

# THE ART OF REGENERATION

## Urban Renewal through Cultural Activity

By Charles Landry, Lesley Greene, Francois Matarasso,  
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### SUMMARY i

<b>1: RETHINKING REGENERATION &amp; THE ARTS</b>	<b>1</b>
A changing climate	1
What makes a town successful?	2
Factors of success	5
Understanding art, culture and creativity	6
Creating liveable cities: an artform in itself	7
<b>2: THE CITY TODAY</b>	<b>9</b>
What is quality of life?	9
The post-industrial city?	9
City crises and responses	10
Future problems and solutions	18
<b>3: ARTS DRIVEN REGENERATION: The Current experience</b>	<b>21</b>
A sense of historical perspective	21
Inspiration from the USA	22
Inspiration from Europe	23
Cultural policy and urban regeneration	25
The weaknesses of some current practice	26
Re-assessing the response	28
<b>4: A CREATIVE DIFFERENCE</b>	<b>31</b>
The benefits of participatory arts programmes	31
A typology of culture-led regeneration	33
<b>5: CITY EXAMPLES</b>	<b>39</b>
Barcelona: City of Parks	39

<b>The Bradford Festival and the Mela</b>	<b>41</b>
<b>Hay-on-Wye: Book Town</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>The Custard Factory, Digbeth</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Penzance: Mazey Day and Golowan</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>Halifax Piece Hall</b>	<b>49</b>
<b>Brickbottom Artists Co-operative, Boston</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Segal Self-Build: An architectural artform</b>	<b>51</b>
<b>Hull: Gateway to Europe</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Hundertwasser Haus, Vienna</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>St. Ives: Tate of the South-West</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>See the Lights: Come to Maidstone</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Temple Bar, Dublin, and the Green Building</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Fish Quay, Sunderland</b>	<b>64</b>
<b>Ilfracombe: A Civic Trust Initiative</b>	<b>67</b>
<b>6: CULTURE DRIVEN REGENERATION: Some proposals</b>	
<b>69</b>	
<b>BIBLIOGRAPHY</b>	<b>72</b>



Dedicated to the memory of

Edward Goodman

1915 - 1996

**The Art of Regeneration**

**Urban Renewal Through Cultural Activity**

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## LONDON

I wander through each chartered street,  
Near where the chartered Thames does flow,  
And mark in every face I meet  
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.  
In every cry of every man,  
In every infant's cry of fear,  
In every voice, in every ban,  
The mind-forged manacles I hear.  
How the chimney-sweeper's cry  
Every blackening church appalls;  
And the hapless soldier's sigh  
Runs in blood down palace walls.  
But most through midnight streets I hear  
How the youthful harlot's curse  
Blasts the newborn infant's tear,  
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

William Blake (1757-1827)

## UPON WESTMINSTER BRIDGE

Earth has not anything to show more fair:  
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by  
A sight so touching in its majesty:  
This City now doth, like a garment, wear  
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,  
Ships, towers, domes, theatres and temples lie  
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;  
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air;  
Never did the sun more beautifully steep  
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;

Ne'er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!  
The river glideth at his own sweet will:  
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;  
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

**William Wordsworth (1770-1850)**

## SUMMARY

Cultural projects have played an increasingly important role in British urban regeneration since the mid-1980s, but recent developments have focused less on capital projects, and more on the capacity of arts activity to support community-led renewal. This book, based on over 10 years' experience of art and urban regeneration policy in the UK and abroad, draws on recent British experience to argue that:

- Arts and cultural activity have become an increasingly important part of urban regeneration in Britain, though the bulk of effort and resources to date has been on capital investment.
- Increasing interest is being shown in participatory arts programmes which are low-cost, flexible and responsive to local needs.
- This use of the arts coincides with a shift in emphasis in regeneration strategies towards seeing local people as the principal asset through which renewal can be achieved.
- Arts programmes have been shown to be effective routes to a wide range of social policy objectives.
- Regeneration agencies wishing to harness the arts, experience problems because the models of success, and key factors in replication, are insufficiently known, but further research is being undertaken to address this issue.
- The National Lottery's restriction to capital projects in the arts severely limits the value of this new source of funding in supporting renewal through cultural activity in many of Britain's most disadvantaged communities.

### City problems

British cities have experienced a profound restructuring of their economic and social fabric since 1945. Some change—the decline in traditional manufacturing, for example—has been obviously economic. But apparently social changes, like the drift of populations from centre to suburb, have had an impact on the local community and economy alike. This erosion of individual commitment to the city has been accelerated recently by the trend towards private provision in all areas of daily life, from transport to leisure. Urban renewal initiatives have in the past tended to overlook the importance of social factors in their pursuit of economic growth. This situation is beginning to change.

### Cultural responses

Artists and cultural organisations are urban agents par excellence, and have always contributed to the vitality and character of cities. In



the United States, since the late 1960s, they have shown how they can contribute to urban renewal, often through the creation of studios and 'cultural quarters' in run-down central districts. In the aftermath of recession in 1981, British cities began to look around for solutions to their economic problems, and some hit upon these American and parallel European experiences. The use of cultural activity to fuel urban regeneration was principally economic in conception and purpose. Its credibility was given a significant boost by a Policy Studies Institute survey, *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (1988), which presented the arts as employer of 500,000 people and the fourth biggest invisible export earner. A series of contemporary conferences (such as those of the British American Arts Association) also contributed to positive perceptions of the arts among local authorities and private developers. The redevelopment of Liverpool docks, which included the 'Tate of the North', a maritime museum and TV studio, was a high-profile cultural regeneration initiative which set the tone for the 1980s. Major cities like Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham put in place cultural development strategies, and committed millions of pounds to them. The notion of the 'cultural industries' was launched.

### **Limitations of existing approaches**

Although much important, worthwhile and lasting redevelopment ensued, some drawbacks also became apparent:

- Cultural regeneration based on capital projects could be costly.
- It could take a long time, during which the construction industry benefited much more than the arts sector.
- It often required substantial public sector revenue support on completion.
- It did not always connect easily with local people and their needs.
- It was inappropriate for, and beyond the reach of, smaller towns.

Growing awareness of these limitations has recently encouraged people to look more closely at the connection between urban regeneration and cultural activity, and begin to change the focus of their responses.

