy.

The examples quoted inevitably reflect instances that I am familiar often quoting British cities. I hope the reader will recognize examples or applications from their own country.

'Imagination and regeneration' starts by looking at culture broadly and how a city's culture can positively affect its development; for example a city with a 'can do spirit' is more likely to achieve things than a city with a closed minded, bureaucratic culture; it then assesses how using the idea of cultural resources a city can unlock a mass of potential. In the second half of the paper it turns to a more conventional and narrower view of culture - the arts and how this can contribute to city development. It is important to start broadly given the confusion that often happens between arts policy and cultural policy. In the majority of European countries most ministries talk about cultural policies which are in fact arts policies, that is policies concerned with art forms like theatre and arts infrastructure like opera houses even though their ministries are called cultural ministries. Nevertheless the arts are a significant factor within a cultural policy.

A central theme running throughout is that culture and cultural knowledge lies at the heart of city development rather than it being a marginal add-on that is only addressed when all the supposedly important other things are dealt with. Yet in order to make the case for putting culture centre-stage it is vital to reposition,

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<sup>1</sup> This publication draws on my other writing including 'The Creative City: A toolkit for urban innovators' and 'Culture at the Crossroads: Culture and cultural institutions at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century'. Section 2 draws on the work of my colleague Franco Bianchini and section 3 on work undertaken in collaboration with my colleague Francois Matarasso.

and redefine how culture is interpreted and used in the city context as well as to provide evidence for its effectiveness. Cultural thinking needs to move away from an exclusive focus on art forms to an emphasis on culture as the lived experience or complex reality of a place. This has a significant implication in that ministries of culture or divisions in cities responsible for it should see themselves as ministries advocating *for* culture right across other ministries and departments rather than being *the* ministry or department of culture.

Three key points run throughout this short book:

- Culture needs to be broadly conceived as a set of distinct and unique urban resources if cities are to maximize their potential. Some resources are physical such as the buildings and human intervention that shape the form and functions delivered by a city. Others are to do with soft infrastructure such as the values, networks, traditions and attitudes that make up an urban culture. Then the varied roles and regenerative power of culture in city revitalization become more apparent. Within this the artistic community can especially play a vital role.
- In so doing linkages and partnerships need to be made with departments, actors and agencies whose primary concern is not culture, but who will benefit by assessing their concerns from within a cultural framework of understanding. For example place marketing benefits by connecting with artistic thinking. In reverse too the overall urban culture is reshaped, enriched and developed by this interaction. Possibilities are enhanced when actors from within the arts, planning, economic development, social affairs, and environment collaborate in a spirit of partnership.
- Creativity lies at the core of the development of an urban culture. It is the mental attribute that can activate and enable people and projects to address urban issues in an imaginative way. Potentially this makes an urban culture dynamic and positively regenerative provided there is an ethical framework or set of principles to guide creative thinking, planning and acting. A focus on creativity will have an impact of a city's organizational culture.

Finally, the figure of the artist and the arts can be paramount in thinking through how our cities can develop as they lie at the core of how our cultures unfold. The arts can help us imagine, help us think, help us beautify and help us to be constructively critical. Their imagination combined with the creativity of others in non-artistic fields is what makes a city vibrant.

### **Questions**

Readers may find it useful to think through some questions in going through this policy note. These include:

- What are your main arts assets of your city; what are your main cultural assets? What is the difference between the two for you?
- What would be the elements of an arts policy you would highlight for your city and what different elements would be highlighted in a cultural policy? Would the resulting projects be different?
- How would you undertake an asset audit for your city, what is the process and who would you involve?
- What projects in your city act as a catalyst for development either to create jobs, wealth or tourism potential or alternatively that reinforce the

city's identity, civic pride and image as well as that provide personal confidence, empowerment or self-esteem?

- Is there instance of cross-departmental working in your city, for instance between those responsible for culture and urban planning, economic development, tourism, education, environmental services or social affairs.
- What cities in your country have a cultural policy and how do you assess its key features?
- Why might it be more effective to focus on the cultural policy for a city rather than a country? Would there be any differences between the focus for your city and any national cultural policy?
- What are the particular strategic dilemmas you would need to think about in developing a cultural strategy for your city? These might include: focusing on contemporary culture or heritage; the city centre or suburbs; elite and prestige project or smaller community development initiatives?
- Do you think your city has a culture of creativity? How would you describe the cultural attributes and attitudes of your city?
- What are the main obstacles in achieving objectives apart from the availability of financial resources?

## **1. The City, Culture and Creativity**

### **The city as a cultural artefact**

The city is the most all embracing, complex cultural artefact shaped and created by human endeavour. It represents the clearest physical and inter-actional embodiment of how a people have addressed the opportunities and functions of their place and in so doing have developed a set of values, attitudes and approaches to guide its development. How the city is shaped, what it feels like and how it projects itself is based on its local culture - the combination of shared values, shared ambition and shared vision based on common assumptions, norms and habits of mind - '*the way we do things around here*'. Each city has a culture responding to its local conditions as well as to its external environment. This culture is etched into the urban landscape, buildings – old and new -, the way the city is put together, its attitudes to public space, its social life, food, the products associated with it, the symbols and rituals of significance; its songs, dance, painting, writing and language; its attitudes to its past and the future, and even the way the city is managed and organized.

Cities are more important than ever, they are the central actors within nations and increasingly recognized as the engines of their national economy. The world of nations turns around their cities, however important the nation state or rural life may seem to be. The cities of Europe include 80% of inhabitants and cities are responsible for nearly 80% of wealth creation. Yet why have cities over the last 20 years regarded a focus on culture as the vital ingredient of their sustainability and revitalisation, their sense of themselves and even to their survival? Why has culture and creativity moved centre-stage in urban development?

### **The city, culture and global dynamics**

There is one immutable fact in the modern world - all places operate in an intensely competitive environment:

- competition to attract business;
- competition to access government and international resources;
- and competition to keep and attract talent and people.

In working in towns and cities as diverse as Johannesburg and Birmingham, Helsinki and Milan, Hong Kong and St. Petersburg our experience, drawn from working alongside civic, business and community leaders tells us that successfully competitive places do three main things:

- They take controlled, imaginative risks;
- They have strong but devolved and widespread leadership; and,
- They have a clear idea of where they are going.

In addition they have a confidence in their culture so are not frightened that change or external influences will weaken their local culture. They feel this strength will allow them to absorb what they consider to be the best from others thereby enriching their culture by adding new layers to their core identity. In so doing successful communities combine a shared recognition of opportunities and threats and nurture a tier of leaders at all levels by identifying the change makers and working with them. This leadership grouping drives the vision forward and inspires others to join in as it moves forward. Successful urban renewal builds wealth creation and social capital together based on recognition of their cultural assets. These assets can be anything from the spirit of local people to their talents reflected in the unique products, services and traditions a city offers. A strong economy needs a strong society and vice versa so balancing economic and social change is key. Crucially, successful 21<sup>st</sup> century cities are open-minded,

flexible and ambitious and they work in partnership harnessing their local talent with that of their region and beyond. In so doing they develop a culture of creativity, innovation, openness and 'can do' spirit.

Culture has become even more important given the world has changed dramatically so that often feels like a paradigm shift. These changes are happening at speed and simultaneously: From how the global economy works with IT to increased mobility and the rise of multi-cultural communities. Global products and brands and the impact of the global media at times make every place seem as if it is the same. Many fear we are beginning to live in a homogenous, mono-cultural world and as a counter-reaction people are arguing that the more global we become the more local we must be. In this process they are highlighting their local identity and culture and increasingly therefore issues of distinctiveness, difference and diversity are rising to the fore. Two things are happening simultaneously: A refocusing on roots and core urban identity, which can be threatened by a globalizing dynamic and a battle for global attention to attract visitors, investors and profile. The one is more inward looking, the other more outward-looking, but both focus on their distinctive culture as the key. How to manage to operate at these different levels with integrity requires cities to be both internationally oriented, but to respect the locally derived. This is the major task of urban cultural policy and is not an easy trick.

Implementing cultural policy at the city level remains far easier than on the national level. First, the geographic remit is smaller; second it is less complex for a city to develop a vision for itself given the number of key stakeholders involved is fewer; third many cities have more resources or access to them including those of the government; fourth the impact of initiatives are more visible in a city and so can inspire a virtuous cycle of cultural development; and finally there is proportionately a greater critical mass of cultural workers, ideas and connections in the city to make things happen.

The major European cities from Amsterdam to Barcelona are significant entities in their own countries and regional powerhouses with impact well beyond their country. The same is already happening in Eastern Europe with cities like Prague, Budapest or Cracow regaining their historic importance in a wider world. Many more cities, including those in places such as the Balkans or South Caucasus, are already etched into the world's imagination resonating images. Many of these images are good and some bad, which if projected at a minimum as a cultural tourism package or route could start a process re-imagining their regions. One only needs to say the names of those capital cities to get the point, not forgetting the power of the regional cities too: Tbilisi, Sarajevo, Belgrade, Yerevan, Zagreb, Bucarest, Baku, Sofia, Skopje and so on.....

Every city needs to respond to this reshaped world and every one can make more out of its potential – some achieve this, others do not and fall into relative decline. Throughout history cities have risen and fallen in terms of wealth creation, political and cultural power and their sense of their own importance. In the life of each city there are crucial moments - moments where what they do and how they do it needs to be re-assessed from scratch.

Now is such a moment particularly for the major cities in Eastern Europe as the arguments being outlined have largely been absorbed by cities in Western Europe. As economic drivers of their countries the urban agenda for cities especially in the East is urgent. By utilizing the power of culture they could stand at the cusp of a rare but complex opportunity that cannot be grasped by a 'business as usual' approach. The stakes are high and cannot be harnessed solely by traditional means. It requires a shift in aspiration, mindset and organization as

well as an understanding that a strategic synthesis between creativity and lateral thinking, culture, economy, urban design and the arts can tangibly help both define, reinforce and project their identity and help implement their economic and social vision. It cannot happen overnight. It will take time to unfold in its fullness, because maximizing the power of culture involves a number of steps, including providing the evidence that culture counts; persuading the unpersuaded, harnessing resources and putting words and ideas into practice.

The world urban hierarchy is reshaping – dramatically - as the spin-offs of globalization play themselves out in the world's various zones, regions and sub-regions. In this new competitive configuration each city has to re-assess its assets, its roles and how it fits into the emerging patterns of global connections. In Western Europe this battle has renewed intensity with cities like Berlin or Vienna projecting themselves as the urban hub and gateway to the East. New regional hubs with an impact on the wider Europe will develop providing renewed opportunities Even the cities of the Balkan states and Caucasus region, for example, will play a part in this international urban jigsaw. In a world of mobile capital it tends to locate where conditions are best. If many places increasingly feel the same, offering similar experiences and similar world-wide brands the quest for wider recognition will hot up. This is the reason cities are increasingly recognizing that their unique culture is a (or perhaps the) major asset to project their distinctiveness and specialness.

### **The transformative power of culture and regeneration**

Heritage, the cultural industries and cultural activities have crucial characteristics that explain their importance to the development and maintenance of cities. Taking a broad view of culture it becomes clear that culture and the arts are more than purely an aesthetic experience and their possible contribution to urban regeneration becomes more evident. It involves recognising their multi-faceted nature and wide-ranging impacts.

In this sense culture weaves its way like a thread through endeavours of all kinds adding value – economically, socially and culturally as well as meaning and impact as it proceeds. Making a successful partnership between the arts, culture and urban regeneration requires a more imaginative understanding of arts and culture, and the way they work. It means appreciating that 'high' art, 'low' art, popular art or 'community' art or new and old buildings each have something to offer a place. This is why internationally support for culture is seen as strategically significant. As culture is the panoply of resources that show that a place is distinctive the resources of the past as well as the culture of the present can help inspire and give confidence for the future. Its impact includes:

- Cultural heritage can stand as a memory of great things achieved in the past such as a memorable church or a beautifully executed painting, but heritage is also reinvented daily whether this be a refurbished building or an adaptation of an old skill for modern times: today's classic was yesterday's innovation. The creativity of people in a city is not only about the continuous invention of the new, but also how appropriately to deal with the old. Cultural heritage and tradition though have a particular power. In the rush for change we find solace and inspiration in buildings, artefacts, skills, values and social rituals of the past. In a globalizing world we seek stability and local roots. Cultural heritage connects us to our histories, our collective memories, it anchors our sense of being and can provide a backbone to face the future. Cultural heritage is the sum of our past creativities and the results of that creativity is what keeps society going and moving forward. Each aspect of our culture though needs re-assessing as it is passed on to the next generation. An example is the

project in Skopje to rethink the traditional bazaar and to give it a new lease of life relevant to today whilst maintaining its traditional features. For cities to survive they need to push at the boundaries of tradition.