### **Renewing citizenship through cultural activity**

At the same time, many of those working to renew our cities have come to see the human potential of a community as its most important asset. They accept that wealth creation, social cohesion and quality of life ultimately depend on confident, imaginative citizens

who feel empowered and are able to fulfil their potential. And they have turned increasingly to the arts as a mechanism to trigger that individual and community development. They have prioritised cultural programmes above capital investment for several reasons:

- Cultural programmes are relatively cheap and very cost-effective.
- They can develop quickly in response to local needs and ideas.
- They are flexible and can change as required.
- They offer a potentially high return for very low risk.
- They can have an impact out of all proportion to their cost.

Britain and Western Europe can now show many examples of the successful use of cultural initiatives in urban regeneration. They have shown a number of important benefits arising from cultural programmes:

#### **Enhancing social cohesion**

Festivals, community plays and other events have shown how cultural activities can bring people together. Carnivals in towns like Bradford, Nottingham and Leicester have attracted mixed audiences celebrating different cultures. The community theatre movement in Belfast draws on Catholic and Protestant communities, and plays dealing with key pre-occupations of both traditions have been seen across the city.

#### **Improving local image**

'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign is only the best-known example of the recent trend to promote cities on the basis of their cultural character. From Edinburgh to Aldeburgh, arts marketing has changed the way places are perceived – or caused them to be perceived in the first place. Shrewsbury benefited from a tourism windfall following the success of the Brother Cadfael 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.

#### **Reducing offending behaviour**

Arts programmes with young people in British cities have shown positive alternatives to addressing criminal behaviour in the community. Bolton City Challenge is one among a number of agencies able to show change in the young people as a result of the work, and cost-effective results when set against the cost of car crime and burglary.

### **Promoting interest in the local environment**

Arts organisations have taken a lead in developing people's interest in the local environment. Groups such as L4a have specialised in using the arts to create a forum for discussion between planners and residents. The planners of North Kesteven were influenced by the work of Common Ground and its emphasis on local distinctiveness and the creation of new traditions. The National Forest commissioned People Express, a local arts organisation, to develop a strategy for art in the forest.

### **Developing self-confidence**

The Collard report on the Manpower Services Commission's drama training projects was one of the first demonstrations that arts training provided an effective means of developing self confidence and helping people into work. Video training offered to people in the North West by First Take is one example among hundreds of such initiatives. The Nerve Centre in Derry was established by local artists and is now a vital training and education resource for North West Ireland, as well as contributing to the vitality of the city.

### **Building private and public sector partnerships**

The arts are unusual in spanning the range of public and private sector activity. There is scope for the entrepreneur, the small business and the grant-aided to work together. Alan Ayckbourn's long-standing commitment to Scarborough has won the town a £1.5 million theatre development, while David Hockney's association with Salt's Mill has been essential to its success. Richard Booth brought about the regeneration of Hay-on-Wye by transforming it into the world's largest centre for secondhand books.

### **Exploring identities**

The arts have been used by communities of all sorts to explore and affirm their identities. In the Fish Quay Festival, it was the identity of a run-down part of Sunderland. In the case of New Breed theatre, it is the identity of disabled people. In Belfast, mentioned above, community theatre has opened new dialogue, with a play about Protestant men on the Somme being performed to full houses in an Irish language arts centre in the Falls Road.

### **Enhancing organisational capacity**

Arts programmes have helped individuals and communities to develop the organisational skills to help themselves. The Craigmillar Festival Society, founded in 1964 on an Edinburgh housing estate, has become a model of community empowerment for many other

initiatives from Easterhouse and Cranhill Arts to the Pilton Video Project in Glasgow.

### **Supporting independence**

Arts programmes with people with mental health problems and others have helped develop confidence, interests and support networks to make a success of living in the community. Work by East Midlands Shape in Derby has proved a cost effective form of support and empowerment for who have been able to articulate their views as a result.

### **Exploring visions of the future**

The artist's ability to see problems from a different perspective and offer previously unheard of solutions is vital to urban regeneration. Artists like Angie Hiesl in Köln, or Christo in Berlin, have created work which has challenged residents' ideas of their cities. In Bradford's Little Germany and elsewhere arts festivals have been organised as a way of drawing attention to the possibility of change and helping people imagine what the future might be. Small changes to bye-laws can have a great impact on urban life, as authorities in Manchester, Bradford and elsewhere have found. Helsinki's Night of the Arts is an annual event that has been running for 5 years. The city allowed cafés and restaurants to put tables and chairs on the streets and extended licensing hours. This has been so popular that it has become the norm, changing the way residents enjoy and perceive their city.

### **What is special about the arts?**

Looking at the dozens of instances where arts programmes have made a positive contribution to local vitality and urban renewal, one must ask whether other types of social programme could not have been equally productive. In some cases the answer is certainly yes, but the arts have a special character to offer because:

- They engage people's creativity, and so lead to problem solving.
- They are about meanings, and enable dialogue between people and social groups.
- They encourage questioning, and the imagination of possible futures.
- They offer self-expression, which is an essential characteristic of the active citizen.
- They are unpredictable, exciting and fun.

Arts programmes are not an alternative to regeneration initiatives like environmental improvements, training schemes or youth development projects. But they are a vital component which, like yeast in dough, can transform a given situation.

### **Regeneration, culture and the National Lottery**

It is unfortunate that the important new resources of the National Lottery are restricted to capital investment in the arts. Britain's most disadvantaged communities—who provide so much of the Lottery's cash—rarely place new arts buildings at the head of their list of priorities. Nor can they easily secure the matching funds and revenue commitments required. But the resources to develop cultural activities which can bring new vitality and other social benefits would be very valuable to neighbourhoods across the country. It is time to revise Lottery guidelines so that the money can help people help themselves through creative programmes.

### **Developing strategies for success**

The difficulty encountered by many local authorities and regeneration agencies when faced with the potential of the arts is often a practical one: where to begin. Successful initiatives are still relatively few, and often known only locally or among specialists. Where they have been reported, it is anecdotally. Attempts have rarely been made to quantify their achievements, or compare their cost-effectiveness with other forms of intervention. The key factors in their success—which are central to the question of replicability—are not analysed. The problem is not made easier by the relatively unpredictable nature of arts activity. The outcomes of an initiative cannot be foreseen with the reliable detail of a capital investment. New research is being undertaken by Comedia on the social impact of participatory arts activity. This involves case studies across the UK and abroad, and is intended to produce evidence of the impact, and a methodology for its assessment, and will be completed in Spring 1997.



## Section 1

### RETHINKING REGENERATION & THE ARTS

#### A changing climate

The city has always been conceived in contrasting ways. What Blake saw as a mad agglomeration of all that was terrible in the human condition, impressed Wordsworth at the same moment as the summit of human achievement. This dichotomy is the heart of urban vitality, the dynamic tension that makes the city the cradle of most political, technological and social change.