- Cultural institutions – theatres, museums, galleries or libraries - at their best offer a rich cultural experience that provides meaning and purpose through triggering insight. They do this by moving and inspiring us so we feel a genuine emotional response - felt directly in an unmediated way, without cheaply making us feel what we should feel. The profundity of the experience can be short term but is often transformative and revelatory. It can connect to our instincts and intellect and thus enriches self-understanding and learning. When done well cultural institutions through their programmes and mode of communication engender the feeling that one *understands* at any number of levels so helping us grasp complexity of life.

Cultural institutions can invite exploration and challenge without foreclosing opportunities. This may be the big distinction between them and the Disney experience, which restricts real exploration for the visitor as it tends to be guided and directed. They need to extract money from visitors, their drive to profitability can mean that the generosity of the programme suffers. They seek less to challenge. Commercial outfits done well can however create generosity in their atmosphere. But a fine library also has a massive backstock that can delve into the legacy of a place increasingly aided by new technology. By contrast in the midst of a Borders bookshop is a commercial entity so considerations of profitability of each unit of space always applies – and thus they cannot focus on backstock. Thus added weight can be provided by cultural institutions by the possibility of continuing to experience the best of what has been achieved before – by creating some sense of lineage and legacy.

- Cultural activities, both traditional and new from one off events to integrated festivals create 'meaning' as they are concerned with expression, celebration and achievement. They thus embody the identity and values of a place. They express local distinctiveness. The wealth of culture in a place engenders civic pride. This pride in turn can give confidence, can inspire and provide the energy to face seemingly insurmountable tasks that may have nothing to do with culture.
- Cultural activities are inextricably linked to innovation and creativity and historically this has been the lifeblood of cities as a means of unleashing their capacity to survive and adapt. Creativity is, of course, legitimised in the arts and increasingly is also seen by business as the key attribute they look for in employees. Briefly, genuine creativity involves the capacity to think problems afresh or from first principles; to be reflexive; to experiment; to dare to be original or rewrite rules; to be unconventional; to visualise future scenarios; to discover common threads amidst the seemingly chaotic and disparate; to look at situations in an integrated way, laterally and with flexibility. For me the best definition of creativity is the 'capacity to think at the edge of your competence and not at its centre'. These ways of thinking encourage innovation and generate new possibilities. In many emerging innovative business fields such as multi-media it is people with arts training that are in particular demand.
- In a world dominated by images the cultural sector is inextricably linked to the image of a place and a strong culture creates a positive, multi-layered

image. Culture is associated with a high quality of life. For this reason city marketing strategies the world over tend increasingly to focus on their cultural offer, the presence of artists and creative people and cultural industries in general. Culture is thus a means of attracting international companies and their mobile workforce who seek a vibrant cultural life for their employees. Thus by helping to create positive images the cultural sector has a direct impact on inward investment.

- Culture's role in tourism is key – with nature it is the primary reason a visitor comes to an area in the first place. And tourism might be the first step that allows someone to explore and know a place and later perhaps invest in it. Tourism offers are largely focused on cultural activities, be this the collecting institutions like museums or galleries which exude presence, power and relevance as well as the live activities like theatre, clubs, festivals or locally distinct rituals.
- The cultural industries are claimed to be the fourth or fifth fastest growing sector in the world's developed economy after financial services, information technology, pharmaceuticals and bio-engineering and tourism. It is thus a sector of substantial scope, scale, size and importance. Significantly the cultural sectors are also industries and thus economic sectors in their own right. Over the global cities as a whole cultural employment represents between 5%-10%, and employ, for example, in London and New York over 500,000 people. In both these cities and Paris too investment in culture is seen as a key goal of their global strategies. If we look at the cultural industries in terms of their sub-components like museums, design, music or theatre their impact is less obviously visible, but taken in their interlocking entirety their economic power is much more apparent.
- Importantly the impacts of cultural activities and the creative industries go even wider as recognized in recent work in assessing the social impact of culture. They can help the increasingly significant social inclusion agenda by engendering the development of social and human capital; by transforming the organizational capacity to handle and respond to change; they can strengthen social cohesion; assist in personal development and increase personal confidence and improve life skills; they can create common ground between people of different ages; improve people's mental and physical well-being; strengthen people's ability to act as democratic citizens and develop new training and employment routes. They thus have an important social and educational impact.
- Interestingly the cultural industries use particular approaches to problem solving, based on project and team working, which are interdisciplinary, collaborative, often experimental and risk-taking. They provide a paradigm for the way in which all industries are likely to be run in the future. In particular, the new multimedia industries - using the power of information technologies on text, images, sounds and animation to produce wholly new kinds of product - provide a platform for rethinking how industry and services in the private, public or not-for-profit sectors will increasingly be organised. Thus having a healthy cultural industries sector within an area may have surprising knock on effects on other sectors within the location.

### **Cultural resources**

Cultural resources are the raw materials of the city and its value base; its assets replacing coal, steel or gold. Creativity is the method of exploiting these

resources and helping them grow. The task of urban planners is to recognize, manage and exploit these resources responsibly. Culture thus should shape the technicalities of urban planning and development rather than being seen as a marginal add-on to be considered once the important planning questions like housing, transport and land-use have been dealt with. By contrast a culturally informed perspective should condition how planning as well as economic development or social affairs should be addressed.

Recognizing culture as a resource can be revelatory as it allows one to think of cities and their assets in completely different ways. Cultural resources are embodied in peoples' skills and talents. They are not only 'things' like buildings, but also symbols, activities and the repertoire of local products in crafts, manufacturing and services, like the intricate skills of violin makers in Cremona in Italy, the wood carvers of the Cracow region or the makers of ice sculptures in Northern Finland. Urban cultural resources are the historical, industrial and artistic heritage representing assets including architecture, urban landscapes or landmarks. Local and indigenous traditions of public life, festivals, rituals or stories as well as hobbies and enthusiasms. Amateur cultural activities can exist simply for enjoyment, but they can also be rethought to generate new products or services. Resources like language, food and cooking, leisure activities, clothing and sub-cultures or its intellectual traditions that exist everywhere are often neglected, but can be used to express the specialness of a location. And, of course, cultural resources are the range and quality of skills in the performing and visual arts and the newer 'cultural industries'.

Seen in this light every crevice in the city has a hidden story or undiscovered potential that can be re-used for a positive urban purpose. This can lead to a new form of urban asset audit. By taking a broad sweep of a city's economy, social potential and political traditions one can assess how cultural assets can be turned to economic advantage. How an old skill in carpentry or metal working can be linked with new technology to satisfy a new market for household goods or how a tradition of learning and debate could be used to market a city as a conference venue. One can even consider the 'senses' of the city from its colours, to its typical sounds or its smells (Belfast used to be known as the city of seven smells). It is also possible to take a broad sweep through mutual aid traditions, associative networks and social rituals as these cultural attributes can also make a city competitive. This approach allows one to think of the city as a malleable artefact shaped both by built projects and by activity; the city then too expresses a personality and emotions, with its feelings uplifted at one moment and depressed in the next. The city conceived of in this way is a living organism, not a machine.

This idea opens up the possibility to apply some conceptual tricks such as the idea of 'turning a weakness into a strength.' Focusing attention on how to make the most of a problem reinforces the idea that potential raw materials are everywhere. For example, Kemi, a town in the Finnish Arctic circle, suffered from high unemployment, its industry dominated by a declining paper mill. Their main asset was coldness and snow and so it built the world's biggest snow castle whose impact has exceeded wildest expectations and has generated a local tourism industry.

As the world of cultural resources opens out it becomes clear that every city can have a unique niche and 'making something out of nothing' can become a powerful idea for anyone trying to develop or promote ugly cities, cold or hot cities or marginal places. Every city can be a world centre for something if it was persistent and tries hard enough—Freiburg for eco-research, New Orleans for the blues or Hay-on-Wye for bookselling. In identifying urban resources much can be

learnt from the Italians renowned for their 'feste' or 'sagre', which celebrate whatever resource their region is known for from mushrooms, to pasta to literature.

### **Rethinking competitive assets of the city**

The ideas highlighted so far have entered the urban debate in two main ways from early 1980's onwards. Firstly in terms utilizing cultural resources by generating arts events to building arts facilities to developing the creative industries as well as re-valuing heritage as part of urban planning and promotion. Secondly, more recently and with ever increasing force people are assessing culture more in the sense of organizational culture. This has come about because in a rapidly changing world people feel culture change is important and within that change 'creativity', 'imagination', 'inventiveness', 'flexibility', 'adaptability' are seen as the key ingredients to make the new city economy work. From this stem the ideas around developing a culture of creativity in cities. The differences between the two strands makes discussions complex, especially given that already within traditional discussions on culture there is the distinction between culture broadly defined or defined exclusively as the arts and art-forms such as theatre or painting.

What urban competitive resources are was then rethought in the context of culture, whose resources were seen as manifold and powerful. Indeed cities are often competing and collaborating with each other through their cultural assets. One only needs to read city marketing brochures to recognize how cities compete with their repertoire of local talent, skills and products in manufacturing, services and craft based industries; their heritage, including the quality of public and open spaces; their gastronomy and food culture; the cultures of their youth or ethnic groups and other 'communities of interest' as well as the quality of leisure, eating, drinking and entertainment facilities and activities.

Cultural resources are also the soft infrastructure of the city, this includes: A city's capacity to nurture and mobilize its ideas, talents and creative organizations as well as form partnerships with them; its ability to connect to itself and beyond; its ability to be tolerant; its desire to increase the aspirations and expectations of citizens; its capacity to generate images, lifestyle possibilities, cultural depth and subtlety; its network capacity; its urban design sense and appreciation of beauty and aesthetics; its eco-awareness; its quality and crucially its perception of being creative, 'can-do' and go-ahead. These attributes make up the atmosphere of the city and again are some of the new competitive tools. Yet urban development in too many cities remains largely focused on older definitions of what makes a city work – roads, housing, sewage, airports. Important as these are how this physical infrastructure is put together increasingly needs to be conditioned by how they support the soft infrastructure of the city.

Think of any renowned city from Amsterdam, Copenhagen, Barcelona to Dublin, Paris, London, Berlin or Prague, Rome, Cracow and Budapest. Our impressions are made up of fragments of truth, impressions and cliché and within them are the resources noted above that form our picture. That picture in turn determines whether we will visit it, invest in it or want to live in it.

### **Culture moving centre-stage**

More people for more reasons are now finding that culture, especially in the city context, has something for them and they want different things from culture, which can create a confusion of objectives if not properly managed and organized. Some focus on how building cultural facilities or celebrating heritage can lead to urban regeneration, others highlight the job and wealth creation possibilities of the creative industries, another group stresses how a vibrant

cultural life establishes positive images and so enhances inward investment potential and most agree that a strong arts and culture infrastructure generates tourism. A different group stresses the social impact of participation in the arts from generating life skills, to personal development to aiding intercultural understanding. All understand that culture plays the central role in establishing the identity of a place and that having a distinctive identity is crucial in a world in danger of becoming homogenous. Finally some simply argue that developing the arts, such a crucial element of culture, is good for any city, because the arts from painting to performing to writing can do a complex of things from helping you think, to providing a critical eye to projecting beauty, inspiration and fun.

Most positions as can be seen are asking 'what can culture do for me'. They look at culture instrumentally rather than at culture as the process where the values of a place are negotiated, argued over and then expressed in various manifestations or memories. The memory of our collective endeavours becomes our culture as it is what we have found to be important and significant be this a building, a skill, an attitude or an artwork. Yet as the dynamics of change speed up the power of cultural heritage and tradition in particular is re-emerging with increased strengths.

Culture is, of course, not static and a live culture always confronts the past with the present and the old with the new. This happens through intense exchanges of ideas and arguments about what is valued and valuable. A lively urban culture is one that values heritage as much as the contemporary. Therefore any policy needs to address both at the same time. Cities are so culturally powerful, because they are the pressure cookers of ideas and the main originators of new ways of thinking, new products, services and new experiences. Cities can broaden horizons.

### **Creativity and culture intrinsically connected**

Cultural development and creativity are intimately connected. Yet at the same we are dealing with two of the most difficult words in any language. Creativity is an overused concept difficult to define and often only associated with the arts. Of course being creative is not the exclusive domain of artists; public officials can be creative as can social workers, business people or community activists. However the idea of being creative is more legitimised in the arts.

Culture by contrast is elusive because it has additional meanings beyond being a process of generating what a city sees as valuable. On the one hand there is in common usage the notion of 'culture and development' and on the other 'cultural or arts development'. The first is about beliefs, traditions and lifestyle expressed in a city and how that affects behaviour, what people do or create. So to talk of 'culture and urban development' in cities means discussing the relationship between cultural factors and their development and how these influence each other. For example, if Eastern European cities conceive themselves as centres of manufacturing rather than as service centres or as creative industries hubs this is a cultural factor determining how they develop. In the one the hard infrastructure mindset focused on buildings tends to dominate, in the other a greater focus on quality of life issues, such as what is the creative atmosphere of a city. Equally if being imaginative is not legitimised or alternatively if a technocratic mindset is allowed to dominate these are cultural factors shaping a city's future. Thus all development is cultural as it reflects the way people perceive their problems and opportunities.