But for Western Europeans in the second half of the twentieth century, struggling to create a post-industrial urbanism, it is Blake's vision of the city that has come to dominate. Dr Jekyll is losing control of Mr Hyde. Cities are seen as unpleasant, noisy, polluted and raw. We highlight the squalor, not the vibrancy, the discomfort not the liberation. These bleak images are smothering centuries-old visions of towns as civilised, sophisticated and gracious—everything we mean by 'urbane'. Yet most of us live in towns, and know that there is still much to be said for urban life, if only the best could be brought to the forefront once again.

The classical urban values of civic pride, cultural identity and local independence, refracted through the ideas of the great, city-building nineteenth century, still resonate for many citizens today. Cultural expression offers the city an opportunity to forge its own world of unique meanings in the face of the dominant corporate priorities and styles of the consumer age. As a result there is a growing interest in the role of the arts and wider cultural factors in restoring something of the quality of urban life which brought Wordsworth such peace.

In Britain, we are beginning to see new approaches to the familiar problems of urban renewal find a more responsive political climate. The Department of the Environment, for example, has begun to question its approach to retail development in the face of the gradual asphyxiation of so many of our town centres.<sup>1</sup> Comparable changes in transport policy suggest that the unchallenged domination of the private car may have reached its zenith, and that a consequent resurgence of public transport—particularly in the form of urban rapid transport systems like Sheffield's and Manchester's supertrams—may be in sight.

Other initiatives exist at a local level. There is an increasing interest in quality of life studies which focus on questions of amenity, attractiveness and ambience. Local authorities, exploring new roles as enablers, are giving more attention to the local canvas on which they hope their individuality will attract both investment and skilled citizens. Croydon, for example, recently held an competition to generate ideas

for the centre's improvement in the 21st century. These initiatives highlight concern to improve our living environments and, with better consultation and hard-won experience, stand a fair chance of success.

### **What makes a town successful?**

The process of searching out examples of successful use of the arts in urban centres—among which those contained in this book represent but a few—has led us to form some conclusions about the key factors in that success. Here, in no significant order, are some whose importance can be seen in the best towns we have studied or worked in.

#### **Leadership**

Most of the driving forces described in the case studies are perfectly ordinary people. The main qualities required would seem to be a little vision, a little enthusiasm and a great deal of determination. Anyone can be a driving force.<sup>2</sup>

The importance of a driving force to bring about change can scarcely be overestimated. That role has often fallen to political leaders like Chamberlain in Birmingham, and contemporary local politicians have shown themselves equally capable of developing a local vision, although in different circumstances and with less power than their 19th century predecessors. The new industrialists, like Sir Titus Salt in Bradford, or Lever at Port Sunlight, also transformed their towns, and the present diminution of interest shown by industry in the life of local communities is a critical brake on regeneration strategies in Britain.

More recently, a new kind of entrepreneurial individual has become an important engine for neighbourhood regeneration. Jonathan Silver transformed Salt's mill into a set of technology and cultural industries workspaces, using a performance of *West Side Story* to help people imagine how it could be brought to life again. The artist David Hockney originally from Bradford played an important initial role in supporting the project, where there is now a Hockney Gallery. Eric Reynolds and his company Urban Space Management already has market developments at Camden Lock and Spitalfields in London to his credit; in 1995 he began a new cultural redevelopment on the former Sneinton market in Nottingham. Bennie Gray has revitalised the old Custard factory in Birmingham as a focus for regenerating Digbeth. All these developers make extensive use of arts programmes to get developments going and to sustain them. Elsewhere local campaigners with non-commercial aims have helped rescue Halifax's extraordinary Piece Hall, or Norwich's wonderful, but empty medieval churches.



### Identity and distinctiveness

At Glasgow's Princess Square shopping centre local artists and craftspeople have made railings, banisters and seating and an array of quirky objects reflecting their Scottish approach to design.

Identity is about creating a distinguishing character, one that is not imitative but draws on the unique nature of a place and its people. It seeks to identify and strengthen that which is special about a situation, and requires attention to detail, affection and care. Areas can be defined using artistic features, such as the entrance gateways signalling the edges of Chinese quarters in cities like London and Manchester. These highlight distinctiveness, and act as visual signposts and ways of celebrating particular cultural identities. But this is marshy terrain, and it is easy to get bogged down in the superficial, even the false. The imperatives of place marketing can easily draw one into facile or questionable promotions: Belfast, for instance, is now having to think hard about how to meet significant interest in its recent past without trivialising it. Strengthening local identity is not an easy solution and does not follow formulas. But doing something well can raise expectations, set inspiring new standards, and create a benchmark for future development. It often means doing less better.

### Local strengths

Each place has its potential, though it may not be obvious, particular to those who live there. It may be physical—a geographical position, or a group of buildings whose historic uses are etched into local memory—or intangible, like traditions and stories, or the skills of its inhabitants. It may be old, or very recent—the Asian community has brought new vitality to the Belgrave Road in Leicester, through its food, music and art, particularly around the time of the Diwali Festival in November. By contrast Norwich has imaginatively reused its stock of medieval churches. In 1966 when the city closed 25 of 31 city centre churches it produced deep shock. It led the Council to establish the Norwich Historic Churches Trust, which maintains 16 of them for which they have found uses that are not only financially viable, but also contribute significantly to the social vitality of the city. Uses in different churches range from a puppet theatre, sculptors workshops, an antique and craft centre, to a sports facility, the probation service, a night shelter and a museum. This impressive approach shows that Norwich's cultural heritage has been recast into an appropriate and lively present and both examples show that assets can be harnessed and used in ways appropriate to current circumstances. Sometimes they involve the introduction of ideas from elsewhere which has its value, but the starting point must always be existing local resources, which are often more valuable than is realised.

### **Turning weakness into strength**

Successful schemes using the arts share a capacity to identify potential in the seemingly intractable and difficult. Often this is a run-down building or location whose structures seem inappropriate for our time. The canal basin and adjacent buildings at Camden Lock had fallen into disuse and were waiting for an upturn in the development cycle. Eric Reynolds and his colleagues could see more. What might have seemed to have no value for a conventional commercial developer turned out to be an asset for the mass of small traders and artists who eventually populated the spaces. They preferred the intimacy of its warren-like structures. As its popularity now shows the public appreciates it too. Similar examples can be seen throughout Britain: Spitalfields market, an island of generous space under the creeping towers of the city of London; the Watershed development on Bristol's waterfront or the AVEC complex in Sheffield, to name but three.