Continuing with this broader notion of culture cities the world over are recognizing that they need to argue for a culture of creativity, high ambition, entrepreneurship and opportunity, beauty and acute sensitivity to high quality

urban design and a good urban atmosphere all of which shape its physical and social environment. Their objective is thus to affect their culture in general and their organizational culture in particular so that their cities become more resourceful and confident. This cultural capital – the capacity to be creative - represents scope within which the prospects of cities unfold. Cultural resources are the raw materials, and creativity the mechanism to bring them to life and to maximize their potential.

On the other hand there is 'cultural or arts development' in its artistic and humanistic dimension. This includes the arts as an empowering, self-expressive activity, the arts as helping provide meaning, purpose and direction for people, the arts as fostering aesthetic appreciation or the arts as creative industries. Yet in this period in cities these elements are intimately connected to the objectives above. Firstly because the arts encourage, if given the status and taken seriously, a particular form of critical imagination and creativity, which the key players in Eastern European cities in particular need if they are to find new roles for themselves and prosper. Second the arts are concerned with quality, attractiveness, performance and beauty and thus the design of our environment and how it is animated – again a feature that must be central to any city vision. Third, any city is concerned with its economic and social well-being, where too the arts and creative industries play a role both as economic engines of growth as well as in terms of their social impacts. As a consequence the arts and culture in this narrower sense affect as well as draw on culture in its broader sense.

### **Creativity the new form of capital**

As cities begin the 21st century in responding to urban challenges it will be their understanding and appreciation of cultural knowledge and creativity, in all its facets, that will largely determine their success or failure. Historically, creativity and innovation have been the source of life of cities' ability to adapt to changing circumstances yet what this should be is context driven. Every period of history needs an emphasis on a particular form of creativity. Most recently there has been a focus on physical improvements and flagship initiatives, and as important as these may be, the next period will need to see a re-balance between hardware and software initiatives. Issues such as developing a talent generation and attraction strategy will be far more important. Equally important will be the development of innovative public/private partnerships to pursue a creativity agenda.

Today cities have one crucial resource - their people or human capital: their cleverness, skills set, ingenuity, aspirations, motivations, imagination and creativity as the old locational factors - raw materials, market access - reduce to a point of less significance. Creativity is thus a new form of capital, one that needs linking to human development. It is the capacity to make the most out of opportunities and potential. It enables people to visualise future scenarios and so be able to generate preferred futures rather than responding merely to the exigencies of the moment. By looking at situations in an integrated, lateral way with flexibility it encourages innovation and generates new possibilities. Participation in the arts is, of course, one of the most significant ways this can happen.

Differing types of creativity are needed to develop and address the complexities of cities in transition which continuously need to deal with conflicting interests and objectives. This might be the creativity of artistically trained designers to improve the visual environment; or that of planners to generate new urban policy; that of engineers to solve technical problems concerned say with transport; that of artists to help reinforce the identity of a place; that of business people to generate new products or services that enhance wealth creation

possibilities; as well as those working in the social domain in order to develop social innovations that might help with issues such as social fragmentation or social exclusion. Thus creative solutions can come from any source whether from within the worlds of the public, private or voluntary sectors as well as individuals operating on their own behalf. Yet sadly most cities over-value some forms of creativity and under-value others.

The currency that provides the glue for success changes too - less finance capital although it remains very important and more the need to develop human capital, whose currency is talent, imagination and intelligence and social capital whose currency is trust, reciprocity, connectedness and networks. Involvement in arts projects is one of the best ways to develop these attributes.

### **Culture change is essential**

In a dynamic world precisely the cultural attributes and attitudes that made cities relatively successful in their past may be those that will constrain them in the future. The dominant cultures of success in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> century all over Eastern Europe and in the West too, were based on hierarchy, order and paternalism as well as hard work and loyalty. Today and tomorrow, companies, communities and cities all over the world are replacing hierarchies with networks, authority with empowerment, order with flexibility and creativity, conformity with diversity and paternalism with self-responsibility. These are the new seeds of success.

Economies can transform quite rapidly, even cataclysmically. Cultures on the other hand, do not change overnight but they can and should change more quickly than is happening. There is a growing disjuncture developing between the local cultures of Eastern European (although it also applies to many Western European cities too) and the culture required to operate in the unfolding international world.

For example, South East European cities were dealt with particularly ruthlessly during the period of dramatic economic and political change of the late 1980's onwards, and it is understandable that the defensive aspects of the culture came to the fore like a shield, but one cannot 'batten down the hatches' forever.

Without a change in culture, the necessary transformations are inconceivable but no-one can legislate culture change into being. Only through ten thousand changes in mindset at all levels can a culture change. The teenager taking the decision to stop taking drugs and stay on at school; the unemployed man who applies for a job despite his colleagues deriding his service sector job as 'woman's work'; the boss who decides to trust their employee; the woman who stops complaining about the lack of healthy food on the estate and starts her own food co-operative; the artist who changes their working priority to explore the potential of children; the teacher who decides to use theatre as a means of creating intercultural understanding.

This is all part of a process of seeing leadership as a renewable resource. Cities need an expanding leadership grouping who share common goals. Developing leadership builds civic capacity - an infrastructure as important as roads and sewers. It implies creating opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills, to usher out older leaders and honour them for their contribution while the community moves on. And yet again it is participation in the arts that can play an important leadership development role.

The new leadership must embrace the new reality that to share power is not an abdication of responsibility but the only feasible and responsible means by which

leaders can possibly achieve everything they want for their communities. It implies 'trading power for creative influence'. The *modus operandi* of most Eastern European cities has been and remains 'command and control', and even in Western Europe in spite of the rhetoric claiming the opposite it is true too. This approach might have worked well for a time, but it is time for a new model.

As part of the culture change each city has to develop a story of itself that feeds from the soil of its past, responds to possibilities in the present yet embodies aspiration. What are the stories that cities, for instance in the East, can project to themselves and the world? Powerhouses of the heroic age of industry; places which have seen better days – but are managing decline efficiently; forgotten backwaters, spiralling into poverty and communal strife; or transforming places of opportunity, optimism and growth?

Thus the capacity for cities to compete and self-renew, it is now increasingly understood, is a much more subtle and over-arching process than previously appreciated. It is more than simply technological innovations, more than physical improvements like road building on their own and involves innovation at every level of decision making. These include social and political innovations such as how the incentives and regulatory regime develops or how governance arrangements are adapted to new circumstances. For this reason organizational capacity and appropriate organizational structure in itself has been acknowledged as a tool for urban competitive advantage.

Physical changes assist, they can help build confidence and provide visible markers of progress. Yet if self-renewal is to be self-sustaining people need to feel engaged, involved and have the opportunity to give of their best and be empowered. Urban development seen so is essentially a holistic process embracing economic, social, political, environmental and cultural factors.

## **2. Regeneration driven through culture and the arts**

### **A sense of historical perspective**

Arts driven renewal is more familiar territory on which we now focus. These days we tend to assume that lively cities were always so, and to forget the role of played by arts and culture in the original economic and social development of European urbanity. In the 14th century, possession of a saint's relic made the fortunes of places like Santiago de Compostela in Spain, Chartres in France and Canterbury in Britain, generating a local cultural industry to support the image of the city. Ravenna in Italy was a medieval arts and tourism destination that ensured its wealth for centuries. Florence in the 14<sup>th</sup> century was an attractor of artistic talent and the connections between their work and the economic well being of the city are firmly established, in 16<sup>th</sup> century Cracow the arts world blossomed and outsiders flocked to the city so sustaining its power and economic base; 18th century, Bath in Britain built its prosperity largely on the cultural characteristics of the architecture of the Woods and the cult of elegance invented by Nash. In Austria the link between sophisticated urban design and economic development established by Vienna was imitated with varying degrees of success by Zagreb, Prague and Budapest and others. The best entrepreneurs of the 19th century made no division between economic success, its external demonstration through commercial, industrial and public buildings, and the promotion of a cultured, educated and 'civil' society.

If in our own time the emphasis has been on culture as an agent of 're'-generation rather than first growth, the underlying principles have been the same. The Edinburgh Festival, launched in 1947, is a world-famous example of what art can do for a city. The problems change, but a vigorous cultural identity and artistic sector remains an asset in dealing with them, as is evident in the former communist countries where it is the artistically and culturally strong cities of St. Petersburg, Prague, Budapest and Cracow that are leading the way economically.

The success of 19<sup>th</sup> century cities lay in the differing activities of, and partnerships between entrepreneurs and city authorities. Although in different ways, these all exist today, and the role of the individual remains critical, the framework, which can be established by local authorities, is critical to the development of culturally successful cities. Whereas the wealth of the city once created patronage of the arts, leading also to the development of our recognizable cultural infrastructure such as museums and libraries, today's challenge is to invest in the arts, and so to create a climate, which can encourage economic activity and wealth creation.

The historical trajectory of these changing attitudes outlined is schematic and may not apply in every detail to every city, but the broad historical trends seem to hold.

### **The age of classic culture**

Between 1945 and 1979 public debate about the arts in Western Europe focused on a limited range of cultural activity, deemed to require and be worthy of subsidy. 'Culture' was completely divorced from broader economic concerns, while many aspects of culture (e.g. film, pop music, photography and the bulk of publishing) were ignored by the arts policy-makers. In many respects, 19th century definitions of 'culture' shaped debate. The main rationale for implementing urban cultural policies was their perceived value in re-educating and civilizing people after the horrors of the war, with a strong bias against the uncomfortable and contaminating forces of commercial popular culture, and towards the well-established canons of pre-electronic (19th century) 'high'

culture. The prevailing attitude towards 'culture' was a continuation of the 19th and early 20<sup>th</sup> century tradition, which largely viewed appreciation of the classics in the arts as an antidote to the spiritual and even environmental damage wrought by industrialization. As a result, urban cultural policies were primarily focused on creating or expanding an infrastructure of traditional, building-based arts institutions located in city centres, such as opera houses, museums, and civic theatres, and on widening access to them through the provision of public subsidy. In part this has left a problematic legacy of physical infrastructure that needs to be maintained, but also buildings that may not be fit for contemporary purposes where people seek more flexible spaces and uses. In addition as cities have expanded provision of culture for suburban areas has become an increasingly important issue.

Unproblematically it assumed that the culture in which people participated, effectively the recognized high art forms, was a pre-prescribed unified canon, inherited and given, on which they would not leave their mark or shape it in turn. There was a conception of a homogenous, national culture, handed down to 'ordinary people' by elites. Cultural managers during this historical phase tended to have a curatorial, more than a developmental role. They tended to be experts in particular disciplines, and were often endowed with a sophisticated scholarly knowledge of particular cultural forms.

### **The age of participation**

The 'age of participation' in the 1970s and early '80s challenged the previous model of urban cultural policy-making as a result of interconnected changes in social, political, administrative, technological and intellectual spheres exemplified by the events of May 1968 in Paris as well as Rome, Berlin and London. A major factor in the growing importance of cultural policies was the post-1968 emergence of grassroots and social movements such as feminism, community action, environmentalism, youth revolts, gay and ethnic minority activism. The latter pre-figured the cultural diversity agenda that was to emerge in the 1990's. These movements were often closely associated with 'alternative' cultural production and distribution circuits comprising experimental theatre groups, rock bands, independent film-makers and cinemas, free radio stations, free festivals, recording studios, independent record labels, small publishing houses, radical bookshops, newspaper and magazines, and visual arts exhibitions in non-traditional venues.

This cultural universe challenged traditional distinctions between 'high' and 'low' cultural forms - for example, between classical and popular music - and adopted a very broad definition of 'culture' combining in imaginative ways old and new, highbrow and lowbrow elements. The growing availability of the relatively low cost new technologies of cultural production used by the new urban social movements increasingly blurred distinctions between commercial and non-commercial, amateur and professional, consumer and producer. These trends were accompanied by the rise of a post-modern aesthetics, in the fields of both cultural criticism and artistic production, questioning traditional notions of cultural value and hierarchy. The new urban social movements influenced many city politicians in Western Europe, mostly of the Left, who expanded the remit of their interventions to include popular and commercial forms of culture. They recognized that cultural policy could act as a vehicle both for mobilising people in the battle of ideas and to legitimise their party and to construct forms of city identity which could be shared by people from different neighbourhoods and belonging to different communities of interest. Slowly art form based policy moved to broad based cultural policy.

The monolithic and elite notion of culture, assumed as the groundwork of social citizenship, was explicitly challenged by the cultural politics of the new social movements. During this historical phase, cultural managers become often more politicised. Many of them saw themselves as activists, as an integral part of cultural-political movements such as "community arts" and "community media" in Britain, *Sozio-Kultur* in Germany, and socio-cultural animation in France.

### **The age of economics**

From the mid-'80s growing pressures on the financial resources of governments helped downgrade the earlier emphasis on the importance of access to culture, particularly for disadvantaged groups. Money spent on the arts was redefined away from being seen as a grant to being seen as 'investment'. Arguments about the wider, social value of the arts were quietly abandoned in favour of new ones, which sought to demonstrate their economic power. In responding to the structural economic crises, most visible in the decline of traditional forms of 'heavy' manufacturing industry, many politicians and policy-makers gradually replaced the 1970s emphasis on personal and community development and participation with arguments highlighting the potential contribution of culture to economic and physical regeneration. Cultural activities and cultural institutions were increasingly seen as valuable tools to diversify the local economic base in an attempt to compensate for jobs lost in traditional industrial and services sectors. A lively, cosmopolitan cultural life more and more became a crucial ingredient of city and regional marketing and internationalisation strategies, designed to attract mobile international capital and specialized personnel. Insofar as there was a notion of the cultured citizen at all in the new market-oriented cultural policies, it was often simply that of the passive, depoliticised consumer. Cultural goods and services were increasingly viewed as commodities like any others, entitlement to which would be dependent on market choice and opportunities. So claims for cultural rights were increasingly being legitimated, not on democratic, but on market grounds. They were treated merely as new forms of consumer demand.

The construction of 'flagship' cultural buildings such as museums, art galleries, libraries, concert halls, opera houses and theatres became part of the repertoire of development in places as diverse as Frankfurt, Helsinki, Bilbao, Montpellier, Rotterdam, Glasgow, Copenhagen and Vienna. Yet one of the legacies of these policies is the fact that maintenance costs and loan charges were often so high that they absorbed most of the resources available for programming leaving us often with beautiful containers without content. There was a tendency in times of financial stringency to curtail revenue funding for those activities seen as 'marginal', often aimed at disadvantaged social groups or innovative and experimental in character, than to withdraw money invested in theatres, concert halls and other building-based, traditional arts institutions.

The establishment of certain areas of cities as 'cultural districts', as in the Museums Quarters of Frankfurt and Amsterdam or Berlin's Hackishche Hoefe or Temple Bar in Dublin, was in some cases problematic in terms of social and cultural sustainability. They usually cause gentrification, displace local residents and facilities by increasing land values, rents, and the local cost of living. These processes ironically often drive out many cultural producers, who are instrumental in designating a district as 'cultural' in the first place but can no longer afford to be based there. As a graffiti in Montreal proclaimed "artists are the storm-troopers of gentrification", highlighting the dilemma. During this historical phase, cultural management training and professional ideologies absorbed much of the language and many of the assumptions of managers of

other sectors. The influence of the languages of accountancy, finance and of product marketing on cultural institutions became increasingly evident.<sup>2</sup>

### **Learning from America**

North American experiences of urban regeneration that began in the 1970's proved to be an inspiration for Britain in the 1980s and the rest of Europe in the 1990's. In several American cities, notably Pittsburgh, Baltimore, Boston and Lowell, initiatives driven by cultural policy had built a significant consensus. The interests of arts organisations looking for new homes and funding coincided with those of mayors attempting to re-launch the image of downtown areas and counteract the 'doughnut effect' in emptying city centres, and of developers wishing to add value to city-centre projects. The concept of mixed use development (MXD) led to new forms of partnership, and the creation of cultural districts in which the arts took place alongside more conventional revenue producers like retail and office space. In Pittsburgh a cultural district was developed by the Heinz Foundation and taken forward by a public/private partnership called the Allegheny Conference on Community Development. Lowell, widely seen as the first US industrial town based on cotton and textiles, was in decline in 1970. It initiated 22 heritage projects refurbishing warehouses to create museums, heritage and visitor centres, shops and restaurants. This was presented as an 'urban cultural park' and is now considered to have been very successful in changing the image of Lowell, and attracting tourists. In the sixties and seventies the emphasis shifted to creating parks, promenades and a series of 'anchor projects' including a Convention Centre, World Trade Centre, Science Park, Aquarium and a festivals shopping complex developed by the Rouse Corporation, and animated by a lively cultural programme. In Boston a cultural district strategy was based on prestige cultural institutions. It was supported by a festival shopping strategy and waterfront developments around Quincy Market.

The success of these and other developments led to a recognition of the impact that the arts could have. It was shown that they could attract people and so make the streets safer by increasing their use, revitalise the evening economy and create a stylish ambience. In return, arts organisations were rewarded with a share of commercial profits to be used to form non-profit-making cultural development trusts. The approach seemed to have the capacity to deliver economic benefits, such as the creation of new jobs, physical and environmental benefits, social benefits, like creating safer places for public use, and symbolic benefits relating to the image of cities.

Since the mid-eighties, attempts have been made in Europe to replicate this imaginative approach to cross-subsidy, though generally without a comparable degree of success largely because the finance incentives and regulatory regime was less flexible.

### **Learning from Europe**

At the same time urban cultural policymakers began learning from their European partners especially from the traditions of social public life often more developed in the Mediterranean countries. Their use of festivals, and imaginative use of architectural projects, often combining old and new—for example in the town of Nîmes, where Norman Foster's mediatheque abuts a 2,000 year old Roman building provided valuable lessons. Since the early 1970s, in Stockholm, Copenhagen, Freiburg, Stuttgart, Lyons, Grenoble, Vienna, Bologna, Rome and elsewhere local authorities had adopted strategies aimed at encouraging local residents to 're-discover' their cities. Broadly speaking, the aim of these strategies was to make the city centre safer, more accessible and attractive for all

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<sup>2</sup> This historical argument is based on the work of Franco Bianchini

citizens. They developed policies encompassing cultural animation, festivals, pedestrianisation, the creation of cultural centres, traffic calming, and improvements in street lighting and public transport. The primary objective of these policies was not to regenerate the local economy, but to counteract trends towards social atomisation and home based cultural consumption. They wanted to re-assert the role of the city centre as a catalyst for civic identity and public sociability.

### **The cultural industries**

In parallel in Britain responding to the decline in traditional industries in cities major arguments were made about the importance of the creative or cultural industries to the national economy and how their health is connected to the health of the subsidized arts sector. Viewing culture industrially meant that there was less concern about commercial imperatives, but it is also meant that the ambit of urban cultural policy was broadened. In order to make a success of the cultural industries it is necessary to connect to those responsible for economic development to ensure that questions about business start ups could be addressed; equally links needed to be made with planning or property development to ensure that issues of location could be addressed. The result of this was that in a city like Birmingham, Britain's second largest, more resources were going into the arts from non-arts departments.

Traditionally the cultural or creative industries include: music (classical, popular, folklore); the visual arts (painting, sculpture, public arts and the decorative arts); the publishing sector based on writing and literature (books, magazines, newspapers); the audio-visual and media sector (film, television, photography, video, broadcasting); the performing arts (theatre, dance, opera, live music etc.); the multimedia sector (combining sound, text and image); crafts; cultural tourism; and the cultural heritage sector (museums, heritage sites and cultural events such as festivals and commemorations).

These industries also include those sectors where the creative input is a secondary but crucial means of enhancing the value of other products whose marketability and effectiveness would otherwise be lessened. These sectors include: design; industrial design and fashion; the graphic arts (including advertising). Thus in analysing the cultural industries as industries cities were not only concerned with the front end of creative production – the ideas people or performers – but also those who have to turn ideas into products as well as those who market and those who provide outlets for cultural products to be seen and sold.

Historically a major problem for the cultural industries was that until recently the sector was rarely viewed as an integrated sector in policy-making terms. Theatre, the visual arts, music or filmmaking or design and fashion were seen as separate sectors without recognition of the interconnections between them. Creative artists often work across different cultural fields. A musician, for example, may perform at a live orchestral concert at one moment, then as a recording studio musician in record production and later as a musician involved in a film score. A graphic artist may produce advertising copy, then pictures for individual sale acting in this sense as a 'pure' artist, and then produce covers for records or film publicity. The creative products themselves are now usually not confined to one medium. Most are cross-media products: the book of the play, the film of the book, the record of the film, and so on.

Underpinning this convergence and cross-media recycling is the way the cultural industries themselves are being linked to and shaped by the development of the communication, computing and 'knowledge' industries. It is increasingly frequent

for creative people to work in teams across disciplines and move between them, as has traditionally happened between, for example, between actors in the theatre, radio and television. Looked at in isolation each sector may seem relatively small, but looked at as a group they are powerful. For example they generate over £32,000 billion for London, employ over 500,000 people representing 11.5% of the workforce and in Britain as a whole generate more export earnings than all manufacturing.

This kind of evidence of the power of the cultural industries which is concentrated in cities completely changed the landscape for policy. Interest in the area is now being taken up Europe wide and within the European Union, who have recently published a report 'Exploitation and development of the job potential in the cultural sector in the age of digitalisation' where according to the broad definition 7.2 million people work in the cultural sector in the EU. With an annual growth in employment of over 4% over the last decade it is one of the fastest growing sectors in the economy. As a consequence many countries, regions and cities are tracking activity on a consistent basis and developing policy accordingly in areas such as dedicated financial support, rethinking legal requirements, intellectual property law and the regulatory and incentives regime in general. This turnaround was only possible because of a decade of lobbying and the provision of evidence by the cultural sector as to its importance.

### **Towards the cultural turn**

Many argue we are currently experiencing a 'cultural turn' where culture is moving centre-stage for another reason when even economics and politics are culturally driven in manifold ways.

Economically, it is argued, value derives increasingly from symbolic and cultural knowledge. Any good or service is less based on its physical presence or attributes and more on the symbolic value inserted whether by the quality of design, its cultural associations such as a fashion icon, a personality or genre, an artistic or sub-cultural movement. Services and goods cannot just be invested with cognitive knowledge such as the intelligence applied to understanding production techniques or markets the former elements of competitive advantage. They now need knowledge of aesthetic and cultural values or qualities to add value. Consumers are making judgements about these aesthetic qualities all the time. Having cultural capital is key if a company is appealing to a market and it needs to demonstrate to that market that it has earned credibility by knowing the cultural signs, symbols, language, conventions and unwritten rules of behaviour of its purchasing community. The advertising campaigns of Levi's, Armani or Diesel are witness to this understanding.

Similarly there is the recognition even by institutions such as the World Bank that the success of development and economic processes are culturally defined and that if people go with the grain and understanding of their cultures that this provides a backbone to adapt to change in contrast to culture becoming a defensive shield. Part of their new understanding is to encourage the development or safeguarding of the heritage infrastructure such as old towns or cultural institutions such as museums. This reinforces the arguments made earlier about cultural factors determining development as it taps beliefs, traditions, behaviours and the resulting things people do.

### **Towards social inclusion**

The final piece in the current urban cultural policy jigsaw is the emphasis on social inclusion, diversity and cultural participation. It is partly because of the identified weakness in much urban regeneration practice that was building or economics focused. In particular, smaller cities, towns and neighbourhoods have

sought for solutions, which are appropriate to their needs and budgets. The answer has in many cases been to support cultural activity and participatory programmes with objectives, which are more social than economic.

Indeed, in terms of the developing interest in culture of non-arts agencies in the public sector—health authorities, social services departments and so on—the social impact of the arts is often more important than economic considerations. Compared to high-profile capital projects, community-based and participatory cultural activity is seen to have several key strengths:

- Cultural activity is relatively cheap and very cost-effective.
- It can be developed quickly in response to local needs and ideas.
- It is flexible and can change as required.
- It offers a potentially high return for very low risk.
- It can have an impact out of all proportion to its cost.

This has far-reaching implications for policy makers. It demands greater emphasis and investment on arts and cultural initiatives that give people the chance to participate actively. Being a consumer of the products of others is enriching, but it is over-valued in relation to participation and agency. Far too much cultural investment is locked into buildings, a situation exacerbated by schemes driven by property related interests. There may be a need to upgrade existing facilities and to develop new facilities, but the purpose of cultural investment is not to support the construction industry. In many instances there is a need to ask whether there are too many cultural institutions and whether some should fold or whether there are audiences to fill (and pay for) these new venues. Will future resources be tied to maintenance instead of participatory cultural activity?

Given that cultural investment has acknowledged value in social and economic terms it is not surprising that the sources of funding have changed. Arts funding is often thought of in terms of central government commitment, but by the early nineties, local government expenditure on the arts in many countries far outstripped that of central government. In addition there is the increasingly important arts investment of non-governmental agencies (like health authorities, tourism associations and development companies), charitable trusts or sponsors. As a result with the gradual involvement of non-arts agencies in arts funding, the agenda has shifted. Cultural Ministries often may place aesthetic considerations above all others, but few other public agencies engaged in arts funding do. Investment in the arts for social purposes has become very important to the arts themselves and to agencies concerned with contemporary social problems. Not only urban regeneration agencies, but health authorities, social services departments, education authorities, crime prevention programmes have successfully used the arts to achieve their objectives. As the multi-dimensional nature of social and economic stability is appreciated, it leads to greater inter-agency co-operation, and a willingness to examine new solutions.

Many city governments do not accept the dilemma presented by the more traditional arts funding system: to pursue either high standards or extend access. There is no inevitable link between widening access and diminishing quality. But there is a link between vibrant, confident, successful communities and access to cultural expression. There is a link between democratic vitality and creative approaches to problem solving. And there is a link between urban renewal and cultural activity.