So much of industry's detritus is regarded unthinkingly as ugly and depressing. Gas Works Park is very much a fun place...and the level of use has outstripped all expectations. The park is easy now to take for granted, but how many towns one wonders would have had the courage and imagination to do likewise? (Michael Middleton)

In 1956 the Washington Gas Company abandoned its works facing downtown Seattle across Lake Union. The council acquired the site and in 1970 commissioned landscape architect Richard Haag to convert it into a park. Haag became fascinated by the remaining generator towers and intricate pipework of the old gas plant. He proposed to the council that large parts be retained as the core of a new concept of urban park. The council agreed, in the face of relentless opposition from the local press and large sections of the public. Gas Works Park opened in 1975. It features an old exhauster building converted into a children's play barn, and a reroofed boiler house transformed into a picnic shelter; the contaminated soil has been grassed and waste turned into a great mound surmounted by a sundial from which there are spectacular views of the lake and downtown. Seattle City Council has never been frightened by bold ideas, perhaps influenced by the presence of companies such as Boeing in the city. It has organised World Fairs, created freeway parks and implemented a visually-striking programme of artworks in public places.

The presence of artists and other cultural producers in declining urban areas can help break cycles of decline. What these tales demonstrate is that a weakness can become a strength if looked from another angle. A location may have a bad image in the eyes of some, but it may be exactly what others are looking for.

### Going beyond corporate style

During the 1990s many cities began replacing their street furniture with 'traditional' benches, litter bins and lamp-posts, imitating cast iron, and fetchingly picked out in gold. But because everyone was doing it, the result was still more homogenisation. Now Nottingham has begun to introduce a series of lively, complex, artist-designed street-markers with a maverick charm of their own.

The International Style, for all the beauty of its best work, had the damaging effect of making our cities more uniform and bland. In its debased form of concrete and glass slabs, it can be seen from Aberdeen to Plymouth, New York to Caracas and Sydney to Kuala Lumpur. Post-modernism has an equally patchy record, though contemporary buildings like the Ark in Hammersmith, looming like an ocean liner over an inner urban motorway, or Piers Gough's playful public toilets in Westbourne Grove in London are encouraging. They, and other examples like recent primary schools built for Hampshire County Council, show that even basic amenities can be a joy to look at and use. But while the pendulum of architectural fashion has swung back towards traditional materials and 'vernacular' styles, local character is still under threat from the standardised corporate style of commercial interests. The chain stores, with their expensively-designed images, dominate British towns, making them look increasingly indistinguishable—and dull. People enjoy difference, variety and individuality. They flock to markets selling things not found elsewhere. They love the drama of the unplanned townscape, where buildings old and new, good and not so good, tell their own long story of the town. With leisure increasingly taking place at home and in private, towns must offer something different and inspiring, if a more collective public life is to re-emerge again which arts-led developments have often encouraged.

### Factors of success

#### Involving people in renewal

Ipswich Council has created 'service panels' for several areas, including town centre management, museums, environmental protection and parks. They bring together councillors, local community groups and members of the public, who are invited to apply for membership through advertisements in the local press. and service developments are discussed by the service panels, who advise policy committee.

Regeneration is not an end in itself: it is about people and the quality of the lives they will be able to lead. Unless projects involve, and win the support of local people, they cannot be sustained over time. External solutions frequently produce only resentment and hostility. It doesn't matter how well local politicians, planning officers and devel-

opers understand what they are doing, and why, if they fail to communicate any of that understanding to their electors, employers and customers. Local ownership of projects requires the involvement of community organisations and leaders, and of people who don't belong to groups or read local papers. It is certainly a hard discipline, as many local authorities now reviewing their consultation procedures can testify, but working with local people is a fundamental constituent of success. It is not only essential for the longer term viability of a project which may be triggered by short-term funding, but also to inspire further ideas and participation.

The contrast between the public arts programmes in Bochum and Unna in Germany, exemplifies the point. Bochum Council commissioned the American sculptor Richard Serra to install massive iron slabs in the central square, supposedly to reflect the city's iron and steel industry past. Yet they are constantly defaced and thus their presence diminishes the centre. In Unna, by contrast, the town's public art programme was initiated in consultation with local metalworking firms, and their apprentices made the artworks helped by experienced artists. As a result of the real link between the makers and the residents, the sculptures are cherished and resist the vandals.

#### **Broadening the scope of planning**

In Swansea's maritime quarter a series of signposts and street furniture on the promenade use local references and poetry.

Planners usually define the terms by which regeneration occurs through their control of the local plan. But as they are not always able to see the town through the lived experience of its residents, their plans tend to be development and infrastructure-led. They are limited by professional constructs and political constraints. While the arts in Britain may be poorly-understood and burdened with prejudices, there is a growing recognition of their potential impact on urban regeneration. This increasing credibility has enabled many arts projects to become successful in urban terms because they have found ways of bringing together different local interests. Where they exist, effective local authority arts committees have often played a similar uniting role. Batley City Challenge placed an artist to work with residents of Batley Carr Estate and engage them in thinking about its renewal. As a result a number of projects have taken place, including, a campaign to create hand-made pottery door-numbers.

#### **Striking a balance between buildings and activities**

Seven years ago Kirklees Council set up Cultural Industries Kirklees to foster the development of cultural businesses. Five years later it was able to fill a media centre with commercially-viable activity which had developed at community level.

In the past decade, as urban authorities have turned to the arts for help in supporting regeneration strategies, a debate about the relative value of arts buildings and activities has emerged. This polarisation is not always helpful: each has a role to play, and what is appropriate and what should come first will depend on circumstances. However, it is clear that, given the initial and ongoing costs of capital projects, the value of activities such as short-term events or festivals have been underplayed. Although a building can be a visible symbol of what has been achieved, its sheer cost and scale can begin to define the strategy, even to the exclusion of other activities. Demand for a building should ideally grow from the determination of wider social and economic needs, perhaps at a later stage in the process, and always as part of a wider development. Huddersfield is a good example of the strategic development of community-based activity, to the point where its needs can be met through viable building projects.

## Understanding art, culture and creativity

### From the arts to culture

To be a city requires more than houses and people. It needs what Benedict Anderson formulated to define a nation: ‘imagined community’, or the conviction that other inhabitants in distant streets, whom one will never meet or see, share elements of a common culture and react to events as one would react oneself. Neal Ascherson<sup>3</sup>

Our culture is more than the arts: it is also about a lived experience of a place and time. It focuses on what is special about a town and its people and how its history can pre-figure its future. Everything about a town is then a potential resource for regeneration. This includes

- Its artistic or archaeological history;
- Its built form and architectural heritage;
- Its landscape, topography, amenities, and landmarks;
- The attractiveness and legibility of its public space;
- Indigenous and recent ethnic traditions, accents and dialects;
- Local products and craft skills, manufacturing and services;
- The quality of retailing, leisure, sport, and entertainment;
- Sub-cultures, including those of the young;
- Traditions of public social life, civic traditions, festival and rituals;

and of course skills in the traditional arts such as performing and painting, and new cultural industries such as film, rock music or digital technology. In short, culture is a summary term which describes the atmosphere created by people in confrontation with the place they live in. It is expressed in physical form and activity.