### **The Weaknesses of some current practice**

While the economic argument achieved vital recognition for the arts and cultural industries, and became both influential and fashionable, its weaknesses were quickly pointed out, they include:

#### **Cultural investment can only do so much**

Cultural initiatives cannot solve every problem. In areas of severe deprivation and unemployment a cultural initiative is only one, if vital, component of a wider regeneration strategy. It must integrate with training, education and economic development, environmental upgrading as well as programmes of social inclusion and cohesion. The important issue is to assess realistically what cultural programmes can do, without underestimating their subtle impact. False expectations have sometimes led to disappointment. People have understandably put high hopes on their employment potential. Yet these have not often been met. In Birmingham perhaps 500-600 new jobs have been created in the cultural area and similar results are true elsewhere. Although the cultural industries cannot make good losses in the manufacturing and heavy industry, partly because they apply new technologies, they have a contribution to make.

#### **Economics above all**

The crude interests of the local economy and of the city as a whole do not always coincide. Arguing that 'what's good for business is good for the town' may lead to a concentration on the use of culture only for marketing purposes. Image campaigns with no grounding in local needs and aspirations can backfire. This happened when Saatchi & Saatchi devised the 'There's a lot of Glasgowing going on' campaign for Glasgow's City of Culture celebrations in 1990. Because many locals found the slogan shallow it created antagonism rather than support. A focus on external, usually business audiences, can also have insidious effects such as limiting the ability of artists to question, challenge and criticise.

#### **Putting the needs of tourists before residents**

With the increasing emphasis on tourism development, has come awareness of the needs to create a sustainable product, which enhances, rather than diminishes local quality of life. Where cultural investment has created major tourist attractions, they have sometimes courted the resentment of local people who feel excluded on economic or social grounds. Despite the success of the Albert Dock in Liverpool, with the Tate of the North, the popular Maritime Museum and an array of boutiques, many locals still say 'it's not for us, it's only for outsiders'. The project financing requires high rents so raising prices and limiting access to local people. The Docks are in danger of becoming more of a tourist destination than a local one.

#### **Imitation in pursuit of distinctiveness**

Although culturally led projects are essentially about enhancing local distinctiveness, in practice they can be disappointingly imitative. The ever-present mural, the fake antique carts selling supposedly local products, the multi-purpose arts centre, the new theatre that only a minority of the population visit—any of these projects might be right, but only if they coincide with local needs, assets and aspirations. It is the local audience that provides the bedrock of a successful initiative.

#### **Supporting the construction industry not the arts**

In Western Europe resources allocated to cultural initiatives are commonly sidetracked into building programmes. As a result an arts led regeneration initiative actually supports the construction industry rather than people and cultural activity. It can take years to build an opera house, or refurbish a theatre, during which time the local community is deriving no cultural benefit. There may

be inadequate resources to fund a full programme work as resources are eaten up by maintenance and running costs. One can foresee a time when the cities of Britain will glitter with half-empty arts facilities. This problem has been exacerbated by the new resources of the National Lottery, which focused in the past on capital projects.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> This section was conceived in collaboration with Francois Matarasso

### **3. A typology of culture-led regeneration**

Regeneration is as individual as the places in which it happens, as the examples, which follow amply, testify. It means very different things in Stockholm or Baku, and it is not surprising that it should be triggered or supported by an equally wide range of cultural catalysts.

#### **The building as regenerator**

The most obvious catalyst for regeneration—though not always the most successful—is an arts building. After all it was speculative development in the 19th centuries, which did so much to create many industrial European cities in the first place. Building projects are often initiated by local authorities like the Guggenheim in Bilbao or like the Tate of the North in Liverpool by an urban renewal agency. They are expensive and flagship projects often—as in the case of Helsinki's Opera House —provoke local and national controversy. At their best, they become hugely popular visitor attractions, which have a symbolic and economic impact on the surrounding area, especially when vigorous attempts are made to connect to the local community both for employment and to ensure that there is involvement in programming as the Tate Modern in London has done. But too frequently, partly because such large-scale projects are intended to serve regional or national populations, they may produce mixed feelings among local people. They can absorb scarce resources from other proposals and their running costs can restrict future funds for cultural activities. In particular, the contrast between the favoured area, and those beyond its boundaries can seem very sharp, and may contribute to resentment and cynicism.

#### **Artists' activity as regenerators**

Conway Mill in Belfast, the Cattle Market in Hong Kong or the Westergasfabriek in Amsterdam have become home to several arts organisations in recent years, each taking on a cheap lease on their own initiative. In the latter there is an attractive symbiosis between studios and galleries, offices, cafés, bookshops and record stores.

Building projects initiated by community groups may be less dramatic, but can have as much impact as the flagships of the state. Groups of artists joining forces to operate from a redundant building, can trigger the regeneration of an area through their occupation and the services they support. This may start with a café catering for the arts community, but whose ambience gradually becomes attractive to other residents and visitors, as with the cafe in the Custard Factory in Birmingham. From small beginnings, a whole area can develop an atmosphere attractive to small traders and new businesses in search of cheap, lively accommodation. Although local authorities cannot make this happen, they can create a planning regime, which will encourage such renewal. The danger is that, as the district is renewed, so rents and prices rise, and the artists on whom its success was based are forced out. This has happened successively in Soho and Camden in London with current arts activity in the capital having moved further out to Hackney and similar areas. The skill is in maintaining low-value uses whilst creating wider benefits such as generating liveliness in an area, while allowing the cycle of renewal to increase property values. Temple Bar in Dublin foresaw this problem and gave long-term leases to artists on favourable terms to ensure their future presence, but also as a kind of reward for being the catalyst for development in the first place. Enabling arts organizations to hold the freehold of a building is an important long-term strategy to avoid them being pushed out by rising prices. To make this balance happen usually requires some public intervention or support.

### **Events as regenerators**

Oldham Council has revitalised a moribund festival called Tulip Sunday, which took place annually in its Alexandra Park by rotating its location. It is now held in a different park each year, and acts as a spur for interest and action in each place. A small refurbishment budget ('Tulip Money') is attached to it, and the event attracts 3-4,000 people. Not only has the festival been renewed and given fresh meaning, but also its catalysing effect has a marked impact on each park it visits.

Cultural events can sometimes remind local people, council and developers of the potential of run-down, inner-fringe districts. A festival was organised as a means of drawing attention to Little Germany in Bradford, and triggered successful regeneration in the area. Possible futures are explored by an event, which becomes the catalyst for regeneration. Over time, some arts events have become economically successful, and their original purpose as a spur to regeneration has been forgotten. The Spoleto Festival gave that Italian town a new vitality. It has since also helped Charleston in the United States which has twinned its festival with Spoleto as a trigger for its own process of downtown regeneration.

### **The bizarre as regenerator**

Yet there are events and events. In Tuscany, the town of Pieve S. Stefano celebrates the annual 'Festival of Diaries' with a prize for the best diary, which is then published. The town has established a National Diary Archive and is marketing itself as 'Città del Diario'. In Montespertoli, near Florence there is an annual festival of ugly people (Festival dei Brutti) celebrating with humour their exceptional ugliness. The event has gradually become an unofficial marriage bureau. It attracts national news coverage and has placed the town on the map. Similar festivals include the Long Noses in a little town near Bergamo, and the Liars which takes place each summer near Bordeaux. Further afield, Darwin's cockroach races held on Australia Day underline that one can create something out of anything with persistence and nerve.

### **Planning regulation as regenerator**

The use of planning regulations to direct activities within a city is not new. Older industrial areas, for example, may have zoning policies that favour large-scale industrial development and are seen as unsuitable for housing. A change in use codes—e.g. to encourage residential and small business development—can have major impacts. When Birmingham designated Digbeth as a media zone it triggered a marketing tool, which drew certain types of investment to the area. This led to the creation of the Custard Factory, a complex of buildings with studio, office and leisure uses. Local authorities familiar with using planning regulations in some contexts have not always appreciated their value in triggering cultural development and vitality.

The Council and local developers increasingly saw the potential of the Digbeth area and built over a decade later amongst other things a landmark cultural centre called Millennium Point combining a part of the local university, the industry and science museum called Think Tank, a youth parliament and multiplex cinema. This gave them the confidence to deal with the biggest problem in unleashing development potential the oppressive physical barrier of an urban motorway between Digbeth and the city centre. Eradicating 800 metres of this physical barrier is causing a development boom creating the typical problem of 'gentrification' – the process of price rises in rents, which tends to push out the artistic characters who often trigger the regeneration in the first place as they cannot afford the new rents.

### **Flexibility as regenerator**

In Helsinki the Night of the Arts has been running for over 10 years. At the beginning of the festival the city for the first time extensively allowed cafés and restaurants to put tables and chairs on the streets and extended licensing hours. This was so popular that it became the norm and has changed the way Helsinki people enjoy and perceive the city. It now has a more continental, outdoor life and many people drink cappuccino outdoors—in their coats with outdoor heating. Two of the main boulevards even have under-floor heating in the long winter to ensure that the winter ice does not cause harm.

There are other invisible regenerators that cost nothing but imply a change in attitudes and a pro-active approach to managing the culture of a city. Thus changing licensing hours and bye-laws at festival periods allows an authority to test their effect. Where this is beneficial, such changes often become permanent and help change the perception of an area. Changes in licensing laws for Mayfest in Glasgow had an important effect, as did the relaxation of local bye-laws in Bradford's West End, where tables are now allowed to spill out from cafés. The success of one café can encourage others to follow in a cluster that can create a critical mass. This way the indoor, introspective life of some cities, especially in Northern Europe, has been turned outwards.

### **Social confidence as regenerator**

Regeneration depends on people, and their self-confidence. Time and again, arts projects have shown how the acquisition of confidence through participation in the arts can transform individual and communities. The Craigmillar Festival Society founded in 1964 on a very difficult Edinburgh housing estate, became a model of community empowerment for numerous other initiatives like Easterhouse and Cranhill Arts Projects or the Pilton Video Project in Glasgow. In Belfast, the community theatre movement—there were about 40 groups in the city at last count—has invigorated some of the most disadvantaged communities in the UK and given many hundreds of people new confidence to address the identities or social and economic development problems of the areas in which they live. The confidence acquired through participating in arts initiatives can have other spin-offs such as enabling people to feel strong enough to get jobs in areas not related to the arts.

### **Mechanisms as regenerators**

Mechanisms and schemes have played a part in urban regeneration. Among the best known is the Percent for Art scheme modelled on that initiated in the USA (though without the support of legislation it has in many American states). Through this a proportion of building costs (usually 1%) is allocated to art. This can improve the quality of the fabric and raise expectations of local standards, but it is disappointing that the scheme has rarely been used to support activity, despite the public relations potential. Some of the more imaginative Percent for Art schemes, such as in Seattle, have pooled the contributions from developers into a joint pot to instigate larger, integrated programmes in the public realm rather than allowing the developer to put an isolated piece of public art in their entrance hall.

Another mechanism is the European City of Culture scheme, which when used strategically can act as a focus for regeneration. Over 20 European cities have now had the title since it was inaugurated in 1985 ranging from Athens to Rotterdam, and Reykjavik to Oporto, yet unfortunately few use it effectively to create regeneration spin-offs or deal to help address a difficult problem, focusing instead on simply providing a series of events like a festival. Three exceptions

with different approaches are regarded as Glasgow in 1990, Antwerp in 1993 and Rotterdam in 2001.

Glasgow was the first city to plan and market the year as a complete year using an approach which was comprehensive, focussing on culture as an inclusive concept, making strong links to the city's cultural organisations, its social, economic, regeneration and tourism initiatives as well as schools and educational institutions. Emphasis was placed on combining international and local projects, and developing programmes which met different tastes and interests. Substantial efforts were made to encourage the active participation of local residents and to achieve impacts not only within the city, but also its wider region and the country as a whole. New physical infrastructure projects were conceived and completed for the cultural year. International links were fostered. The approach that was adopted focused largely on creating partnerships across the city. The programme began before the cultural year itself and lasted the full 12 months of 1990. This model was subsequently followed by Antwerp, Copenhagen, Stockholm, Rotterdam and many other future cities.

In Antwerp the intention was to move away from and challenge the notion of the arts where prominence is given to political, economic or religious objectives; or as a tool for developing tourism or broader instrumental objectives such as urban regeneration. It was aware that these might be side effects but not the primary goal. As such the programme was conceived partly as a reaction against the commercialisation of culture.

The aim was to place art at the centre in terms of getting people to stop and think about the nature of a changing society and to assess the place of artists and their social responsibility. It asked the question in its slogan 'can the arts save the world?' It championed the autonomous, critical role of the artist. Given that the city is a meeting place for people with different backgrounds, art and artists can create a workshop for debate, with the inevitable tension that can result. The Antwerp programme was part of a process to develop a cultural policy for the city. This was reflected in the themes and projects chosen which were to make people think about society. For example the programme 'A future of the past', which was seen not as glorification but seeking to unravel areas of tension and debate in Antwerp. The emphasis on multi-culturalism followed similar programming and sought to address the threat to social cohesion posed by the rise of the extremely nationalistic Vlams Block.

A final mechanism worth mentioning is the rise of national lotteries, which allocate part of their receipts to the arts as in the UK. This has largely had beneficial effects in that it has helped to renew the physical arts infrastructure from theatres to museums. However its initial emphasis on spending on physical projects, which runs counter to much of the experience described here, was a disappointing restriction.

### **The individual as regenerator**

The bookseller Richard Booth brought about the regeneration of Hay-on-Wye, a small Welsh border town, by transforming it into the world's largest centre for second hand books. This is an example of the critical role of individuals in regeneration which is always a significant factor - their vision, tenacity, passion and even obsession is key. When the arts act as a regenerator there is always a project champion as of most successful regeneration projects.

In the case of Britain there are examples in public agencies (e.g. Robin Campbell, who steered the development of the Swansea Maritime Quarter), and the private sector (e.g. Eric Reynolds of Urban Space Management, who helped develop

Camden Lock; Jonathan Silver of Salt's Mill in Bradford or Bennie Gray who was responsible for the Custard Factory in Birmingham). While not artists themselves, their understanding of what art can do is profound. The regeneration of Salt's Mill in Bradford and of Camden Lock both had an underlying vision, though the process itself was organic and long term, responding to opportunities as they arose. Arts projects often rely less on strategy than on intuition, but this approach is rare in mainstream development, where the focus is on more immediate returns on investment. Eccentricity reflects the willingness of individuals to depart from conventional problem-solving. These are creative individuals who find it hard to operate within corporate structures.

### **The artist as regenerator**

Goethe and Schiller lived in Weimar and Shakespeare was born in Stratford making their towns the base of the Goethe/Schiller and Shakespeare industries. They have sustained their town ever since from visitors to their theatres, the centres specializing in their work. At a more humble scale Shrewsbury in Britain, has benefited from a tourism windfall following the success of the Brother Cadfael medieval detective stories. The novels brought many fans to the Shropshire town in which they are set, and in 1994 a £1 million visitor centre was built to capitalise on this interest. Every country will have their own example.

The association of artists with places has long been recognised as valuable in terms of local identity and tourism potential. Think only of the connection between Mozart and Vienna or more recently Hundertwasser and his apartment buildings or transformation of the local incinerator that project themselves as works of art; or Gaudi and Barcelona. The list is endless. This has usually been related to the artists of the past, who acquire a safe respectability once they are dead. But whatever the Dickens industry has given Rochester or Portsmouth in the 20th century, is far outweighed by his impact on the quality of life of Londoners in the 19th. If there is a lesson here, it is that we should value the contribution of our artists whilst they are alive—even if it is not always comfortable.

The British arts group Welfare State International coined the phrase 'engineers of the imagination' to describe their own approach to the arts. It sums up the peculiar quality that artists can bring to the whole process of urban regeneration, through their different way of looking at the world. Artists are well placed to look beyond convention; originality and authenticity are central to their approach to the world.

Local artists in Stockholm proposed leaving the caves blasted out during construction of the city's underground, and helped make the 'largest art gallery' in the world and a major tourist attraction for the city.

Artists see things from a different perspective. They turn can weaknesses into strengths by recognising value in what the rest of us disregard. In the redundant harbour areas of Rotterdam, artists saw the potential of an area of cranes, which could be brought to life with a little care. At a time when our cities are becoming standardised, the touch of the individual can transform our perceptions and our level of interest. Artists work by hand, manipulating their materials from paint to steel. Their attention to detail, to the human touch, is unusual in the modern world. They recognise the value of the individual, the different and the local. Artists are often more committed to the communities or context in which they live and work than those whose occupations require them to move around.

Artists usually do not have a job in the conventional sense. They are self-employed, living by applying a range of transferable skills to the different

opportunities, which arise. An economic lifestyle, which once challenged convention, seems increasingly sustainable in a world of short-term contracts, re-training and the need for adaptable skills. But perhaps the major contribution artists can make to the regeneration process is to give others the confidence to be creative too. The task is to help everyone involved in local development feel the confidence to express their creative visions rather than accept existing assumptions or the tendency only to go for the tried and tested.

### **Collaboration as the regenerator**

Building mixed teams with artists as an integral part can have spin-off effects especially when they work with engineers or architects. In Adelaide in Australia the brokerage created by a public art specialist between the city's engineering department and artists has had a marked effect on the public environment. Slowly its effects are infusing the overall space by transforming offices, the shopping centre, bus shelters, bollards, seating, waymarkings, lighting, entry points and portals which seen through the eyes of the artistic imagination create a sense of drama and expectation. This approach can be reinforced by temporary installations. When seen as part of a longer-term process the sum of the parts becomes greater than each element. This is what occurred in Stockholm's 30 year 101 station metro programme, or parts of that of St. Petersburg and Moscow, where each station becomes a daily used and relevant artwork – and in passing a major tourist attraction. In Strasbourg the central station metro stop has poems etched into steel on the floor exhorting passers by in one 'to feel less stress, to relax and be happy' and on another 'to think big thoughts and to reflect on these' and in a copy of commercial posters there is a large poster reminding us that 'empathy – can change the world'. Using metros for the arts is now part of the established repertoire as can be seen too in the metros of Mexico City, Toronto or Portland USA.

### **Marketing as regenerator**

The marketing process itself can be part of the regeneration dynamic, as in many of the European cities of culture and other places. Although the initial artistic project may be small, marketing can be used to maximise its impact. So the success of one event gives confidence to take on bolder projects, creating a virtuous cycle of initiatives. Marketing can be used to tell a story about a place as Montpellier, in Southern France, illustrates. Here, a combination of subtle messages—from the multi-lingual welcome, to streets named after scientists, the cycleways and mobile health centres—have been consciously used to tell a story about a city with a progressive, scientific identity and future. In Britain, Ironbridge near Telford may be one the best examples. Here a number of important, but small industrial heritage sites have been marketed under the overarching symbol of the world's first iron bridge. As a result sufficient mass has been achieved to raise the profile of the area and compete successfully for tourists and visitors. More has been made of the existing assets by taking an imaginative view and not being restricted by local government identities.

### **The organisation as regenerator**

The presence of an arts organisation can be invaluable to a town or city, and not only for its actual work. The fact that Welfare State made its home in Ulverston in Cumbria has influenced how people have thought about the town and its development, and created new traditions like the lantern procession. The planners of North Kesteven (Lincolnshire) were influenced by the work of Common Ground and its emphasis on local distinctiveness in the creation of new traditions. Similarly groups like the Kaos Pilots in Aarhus or have popularised the use of art or artistic imagination as a means of creating better quality environments and affected the thinking of many local authorities. National organisations can change how decision-makers look at problems in the first place. The American

organisation Partners for Liveable Communities popularised the concept of using the town or city as a stage and of the use of cultural resources in urban development. The British American Arts Association, now called Creative Communities, through its conferences the 'Arts and the Changing City' in 1988 and the 'Artist in the Changing City' in 1993 had a significant long term impact on local authorities attitudes towards the arts in general and their contribution to urban regeneration.

### **Crisis as a regenerator**

Regenerative capacity is not generated in isolation. Innovative responses are sparked by recognizing a situation is causing problems or is otherwise inadequate. It is much more difficult to renew when everything is seen as satisfactory. Crisis requires an urgent response which may help overcome obstacles to innovation and generate the political will or sense of urgency to drive creativity. Situations need immediate solutions and it is difficult to insist on old approaches. Wartime has often allowed women to show their abilities - after their contribution in the First World War it became unsustainable to deny them the vote in Britain. Equally the recent wars in the Balkans triggered imaginative responses to revitalizing democracy where a national forum of young people encourages debate across ethnic and cultural boundaries. In 1995 the Kobe earthquake revealed the inadequacy of the Japanese civil service to deal with major disaster, and produced innovations in the management of central and local administrations.

But crisis is not always a singular event: it can be the slow erosion of capacity and ability to respond. Years of corruption, inefficiency, the inability to maintain infrastructures or to adjust to new needs can create a loss of morale. Such crises are debilitating, because their causes are systemic, and creative responses require the power and will to act. Often things have to get worse before they can get better, as when the Emscher river sewage in the Ruhr in Germany began seeping into the water supply, finally forcing the Nordrhein Westfalen government to take bold action that ultimately led to the inspiring 10 year Emscher Park programme called "A Workshop for the Future of Old Industrial Areas". This combined environmental and industrial renewal with culturally sensitive development that worked with the cultural assets of the past, especially the re-use of old mining infrastructures, to inspire confidence in a future based on new technology and a green perspective on development.

### **Conclusion**

Broadening the way the concept of culture is understood, interpreted and used means that the cultural strategy of the city can move centre-stage. Cultural strategy becomes a crucial lever for the city to unlock potential and possibilities, unfortunately its power remains under-recognized. It only does so because the strategy is not only focused on the arts as specific art forms and their associated facilities, although they may play an important part. The most effective urban cultural policies think of culture broadly and see the elements that make up the local culture as potential resources from using a famous person to rethinking a local skill in modern terms. Seen so one can unleash a paradigm shift in thinking about what any city in the region could be.

Culture is the panoply of resources that show that a place is unique and distinctive. The resources of the past can help inspire and give confidence for the future, but the contemporary must never be underplayed otherwise it will not remain dynamic. By thinking in terms of cultural resources a completely new language and set of priorities enters the strategic planning debate with potentially significant impacts. Much of this language in the new urban development is

dynamic and includes concepts such as: urban vitality; cultural richness, experience or depth; creative milieu as well as imagination and creativity. People feel cities as complex, multi-faceted experiences and the arts have both a role in helping us understand this complexity as well as providing ways of unlocking its potential.

## **4. A Template for developing a city cultural strategy**

### **Introduction**

The Ministry of Culture, Media and Sport in the UK requires each municipality to develop an urban cultural strategy. Below we adapt their guidance as a model, which other cities might wish to follow. Three points are highlighted, the first is that it is broad in scope; second it focuses on partnership and cross-sectoral linkages and third it focuses on outcomes.

A cultural strategy is a plan that integrates the major goals, policies and actions of a municipality and its linked partnership of organizations into a cohesive whole. Like all strategies, an urban cultural strategy should be viewed not as a firmly fixed plan, but as a continuing process, informing other strategies and, in turn, being informed by them. Strategies, in this view, are not so much about establishing once-and-for-all optimal solutions, as about understanding, and acting upon, the unfolding and complex strategic relationships, opportunities and uncertain futures in which the municipality and others partners operate. It is concerned with 'why are we doing this?' and 'what should we be doing?' and so is characterized by 'reflection'. It is less concerned with 'how to do this' or characterized by crisis.

The scope of the strategy should aim to include rather than exclude and to create linkages both within the authority and outside its own services, embracing other organizations, which can contribute towards wider goals. It should explore existing and potential cross service links both between different cultural services, such as arts and sport, and with services outside the traditional cultural services sector, including other city departments and agencies, such as initiatives in tourism, urban regeneration, health services, education and the environmental improvement. This demonstrates culture's contribution to the wider agenda. It should also be supplemented by references to programmes and initiatives for targeted groups, such as children, youth, the elderly, minority populations, or people with disabilities. Crucially any cultural strategy must identify the specific distinctiveness of its area and so not be formulaic.

### **Some examples**

There are many examples of successful urban cultural policies for cities large and small. Whilst most have a certain similarity in that they usually discuss issues such as how to develop support mechanisms to encourage creative people or how to provide the physical cultural infrastructures they range in scope and ambition. For example:

- Antwerp has recognized its wealth of creators in fashion and in making this a central plank of its policy in 2001 initiated a 5 month programme called Modeland 2001 which celebrated its fashion talent in variety of ways. This combined both artistic and commercial initiatives. This will be repeated bi-annually. In addition it is concerned too with issues of multiculturalism and diversity in order to counteract the potential problems caused by intolerance - a particular problem in the city.
- Gateshead in the UK on the other hand has focused on programmes of social inclusion, especially young people, whilst at the same time building quite dramatic modern infrastructure such as its Baltic Arts Centre or Sage Music Centre. In both cases it has reviewed how to integrate local people firmly into the plans and programming of the institutions to ensure that they are not seen as exclusionary.
- Veria, a small town in Northern Greece has developed a strategic cultural plan to revalue its cultural heritage which has led to a substantial

upgrading of its physical fabric resulting in a renewed confidence in the city with numerous spin-offs such as increased tourism.