Planning is humanised when culture is given a leading role.

The potential value of culture to urban renewal is evident if its complex nature is recognised. It cannot be limited to experiential, social or economic constructs. But they may help strengthen social cohesion, increase personal confidence and life skills, create common ground between people, improve their mental and physical well-being, strengthen their ability to act as democratic citizens, develop new training and employment routes, attract those whose needs are not addressed by other provision, or develop organisational capacity – or all of these. In a world driven by economic imperatives, and focused on financial measures of success, the ‘softer’ benefits of cultural investment are easily forgotten. Accepting that culture and the arts are open to change, responsive and unpredictable, like life itself, may be difficult. Yet if we relax a little and see culture as a cheap and creative way of finding solutions, we might solve some intractable problems and respond better to how people actually live.

### **The arts and creativity**

When the Director of New York’s Central Park was looking for someone to oversee the renewal of the Conservatory Garden, she chose the artist Lynden Miller. ‘I told Betsy she was crazy,’ Miller recalled. ‘I was a painter. I had never done anything like it. But she chose me because she wanted an artist’s eye.’ Today, the 6 acres have become a space shared by the poor of East Harlem and smart Fifth Avenue.<sup>4</sup>

We should not see as the arts only route to creativity any more than we see them as equivalent to culture. Creativity, that complex imaginative force which can do so much for our towns and our lives, certainly involves experimentation and originality. It requires the capacity to rewrite rules; to be unconventional; to look at a problem from a new angle; to imagine new solutions; to discover common threads among different issues; to be flexible. Yet creativity may mean holding back or keeping things the same. The focus on sustainability in towns is often, in this sense, creative: leaving things as they are might, in some circumstances, be a courageous act. Creativity can make the most of our efforts and add value and meaning to them. But it is not reserved solely to artists – engineers, planners, social scientists, librarians, business people can all be creative if the environment within which they operate is right.

Creating a successful partnership between the arts, culture and urban regeneration requires a more imaginative understanding of culture,

and the way it works, than the traditional focus on aesthetic values generally allows. We should not be concerned with high art, low art, popular art or community art, but only with what the artists are trying to achieve, who with, and how it relates to people, their needs and aspirations. This is far not an abandonment of quality – poor quality initiatives always fail. Instead it is a call to abandon prejudice and look beyond the surface to find deeper resonances and meanings.

### **Creating liveable cities: an artform in itself**

The art of city making is as much a challenge for those concerned with regeneration as it ever was. Our goal should be the city as artefact, where designed and accidental environments of streets, buildings, landmarks and open spaces are brought to life with human activity. Cities are communities of people, living organisms not machines, endowed with particular identities, community networks and social dynamics, including economic activities, trading relations and a political community. Unfortunately people are increasingly burdened by the intractability of urban problems. It is for this reason that the idea of quality of life has so rapidly risen to the fore. Those who live in towns don't feel they can make a better life there – the forces controlling development seem so overpowering; the crises affecting towns so numerous.





## Section 2

### The City today

#### What is quality of life?

The connection between urban regeneration and culture is so easily made because of the low perception of the quality of life in the modern city, and the arts are seen as a resource through which that quality might be improved. The value of national economic indicators in measuring quality of life—which, after all, economic activity is intended to enhance—is being increasingly questioned. The hidden social and environmental costs produced by some routes to economic growth are working their way back into the economic system as real losses in real welfare. The New Economics Foundation's programme to develop new indicators go well beyond standards like personal consumption and capital growth, to health and education spending, pollution, noise, commuting costs, loss of farmland, urbanisation and loss of natural resources. Having allotted values to these factors they conclude that the quality of life of British cities has declined since the 1970s.

#### The post-industrial city?

The proportion of the employed population working in manufacturing fell from 36% to 24% between 1971 and 1986: the proportion working in services rose from 52% to 67% in the same period.<sup>5</sup>

Since the sixties urban regeneration has been a political buzz-word as attempts have been made to reshape towns in response to change in the urban economy.<sup>6</sup> The emphasis of economic activity has shifted steadily from manufacturing to service industries, and towards an emerging knowledge economy, though it must be recognised that these sectors are mutually supportive and increasingly heterogeneous. The manipulation of data through digital technology is beginning to be as important in adding value and creating employment to some urban economies as manufactured products were in the past.

Bolton is one of several cities with a large stock of under-used industrial buildings which have taken a strategic approach to their development.

These huge changes have affected city fabrics and the citizens who use them. Most obvious are old industrial buildings, often of great architectural and social value, which have become redundant and lie forlorn in the urban landscape, at the edge of city centres. Although some have been imaginatively re-used—Dean Clough in Halifax, the Custard Factory in Birmingham or Canalot in North Kensington—

many more have been pulled down to make way for retail parks, or lie under-used waiting for the next upturn in the economy.

But the state of the buildings only underlines how people have been affected by the loss of traditional employment and the social structures they supported. Some have been able to retrain for jobs in the new manufacturing and service industries but for many change has brought long-term unemployment or early retirement. The south of the country has benefited much more from what new industry there is than the great Victorian cities of northern Britain, where the rapid boom of the nineteenth century has been mirrored by equally rapid industrial recession. The catch 22 of reduced local income and increased local need can easily create a dispiriting cycle of decline and failing confidence.

Birmingham, Glasgow, Barcelona, Cologne, Bremen and Galway have all attracted international for their use of the arts and cultural industries in renewal.

The cultural industries—graphic and industrial design, fashion, television, music etc.—have offered an alternative because of their innate brash confidence, their current high growth and possible employment impacts. As a result some cities have turned to them as a source of new employment and to try to project positive and youthful image for places easily seen as old-fashioned and declining. There have undoubtedly been some successes in this area but the long term economic and social impact of the cultural industries, in spite of the influential PSI report on *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain*, still remains insufficiently tested. The most imaginative cities, however, are looking beyond the purely economic role of culture to the way in which the arts can not only improve the quality of life for a few, but transform the social contexts, self-confidence and imaginative capacity of whole urban districts. The cultural policies of Kirklees, Sheffield, Liverpool and Temple Bar in Dublin stand out in this regard.

### **City Crises and responses**

‘The city is in crisis!’ is a cliché with a deal of truth. Yet whilst its interlocking problems can be seen at every turn this does not mean that they are not being addressed. It is often artistically inspired projects that provide an initial spur to improvement. In a recent survey of City Challenge programmes, for example, Comedia found that 16 out of 23 projects saw the arts as playing a major part in their regeneration programme. They see the arts as adding quality in environmental terms and similarly as a means of working with people to build more sustainable relationships and partnerships as well as building confidence.

### Anachronistic structures

In the City of London at least 48 architecturally-distinguished post-war buildings have already been demolished, as computers change the way that business is done, and the space requirements of financial service industries.

There is an increasing recognition that the shift to services and 'clean industries' has not been matched by corresponding changes in urban infrastructures. Post-war road building, for example, was guided in large part by the needs of manufacturing and related distributive services. Inner ring roads are now strangling city centres the world over, destroying centuries-old street patterns and polluting the environment with traffic that is often just passing through. Office workers and services employers are generally in favour of inner ring roads and multi-storey car-parks, because they facilitate access, yet residents find them unbearable. The blighted outer edges of inner ring roads and their feeder roads from the suburbs have usually been abandoned by more affluent residents: remaining communities tend to be socially and economically disadvantaged. These population groups lack the political muscle to lobby effectively for radical reforms of traffic regimes.

Birmingham put part of its ring-road underground, reconnecting old walking routes, and Nottingham has considered similar proposals for Maid Marian Way.

The greening of urban motorways in the Ruhr and Stuttgart – whose shrub and tree noise shields create a wooded linear park landscape – has produced urban environmental art and illustrates how to deal with accessibility, noise, aesthetics and ecology simultaneously. Its creation required planners to think laterally and interconnect a wide range of popular needs and desires. In Liverpool and Leicester community groups have formed human chains across ring-roads and with songs, posters and placards focused attention on their danger. The Liverpool project was organised by the Rotunda Community Centre in Vauxhall where Scotland Road was blocked as part of the local festival.

In 1976 one of Britain's first mural protests was painted in Floyd Road, Charlton, when Stephen Lobb & Carol Kenna worked with local people to express their (eventually successful) opposition to the demolition of their homes.

Artistic projects can easily be used to question and explore quality of life issues. Sadly, what usually happens to run-down urban environments is a form of creative expression through graffiti as anyone arriving by train into London will testify. Although, in the hands of

activists like the American Keith Haring, graffiti has become a quintessential urban artform, it is read by many as the language of menace. On the other hand projects to create temporary bridges, wrap up buildings or paint murals are more comfortable initiatives that spring to mind.

### **Community and identity**

Changes in the nature of local government, the dispersal of key urban functions and increased mobility have all contributed to the erosion of local communities and personal identification with place. Community is increasingly defined on the basis of common interests rather than physical relationship, and people carry their own personal geographies. Even at neighbourhood level there is often no community, simply because the factors that give rise to community are no longer there. The increasing number of neighbourhood disputes which has led to the establishment of mediation services by many local authorities offers some evidence of this. The career mobility of the professional classes has in many places disconnected them from deep commitment to the place where they happen to be working. Those who remain have less access to power and resources to improve the quality of life of their communities, and are often discouraged by their employers (or by legislation) from taking an active part in local politics. One such group is the elderly and in 1995, Angie Hiesl invited 19 Köln pensioners to take part in her 'action' X-times-Human-Chair, by sitting on chairs screwed to the walls above the city's shopping streets: her aim was to 'put old people into focus'.

The successful campaign fought by residents to restore the county of Rutland, absorbed by Leicestershire in 1974, illustrates the longevity of local identity.

There are many other examples of the use of public art, festivals and special events to overcome problems of community identification. The 'Glasgow in Stitches' project invited 600 men and women to stitch a scene from Glasgow life—football, work in the docks, or the city's socialist tradition—for every month of the year. These banners are now on display at Kelvingrove Museum. The new Museum of Liverpool Life, at the Pierhead and part of the Maritime Museum, is another example of people affirming the value of their own cultures. This looks at the political, economic, social and cultural history of the city, drawing on many facets of local culture, including pop music, football and television (e.g. Brookside). Most big towns (e.g. Luton, Leeds and Bristol) have now been inspired by events like the Notting Hill Carnival and Bradford Mela to work with local people on events which similarly help people identify with a place, celebrate its strengths and articulate concerns about its problems.

### Divisiveness

Economic restructuring has produced 'the dual city' where there is a growing divide between spatially segregated low-income groups which contribute comparatively little to public budgets and higher income groups often living in the suburbs and outer areas of cities who have increasingly argued against redistribution within the city, such as the use of revenues from richer areas to pay for initiatives to ameliorate the conditions in poorer areas. In many British cities, the issue does not even arise because the outer suburbs (many of whose commuters use the central facilities) are beyond the urban political and administrative boundary. The Hexagon in Reading, the town's leading arts and entertainments facility is used by people across Berkshire, yet the town council has to cover its annual subsidy.

Diwali lights go up in Leicester's Belgrave Road in late October, and come down as Christmas lights in January, having been enjoyed in the intervening period by people of all religions and none.

Cultural and community events offer some scope for people of different backgrounds to meet and relate. From large-scale pop concerts to fun fairs, and from school arts events to community festivals, there is a huge variety of local celebrations which can contribute to bringing people together. Britain's social and religious calendar has been extended in many cities by the celebration of Eid, Diwali, Chinese New Year and other festivals, while British eating habits have seen equally rich changes. Since the 1970s, community plays have made another powerful contribution to urban cohesion in many places. Most, such as the Monmouth community play, tend to involve relatively homogenous groups, but the community theatre movement in Belfast has provided a uniquely non-sectarian space for people to articulate their ideas. Companies like Welsh National Opera have ventured into this area, working in disadvantaged areas such as Ely or Splott in Cardiff.

### Crime and fear of crime

Crime, and the fear of it, is increasing, and is often seen as an urban issue. This is partly about perception, related to increasingly home-based lifestyles and decreasing familiarity with, and therefore confidence in, outside activities—the public realm. Rises in crime must be seen in the context of the emergence of a dual labour market in cities. Some identify an 'underclass' which is trapped in a cycle of poverty, in the lower paid and less skilled sections of the labour market, with very limited opportunities for self-improvement and social mobility, though the concept is controversial.<sup>7</sup>

Pallister Park in Middles-borough is entirely monitored by CCTV, overseen from a central security point in the community centre.