- Timisoara in Romania, with the assistance of the European Cultural Foundation and the ECUMEST Foundation, has perhaps been one of the first former Eastern European cities to think through its cultural policy strategically within a post-Communist framework. Creating such a policy was no easy task given the difficult choices it had to make on policy priorities. It has developed a solid informational base on its cultural dynamics as well as attitudes to culture, which provides a benchmark from which to move forward. It has focused on unleashing the capacity in education, its tradition of multi-culturalism and on connecting to international circuits.
- Plovdiv in Bulgaria has undergone a similar process of research and analysis and in so doing has provided the foundation upon which choices in a difficult financial climate can be made. Again the city highlights both its historic gateway function as a means of integrating it more widely into international circuits.
- Already in the early 1990's Sabadell in the metropolitan area of Barcelona was seen as a model of undertaking a cultural policy in that it undertook detailed research on the cultural needs and aspirations of its people. This was driven by a focus on arts and community development rather than wider issues of urban regeneration.
- By contrast Bilbao's cultural strategy initiated in the late 1980's was initially based on regenerating the urban area through cultural flagships, such as the Guggenheim or its music/arts center, and high quality urban design, such as its new airport and metro system, which both feel like massive works of art. In a second phase the city emphasized the need to increase the city's attractiveness and now in a third phase is attempting a more complicated task of changing the cultural values of its citizens. Under the slogan 'Living by Shared Values - Dare to Dream, Make a Difference' they are encouraging people to be innovative, to yearn to improve, to be proactive, to open themselves to new ideas, to understand the "big picture". A second theme is 'Respect Others - Each One Counts' suggesting that each of us can contribute in meaningful ways. The third theme is 'Learn Without Borders - Succeed Through Partnership' whose aim is for win-win partnerships through teamwork and team learning as well as achieving greater synergy by working harmoniously with external partners. The theme proposes practicing high service standards, continuous learning and applying new knowledge and skills to stay ahead.
- Sundsvall a medium sized town in Sweden, which has high class heritage features, has made a strong commitment to the development of both contemporary and heritage culture. Its Culture Warehouse is perhaps the centre point housing the museum, library and associated facilities. It consists of four turn of the century harbour stores linked by a glass roof and gables. The design attracted considerable attention and won the Europa Nostra Prize. The town supports and develops both professional and amateur expression in a variety of ways, with a particular focus on children and young people, from the Sundsvall Street Festival to choir events as it is known in Sweden as the 'City of Choirs'.
- Tampere, Finland's second largest city, has focused on projecting itself as the country's theatre and festival city by both creating a diversity of venues and activity programmes. Whilst one highpoint is its increasingly international theatre festival in the summer it has quite cleverly spread events throughout the year. It has also a wide range of free street events so making arts activity very visible and so projects the city itself as a stage. The range cuts across mainstream and fringe activity, the

traditional to the highly innovative and challenging. One impact is, of course on tourism.

- The Slow Cities movement or Cittaslow originated in Italy and grew out of the 'Slow Food' movement, a reaction to the "McDonaldisation" of international fast food. The word 'slow' is used ironically and does not imply supporters are backward-looking. The movement now has over 150,000 members in over 30 countries. Cittaslow is against the uniformity that is spreading to every town because of the rise of bland multi-national chainstores and global cultural product. It aims to help small towns keep their distinctiveness by improving the local environment, both natural and man-made, and using local shops, goods and services with an emphasis on what is unique in each town. The network started when the mayors of three small northern Italian towns met up in 1999 to share ideas. The network now has 77 Italian members and increasingly towns from other countries are beginning to join. It includes places such as Chiavenna, Positano, Trani and Calazzo. Memberships is only open to of up to 50,000 inhabitants and in order to qualify they have meet a set of targets and requirements. Their joint marketing and the idea itself has caught on and has been away of small cities gaining a higher profile. Although its scope is broader than a traditional cultural strategy Slow Cities with their focus on distinctiveness provide a useful way of integrating wider cultural resources and concerns into the development of towns.

### **Culture at the centre of policy-making**

The objective of strategic policy is put culture centre-stage in overall decision making about the future of a locality so increases its status and impact. Culture has a material dimension including the art forms noted above as well as museums, artefacts, the built heritage, architecture, landscape and archaeology; parks, open spaces, wildlife habitats, the water environment and countryside recreation, children's play, playgrounds and play activities; tourism, festivals and attractions and informal leisure pursuits. Second culture has a value dimension, including relationships, shared memories, habits, experiences and identity, diverse cultural, religious and historic backgrounds. In sum what we consider valuable to pass on to future generations.

The concept of cultural policy making outlined does not look at policy sectorally, such as only policies for the development of theatre, dance, literature, the crafts and other cultural forms, but adopts a territorial remit – in this case the city. Its purpose is to see how the pool of cultural resources identified can contribute to the integrated development of a city. These may range from traditional art forms to local gastronomy traditions or architecture. By placing cultural resources at the centre of policy-making, interactive and synergistic relationships are established with any type of public policy - in fields ranging from economic development to housing, health, education, social services, tourism, urban planning, architecture, townscape design, and cultural policy itself. Policy-makers in all fields should not simply be making an instrumental use of culture as a tool for achieving non-cultural goals. So specialists in place marketing can draw strength from the encounter with cultural knowledge by recognizing the richness and complexity of places. The consequence is that a place's overall stock of culture is enriched by the fact that a more sophisticated form of place marketing exists in the public domain. Likewise an artist may contribute to innovation in a social services department; and a social worker might run the outreach service of a theatre. These processes encourage innovation, boundary crossing and trans-disciplinary work, for example through inter-culturalism or co-operation between artists and scientists and crossovers between different cultural forms.

For this approach to be successful it needs policy makers and implementers who think in a certain way. They tend to be people-centred, humanistic, able to think holistically, flexibly and laterally, they are networking focused and interdisciplinary; innovation-oriented, original and experimental; critical, inquiring, challenging and questioning; 'cultured', and informed by a critical knowledge of traditions of cultural expression. This will enable them to synthesise; to see the connections between the social, cultural, political, economic and natural environments, and to grasp the importance not only of 'hard' but also of 'soft' infrastructures, which are the social network dynamics of a place.

In order to adopt this approach, cultural policy-makers would need to expand their knowledge from arts administration and cultural management to political economy, urban sociology, physical planning, urban history and other disciplines, which are essential for an understanding of how their city develops. The result is more integrated policy-making and the organization more around cross-cutting issues and problems less shaped by the rigidities of departmental concerns.

### **A cultural perspective on planning**

There is a need to shift planning priorities away from their physical orientation towards an understanding of the dynamics of places and of how people perceive their environments, away from the idea of the city as a machine to that of a living organism. This implies much greater attention to people's lived experiences, sensations, emotions and their well-being rather than to infrastructure and buildings. Urban cultural planners need to collaborate much more with citizen representatives as well as people with cultural sensitivities and people skills, such as anthropologists, psychologists, community activists, historians, business people and sociologists. In this process there would be a focus on developing 'open-minded' cultural spaces and places, that feel safe and allow opportunities for chance encounters, interaction and exchange of ideas.

This approach to cultural planning has some key characteristics:

- Auditing potential: A pre-condition for identifying, harnessing and then exploiting potential is a wide-ranging audit of possibilities based on seeking out cultural assets.
- Strategy is central: These possibilities need to be placed in time-dated framework where catalysts that can create an impact are identified.
- Connecting: By definition it works best when there is cross-departmental or cross-sector collaboration.
- Creating impact: Cities that successfully apply cultural policy take controlled risks; they have strong but devolved leadership and have a clear idea of where they are going.
- Addressing and overcoming strategic dilemmas, such as between developments in the city centre and the suburbs.

### **Arts policy or cultural policy**

A strategy focused on the arts will be different from one focused on culture and requires different skills. An arts policy usually concentrates on the development of art forms such as dance, theatre or film and on the conditions for the arts to develop such as audience development, arts and education and venues such as museums and opera houses. Those undertaking such work tend to specialize in an arts discipline or have a curatorial perspective. The result is an argument to fund or develop art forms and its associated infrastructure from buildings to marketing the arts. Typically they might come up with the idea of a new centre for performing arts.

The cultural policy person by contrast tends to search out the distinctiveness, specialness and uniqueness of a place or a city, one aspect of which might be the arts. They will focus on how these resources can be used to create overall cultural vitality ranging from how a city's intellectual heritage can be turned into projecting the city as a centre for debate through say a conferencing strategy or how local food can both be celebrated and promoted as well as provide a platform for exports. Having scanned local resources they might see the potential of the design and fashion industry and its associated training infrastructure and come up with the idea of a design centre that both encourages designers to develop a unique local style yet at the same time combines this with a business incubator centre and best practice observatory. Equally they may see potential in the city's intellectual life and develop a festival of ideas or science rather than an arts festival. This creates completely new connections and new resources such as from the scientific or business community. Therefore it has implications for funding, management and partnering.

### **Auditing cultural assets**

The check-list below is proposed to get the thinking going and as a means of analysing where a city stands, yet each city will adapt this as they see fit:

- **Is there a vision:** Is there an overarching vision for the city within which there is a role for a culture perspective? Who took part in any vision making process and were people with cultural knowledge and cultural literacy included? Have urban development plans from initiatives in a city centre to the suburbs thought through potential and the urban design with an eye to making the city more distinctive rather than only imitating what others have done on the principle of 'suitably and appropriately imitate the best of the best and reinvent the rest'.
- **What has your city done so far?** How is culture defined and used – narrowly or broadly? Where have the major investments been historically? If they have been in arts infrastructure where has the main emphasis been and in which art forms? Is what has happened so far relevant to the concerns and interests of the city today and the future? What is the balance of investment in infrastructure versus activities and programming? Is the current balance blocking and restricting cultural development? Is it possible to both maintain the existing infrastructure and to develop new projects? Should priorities change? Should some institutions or projects close and is this politically possible? If you started from a blank sheet would you make the same decisions?
- **Unique resources:** Is it possible to think of assets from scratch and in a detached way so highlighting what is special about your city? Is it traditions in making or crafts that could be adapted through new technology? For example, design of clothing; the use of particular materials; forms of furniture and carpentry; certain forms of music. Are there particular intellectual traditions, say of humanism or a tradition of tolerance, that could help both the self-understanding and image of the city; is there a scientific specialism or university research priority where there is a talent pool? Are there food resources and gastronomy traditions that can be exploited, such as Parma has with its ham? Can problems be turned into opportunities, such as happened in Derry in Northern Ireland, which used its experience of inter-religious crisis to, developed the internationally renowned Centre for Conflict Resolution? Are there connections to be made between science and the arts in terms of developing new insights, products and services? How can these assets be turned into civic pride, economic, image or tourism potential?
- **Talent strategy:** What is the talent pool of the city and where are its specialisms? Does the city provide opportunities for this talent to express

itself? Is there a social inclusion agenda that encourages active participation and allows people to tell their own stories? Is the formal educational infrastructure flexible and innovative enough to meet emerging needs, what about informal arrangements? Is talent leaving the city or coming to it? Which groups are leaving or coming to the city and why? Can this be addressed by existing strategies?

- **Artists and independent arts projects:** How many artists or independent arts organizations are there in the city? Is there a lively artistic discussion culture? Is the artistic community encouraged and given licence to criticize and comment? Are there meeting places for creative people to congregate? Is the cultural scene recognized by outsiders – other parts of your country or abroad? What evidence is there for their vitality, such as international recognition or prizes? Is the independent arts scene encouraged by public authorities through project funding or particular incentives? What is the balance of funding given to independent initiatives in contrast to mainstream cultural institutions? Are artists part of discussions on urban planning and the visual environment? Are there collaborative projects between artists and architects or environmentalists and planners? Are there sufficient artists studios and is there potential for re-using under-used buildings?
- **Celebrations and festivals:** What kind of celebrations exist? Are they effective and challenging? When were they founded? Are new events coming on stream? Are events that have outlived their usefulness being stopped to release resources for new ones? Are festivals being linked to broader issues? For example in Brisbane the river festival is also linked to an annual major conference on water use in cities. Is there an annual calendar of events? To what extent is the wider community involved as participants?
- **Cultural institutions:** How well traditional local cultural institutions, such as archives, libraries, museums, academies, visual and performing arts venues doing? Are they well organized, financed and managed? What is the balance of their income, what proportion is self-generated, given through subsidy or through sponsorship? What is the balance of funding given to building maintenance or core staff versus for production? Are new forms of management and ownership emerging, such as trusts and partnerships or collaborations developing? Is there an overall modernization programme or are the institutions operating as they have always done? Are they rethinking their role as institutions in the context of the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Are there too many institutions or too few? How many does your city need? How many can you afford? Are the funded institutions relating to the overall vision of the city and helping to implement that vision? How many independent cultural organizations are there? Are these being encouraged to set up?
- **Cultural associations and centres:** What is the role of cultural associations or cultural centres; are these new style organizations or traditional throwbacks to a former era? What role do they play in civil society development? How are they constituted, managed and networked? What activity programmes do they have? Are the participants amateurs or semi-professionals and is there evidence of their contribution to creativity development? Do the associations or centres connect with the education sector and adult learning or are they more self-referential?
- **Decision-making:** How is culture organised, what is the system and its structure and who is responsible for what and how does co-ordination between different agencies and actors occur? Why was it decided to organize culture in this way and has it been effective? How does the public, private and community sector relate? Do public authorities work inter-departmentally and across the sectors in partnership in order to

maximize opportunities? For example, are there links between tourism agencies and the department of economic affairs? Are there local links with cultural industry companies or associations? How are the major institutions governed and has this been recently assessed? Would there be better ways of organizing?