Attempts have been made to limit property crime by reducing through routes in residential neighbourhoods, or separating them from the surrounding urban fabric. For indoor shopping malls, corporate plazas and some housing developments fear of crime has led to the introduction of systems with controversial implications for civil liberties. Instead of employing more people to monitor areas, towns are spending very large sums of money on control technology which, ironically, may intensify the soulessness of the urban experience.

Although closed circuit television (CCTV) has been shown to reduce crime – and the evidence is debated – it is argued that technology not only displaces crime, but also people and the natural surveillance that arises from busy streets. But any assessment of the relative merits of employing more policemen or installing CCTV requires a subtle understanding of how people use places, and real judgements about the type of places we want to live in.

I do believe the great interest and participation in cultural events in San Jose is a factor in the low crime rates we enjoy. Joseph MacNamara, Chief of Police, San Jose, California.<sup>8</sup>

When Manchester was awaiting the verdict on its Olympic bid in September 1993, licensing hours were extended to 12pm for pubs and 4am for night clubs, which responded by putting on more live entertainment. Andy Lovatt's report *More Hours in the Day* revealed a decrease in arrests of 43% and in alcohol related incidents of 16% over the four-week period. This evidence supports arguments in Local Government and the Arts, where Robert Wasserman, Assistant to the Boston Police Commissioner, is quoted as saying: 'We believe that arts activities can generally help reduce street crime. Both in those areas of Boston which have regular street cultural activities and in our theatre districts, there tends to be less crime during those times when cultural events are going on.'

And what of the young people, in the aftermath of the project? Phil, having studied all year with Anthony Waller and taken 'O' level dance, is now enrolled the Northern Dance School. John and two of his friends are taking a course in community arts dance and are working semi-professionally as dance animateurs in the community. Tracey, Richard and two of his black friends who joined later are holding dance workshops in youth clubs around town. The windows to another world are still open, and people are looking and climbing through.<sup>9</sup>

Advocates of community arts have long argued for recognition of the benefits accruing from participation, citing less crime on the estate,

enhanced self-confidence, higher take-up of places in further education and so on. The arguments are rehearsed in Victoria Neumark's report, *The Magic Exercise*, for the National Association of Arts Centres (1989), where individual career outcomes are examined. Elsewhere in the report, there is a description of the now defunct CAVE Arts Centre in Handsworth, described as possibly 'the only cultural centre in the country directly aimed at social engineering.' The centre was financed by the Probation Service which, in the words of its deputy director, Rufus Corbin, 'had run out of ideas of how to deal with the number of black clients it was getting.' The result was an arts centre which it was claimed had successfully prevented a number of Intermediate Treatment clients from re-offending and showed the cost benefits of funding arts activities in relation to community well-being.

### **Planning**

Reminiscence projects have often made a contribution to maintaining interest in the recent urban past. Age Exchange has worked on a number of theatre projects with elderly people, drawing on their memories to maintain a link between Greenwich past, present and future through a museum, shop and reminiscence centre in Blackheath.

Free market political thinking has led to shifts in planning ideology so that land simply becomes a commodity, its value to be assessed in terms of exchange without any sense of the public realm. With the continuing shift to service employment in towns, land is one of the few areas where profits can be made. There is thus great pressure on politicians to relax planning regulations in pursuit of earnings. Arts-related responses to this problem have tended towards polemic: the battle for Covent Garden, its festival and community garden is a case in point. These initiatives were used to lobby for a more human scale of development which recognised the needs of existing residents. This was successful in so far as the area has not become a high rise office zone and people come from far afield to see how this can be replicated. Ironically Covent Garden is suffering from its success and Westminster City Council is seeking ways of diverting people away from it.

### **Dispersal**

As communications, transport and distribution costs have lowered, location is less critical, and there have been trends to dispersal in the historic areas of cities. 19th century streets were not laid out with the articulated lorry in mind, and it is clearly easier to distribute goods from a motorway nodal point. Retailing and manufacturing functions are similarly affected and the mixed use which traditionally gave towns centres their vitality can be threatened. But city and town centres remain important. They are the communications hub; they

usually express most succinctly the historical essence of a place; they are the potential neutral territory where groups of different ages and backgrounds can meet and where activities can take place. It is for this reason that the cultural function of the centre is so often stressed.

In Helsinki, the old Cable Factory is provides workspace for 800 people in the midst of a new housing development.

Artists working in town centres bring a different kind of vitality to office or housing development: Although the arts are not the main use in Salt's Mill in Saltaire near Bradford, it was an artistic project—a performance of *West Side Story*—that served to highlight the potential of this magnificent building. Some 900 people now work in the mill, largely in new technologies, but about 40 of them in arts-related fields. The surrounding area has been gentrified and an adjacent mill empty for 15 years has been converted into 75 flats. The area health authority has moved into new offices, contributing to Saltaire's modern mixture of residential, offices, exhibition, production and entertainment uses. London Docklands has an active arts programme as a means of creating a human face to a somewhat gargantuan development.

### Cash

16% of revenue is under local authority control in the UK, compared to 50% in Canada.

The interconnected problems of cities have generated a fiscal crisis and eroded their capacity to plan for wider public purposes. Insufficient revenues are generated to pay for social services, education, public transport or low-cost housing. In Britain these general difficulties are compounded by the limitations placed on local authorities' tax-raising powers. Local politicians cannot create visions of the future and seek local support for them; nor can they inspire and motivate citizens to take that future into their own hands. They cannot initiate bold and creative schemes which attract local support, but which it may not be possible to fund from external sources. It is usually only in areas of substantial deprivation which are eligible for City Challenge or Single Regeneration Budget funding where more imaginative schemes can be tried out. Winning (or sometimes losing) prizes like the European City of Culture designation or Manchester's unsuccessful attempt to gain the nomination for the Olympics, can be a means of accessing resources.

A wide range of economic impact studies of the arts have been undertaken, including *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* mentioned above. This produced evidence that investment in the arts could be justified on economic grounds. Although some of the study's conclusions have been disputed, it is widely accepted that cities like Glasgow, Liverpool, or Bradford would have had fewer



tourists, less investment and a worse image without it. If investment in the arts strengthens the local economy, it can be expected to have a direct impact on the local tax base, though these calculations are complex. There is, of course a problem with focusing purely on the economic returns of the arts when many of the arts benefits cannot simply be related to how many tourists they might bring in, as they may instead have more intangible benefits such as enhancing a person's self-esteem through participation in an arts project.