- **The regulatory regime:** What legal competences and legal framework does the city have within which cultural workers, artists and organization operate? Are most decisions determined at the regional or state level? Does the city have local powers to encourage the cultural industries, such as film, TV or the music industry? If so in what areas, such as the ability to create incubator units or to help with property related issues? Does the city have power and resources to encourage interesting projects through economic development funds? If there are restrictions how can they be overcome and with whom does the city need to partner?
- **The incentives regime:** What financial instruments are available at the local level, such as local tax raising powers or the power to dedicate resources to specific initiatives? Are there pre-identified priorities that allow the city to marshal resources? Is the relationship with the private sector developed? Has the city the capacity to harness opportunities both at the national as well as international level, such as the European Union and foundation funding or resources available from international development banks?
- **Providing the evidential base:** Although the focus of cultural policy should be broad it remains important to gather the key facts about the labour market in the different arts sectors, has this been done? What is the state of training within the different sectors; how well is cultural management developed and are there strategies to stimulate employment in the cultural sector? What are the dynamics of the book trade, music, film, television or design industries or those of the media and new information technologies? How well are these understood and analysed? Have economic impact studies been undertaken? Is this positive or negative? How well are local industries doing or are they being dominated by foreign owned companies? Where does most cultural product come from? Are there incubator units and support structures to encourage company development and local product? Are there links between culture departments and those concerned with economics or tourism?
- **Harnessing heritage:** Are the national legal provisions for monuments, heritage protection and natural landscapes adequate and are they being implemented locally? Is there a need for specific local laws? Are there regulations and incentives to encourage public and private owners to invest in heritage? Are there active links between urban planning departments, tourism, conservation bodies and cultural divisions?
- **Education and training:** What is the condition of education and training at primary, secondary and tertiary level? What are the main changes in the last five years and what are the trends within specific fields, for example within art forms such as music, performance or the visual arts? What about areas not concerned with the arts? Is there the possibility of creating completely new courses linked to your emerging city vision? How well are industry schemes and more informal programmes developed, such as in community arts or management expertise to generate more active participation? Are there programmes for all age groups? Is there an inter-generational agenda?
- **Cultural minorities:** Do minorities provide a potential source of innovation and enrichment to your city? Is this being harnessed from food to traditions in design or crafts? Is diversity seen as a contentious issue and if so what is being done to foster inter-cultural understanding? Are there arts events that celebrate the diversity? Are there fusion art forms

between different cultural groupings? Is your city thinking through what an intercultural city could mean, for example in urban design terms?

- **Participation:** What are the trends in participation, such as audience figures or consumption patterns? What is the balance of participation in the classic arts, or folklore or popular culture or other non-arts activities? How much viewing and participation is domestic or foreign culture? What policy initiatives exist to promote participation in cultural life both for mainstream and marginalized groups? What is the level of participation in commercially generated activities and what for subsidized activity?
- **Support to creativity:** Are there any incentives or policy initiatives that foster creativity? Are there schemes targeted at non-artists to increase their appreciation of creativity? Is the city itself concerned about its own level of creativity in solving problems and identifying opportunities? Is it rethinking leadership and how leadership might develop? Would the leadership be described as top-down and hierarchical or as more enabling?
- **Gaps in provision:** What are the major gaps and opportunities identified and what are the major obstacles to implementing ideas and projects? Are there, for example sufficient spaces for young innovators to work? Are the gaps more concerned with finding resources for activity or concerned with developing new institutions?
- **Catalyst opportunities:** Are there particular catalysts that could embody a new vision for the city? This might be adapting an old building to new uses by combining old and new architecture; it might be to insert a new project in an under-used part of the city or rethinking an old style institution so giving it new life. It might be too developing an event or festival that expresses distinctively what the city offers or using a new city marketing campaign to rethink how the city is projected?
- **Analyzing across the chain:** If the city assesses its potential across the chain of creation from ideas generation to production to distribution and level of debate – where are the strengths and weaknesses? Is the city good at generating ideas, which then are implemented elsewhere? Is it a production base? To what extent is a debating culture on the city's culture and its development encouraged and fostered through the various media? Is this a sophisticated debate? Is there an alternative cultural scene across in the city to balance mainstream activity?
- **Connecting to the outside world:** How well are the creators in your city connected? How many of their services are sold locally, nationally or internationally? Are there efforts to increase international connectivity? What international organizations operate within the city, how effective are they and do they contribute to the local scene?

### **Benefits of developing an urban cultural strategy**

The DCMS guidance note argues that there are benefits of cultural strategy because it:

- focuses on the cultural needs, demands and aspirations of the communities covered and encapsulates the vision of the local municipality;
- brings cultural activities centre stage in the business of the local authority and can demonstrate that the cultural needs of the area are being met in an efficient, equitable and effective way so helping to ensure there is equity and access for everyone to cultural activities.
- done well a cultural strategy sets out both the intrinsic value of cultural activities as well as their instrumental benefits - the positive contribution cultural activities make towards the economic, social and environmental well-being of the local population.

- in so doing it inspires local people and communities and promotes volunteering in cultural activities as well as creates pathways for people to participate in different cultural activities, for economic reasons or for pure enjoyment, throughout their lives so encouraging lifelong learning.
- defines priorities within and between services and reconciles competing demands
- informs the individual detailed service plans, such as for theatre or visual arts as well as non-arts departments and the work of individual officers, departments and other agencies
- acts as a framework for reviewing the performance of different areas
- encourages innovation and partnership solutions in providing cultural services and identifies opportunities designed to meet local needs
- sets a direction and priorities for the municipality and other agencies and organizations
- provides links with other plans and strategies of the municipality and its partners and promotes partnerships, such as with tourism, land-use planning or business development
- helps create a clear vision shared by other funding agencies and so acts as a lever and rationale for gaining funding from external agencies, including: the region, central government, the European Union, private sponsorship thus bringing synergy to the work of all the agencies involved.

## **Principles**

The following principles should underpin urban cultural strategies.

- be based on the needs, demands and aspirations of the various communities of interest which the municipality serves and so be guided by a locally distinctive vision for culture in their area that ensures fair access for all;
- be developed through a cross-departmental and intra-agency approach. The municipality should lead the process but work in partnership with other agencies from all sectors. This shares resources and expertise, ensures different views are heard, and helps to develop synergy between agencies;
- take a holistic, rather than a service or department, viewpoint, and not be bounded by the responsibilities of a specific department or committee;
- make clear links with these other strategies and plans of the municipality setting out the roles of the different plans, and clarifying where the urban cultural strategy informs and fits into those other plans
- central to the strategy is to ensure that meaningful and active consultation with a wide range of organizations and local people - both users and non-users of services. This ensures common ownership as many, if not most, cultural activities are managed by community organizations, the private sector or by other public agencies.
- take account of the wider central and regional government context, including the objectives of central government, sponsored agencies such as those concerned with heritage, tourism and external promotion. These include the cross-cutting agendas of public health, community safety, social inclusion, environmental sustainability, regeneration or lifelong learning;

- be focused on strategic choices, priorities for resources and action, defined outcomes, forward planning, mechanisms for implementation, mechanisms for monitoring and review. It should ensure too that the strategy document contains an Action Plan or other implementation mechanisms as well as means for monitoring and review, including performance indicators and other means of assessment.

### **The Cultural Strategy Development Process**

Any strategy development process is complex and time consuming. It involves different skills and expertise, and is likely to take a considerable time from inception to publication.

#### **Stage One: Preparation (2 -3 months)**

This will involve decisions on the formation of the team who will develop the strategy, the scope of the strategy and the time and budgetary allocations necessary to ensure the success of the process. Elected officials will need to appraise the brief and approve resources. The broader operating context for the cultural strategy, including a review of other strategies and plans, for example in economic or physical urban development should be spelt out as should provisional key issues. These will include local priorities and will test the rationale why some existing services are provided, such as the level of funding for theatre or museums.

The strategy is better undertaken by a team rather than an individual because of the insights and knowledge required as well as roles that need to be performed: champion, co-ordinator/chair, researcher, strategic thinker, constructive critic and author of the report, as well as those who will implement the strategy. At least one member of the team should have sufficient authority to ensure that the strategy is not sidelined. Elected Members need to be involved from the start to ensure that the municipality as a whole has ownership of the strategy. A balance needs to be struck between having officials from other departments and agencies to help develop a shared ownership and vision, and ensuring that the strategy development process does not become too bureaucratic and an end in itself.

#### **Stage Two: Consultation and Research (3 -4 months)**

While the extent of consultation will depend partly on the local authority and its resources, it is fundamental to the strategy process. Consultation will help to identify and clarify the local agenda, test the provisional strategic cultural issues for the municipality and its key partners from the cultural field and elsewhere, help to establish the needs of the community's interest groups, help to prioritize services and activities as well as give an objective view of the present performance of cultural services and in so doing help set a common agenda and objectives

Whilst there are many different ways of consulting from one to one interviews and groups sessions or visioning processes, depending on the groups being consulted and its purpose the resources (money and time) should not be underestimated.

Research should also be conducted into existing services, facilities, voluntary clubs and practitioners. A full-scale audit of present provision should include the voluntary and private sectors and so be informed by the nature, pattern and spread of present activity. As well as mapping present activities and gaps, this helps to define key issues and concerns. But it is also important to be pragmatic about what can be achieved and not to aim for perfection or be diverted into information-gathering for its own sake.

In this process a number of strategic dilemmas will emerge that need to be addressed. Every strategy area has issue that seem intractable. In the cultural planning field these include: Balancing the need for individuals to act with freedom with the need for accountability; whether to focus on the city centre or suburbs; whether to highlight flagship projects or community developments initiatives; programmes to encourage cultural production and therefore possible jobs or income or consumption based initiatives; new technology or more crafts based approaches, physical projects or live activities; or developing a regulatory regime to avoid the effects of gentrification. The task of strategy is to overcome these dilemmas.

### **Stage Three: Analysis (2 -3 months)**

Once the consultation period is over, the responses and views need to be analyzed. Whilst the quantitative data will be useful (e.g. what percentage of the population take part in which cultural activities), often the qualitative findings prove more significant in clarifying key issues and informing strategic priorities (e.g. perceptions of the cultural sector and what the gaps and barriers are). The identification of key issues, community needs and strategic priorities will also help to identify review and monitoring mechanisms, the preliminary identification of performance indicators and proxy indicators (both quantitative and qualitative), which can be later refined and targets set in the specific plans for delivery.

### **Stage Four: Creation (2 -3 months)**

Based on the work so far, the consultation draft of the strategy can be developed, drafted and re-drafted. Whilst there may be contributions from several sources within the municipality and its partners it usually makes sense for one person to be responsible for drawing it all together as a consultation draft; which should be endorsed by elected officials and - where appropriate -partner agencies before being circulated more widely. This does not mean it is finalized, but that there is political and partner support for the overall approach outlined in the draft.

### **Stage Five Consultation B (2-3 months)**

The second consultation stage is designed to encourage feedback on the consultation draft, to refine and improve it, and to remedy any gaps or errors. If practical, the draft should be circulated to all organizations that responded formally. It should also be widely publicized, so that interested members of the public can also respond in detail. There will also be meetings with the key cultural players to discuss the consultation draft and, through this dialogue, amend and refine the draft.

### **Stage Six: Completion and Launch (1 -2 months)**

Having collated responses this phase is more likely to involve re-editing and amendment, rather than wholesale revision with the final version presented to for adoption by elected officials and a public summary produced. A strategy is more than just words on paper. To be successfully implemented it will need the co-operation and enthusiasm of a wide range of individuals and organizations throughout the city. A high profile launch will help to start the process.

### **Implementation, Monitoring and Review**

A strategy is only as good as its implementation. Monitoring mechanisms should be in place to ensure that the strategy remains on course. This does not mean that the strategy is fixed in stone. Indeed, a good strategy will be flexible enough to take on board new legislation, new developments, new priorities and new aspirations. Similarly, a date needs to be set when the strategy will be reviewed.

Finally cities are the drivers of national development; cities are the hubs of creativity and innovation in most countries and cities can generate most impact for themselves if they maximize their cultural resources.

Charles Landry founded Comedia a cultural planning consultancy, in 1978. Comedia has worked in 35 countries including Australia, Bosnia, The Netherlands, Bulgaria, Germany, Spain, Italy, Russia, Poland, South Africa, Finland, Sweden, the USA, Hon Kong, Ukraine, Croatia, New Zealand and Yemen. During that time it has undertaken several hundred projects concerned with revitalising public, social and economic life through cultural activity; quality of life studies; cultural industry development projects and city and regional strategies. Most recently Comedia has been involved in 6 major programmes. They concern an international study on creative cities and creative urban milieux; the social impact of the arts; the future of public libraries and the development of the idea of the informed citizen; the role of public parks and public space; the future of the non-profit sector; the viability and vitality of cities. He has been responsible for over 180 assignments for national and local authorities and funding agencies both in the UK and abroad.

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