The Royal Armouries will shortly move from the Tower of London to Leeds, as part of a programme to spread the country's heritage resources beyond the capital.

But a number of major cities have acquired arts resources without significant local authority investment. In Liverpool, for example, the developments at the Tate of the North and the Maritime Museum have been funded by central government and European Union sources. The new Liverpool Institute for the Performing Arts, drew on these and private sector sources including £1 million from Paul McCartney. Bradford received similar outside help with its development of the Museum of Film and Photography and refurbishment of the Alhambra. Theatres in Cardiff, Newcastle and Sheffield all received financial support through European Union funds. In Bristol the Arnolfini and Watershed Media Centre were largely funded through planning gain and the city council charges a peppercorn rent to the arts institutions.

### **Waste**

The green movement has attacked urban life, arguing that the current organisation of cities represents a poor use of resources in the energy chain. Towns rely on importing (and exporting) goods and services. Their sprawl generates increased traffic. They generate high pollution levels and noise, while the associated stress leads to illness and loss of productivity. Germany, Austria, Holland and the Scandinavian countries have taken the lead in rethinking urban development from an ecological perspective, and their re-cycling initiatives, use of green space and energy saving in housing projects are well known. The Environment City movement in Britain, with Leicester at the forefront, is a lower-key British response. During its annual show Leicester created a village with a 'green circus' to raise environmental awareness. The local theatre put on *The Boy Who Loved Trees*, a play looking at how the Western countries could save the rainforest, to celebrate Leicester's twinning with the Indian town of Vrindavan. People and Places in Brighton, who publish *Streetwise* and co-ordinate a network of 35 urban studies centres in Britain, have documented many creative environmental initiatives. These include projects where people have been encouraged to draw and write about their cities, or used photography to show the degradation of the

urban environment. Canterbury, Brighton and Notting Hill in London are particularly active centres.

### **Emptiness**

The resident population of the City of London has fallen from over 100,000 to less than 5,000 since the turn of the century.

Town and city centres have become depopulated as the logic of development has concentrated on higher-value uses (notably offices) while pushing first housing and now retailing to the urban periphery. The lack of new affordable housing tends to push poorer people into substandard accommodation or even homelessness. As a consequence the social structure of most towns centres does not reflect the social structure of society as a whole.

200 people live in the Ufa Fabrik in Berlin, and Fort Points Arts in Boston accommodates over 150 artists.

Warehouses have been converted into studios, workshops and retailing outlets selling value-added products from craft work to organic foods; these also sometimes provide living accommodation. Examples include the craft village of La Gacilly in Brittany, France, Oldham Street in Manchester and Merchant Street in Glasgow, an area which now attracts galleries, artists studios and other cultural venues. 'Atelier' developments springing up are for people who wish to work and live in the same place like artisans of the past. The buyers are often working in new technology as well as graphic designers and craftspeople. Many such workspaces, especially in the United States, have been achieved by artists challenging planning regulation. At Fort Point Arts in Boston the authority were supportive of changing a zoning regulation to permit residential development in an industrial zone, because it would regenerate a derelict area at no cost to the town. These initiatives encourage more people to come to the city.

### **Commitment**

The positive impact on York of Rowntree's depended on local owners, and may not be sustained following its takeover by the Swiss-based multi-national Nestlé.

Larger private sector industries are now rarely owned by local people. The shift towards a service economy has meant that the main private sector players in today's cities operate increasingly within large administrations – the managers of stores and banks – and often have little autonomous decision-making power. In any case the professional classes are increasingly mobile, and may not live in one city for long. Profits made locally may not be reinvested there, but vanish into complex financial operations of which the town knows little and

benefits less. These factors have produced a crisis of commitment on the part of potential private sector players in relation to local development. Nevertheless a number of larger companies such as Marks and Spencers, Boots, W. H. Smith and BT have found it helpful to invest in local cultural projects as a means of putting something back into the community where they make their profits, getting closer to that community and sustaining a positive image of themselves. The BR project to paint old bridges, as in Reading and Gateshead, is an imaginative example.

### **The car**

In 1990, environmental artist Jim Lundy grassed over Melbourne's main thoroughfare (Swanston Street) during the night to return it to pedestrian use for a short period. This action raised a heated debate and led to the first pedestrianisation programme in central Melbourne.

The need to strike a better balance between the needs of car and public transport users, and between residents, commuters and visitors has been widely recognised, though the solutions proposed remain controversial. There is a view that the power of the traffic lobby in town politics has not been sufficiently challenged, and that the problem requires a fundamental rethinking of traffic access. Artists have created work to show alternative city scenarios. In the East end of London, the Docklands Community Poster Project created a series of dramatic billboards showing how the area would be bisected by a proposed road building programme and so contributed to a rethink of the planned developments.

### **Vitality**

'Nottingham by the Sea' is an August festival when the traditional character of the English seaside is recreated by the City Council in the market square. Sand, deckchairs and entertainment contribute to a festival which, at a cost of only £15,000 contributes to keeping the city lively during the holiday season, and giving pleasure to children from privileged and disadvantaged backgrounds alike.

'We live in a cultural desert' or 'the place is dead at night' are familiar complaints. Increasingly people are arguing that places can be made livelier by establishing cultural activities. These activities are also seen as a means of resisting social fragmentation and sustaining cohesion. In fact the centrifugal forces affecting many British towns have barely touched cultural facilities like theatres, concert halls, museums, public libraries, which are still predominantly located in urban centres. Many festivals, carnivals and civic celebrations are also based in town centres, though there have been exceptions, including the siting of the new West Yorkshire Playhouse in Leeds, and the growth of multiplex cinemas on ring road sites. But the value of the

symbiotic relationship between these cultural activities and small restaurants, cafés and retail outlets is increasingly recognised as a key to town centre vitality and the evening economy. Relaxation of planning regulations in Bradford's West End (an area close to the Alhambra theatre and suffering from planning blight) has allowed a series of cafés to open onto the pavement giving the area a more pleasant, cosmopolitan feel.

### **Democracy**

The past ten years have seen a growing popular cynicism about politicians (not the most admired people at the best of times). Rarely have local politicians been able to project a vision for the places they represent, often being seen as too close to various interest groups to promote the good of the city itself. The limited room for manoeuvre given to local authorities in Britain undoubtedly contributes to the often poor relationship between Council and local electorate, even where it might be shown that they share common goals.

In 1985 the GLC organised an arts festival for the unemployed, *Jobs for a Change*. With contributions by Ravi Shankar, Billy Bragg and others, it sought to help unemployed people gain skills for work.

Sometimes the arts have been seen by local politicians as a way of communicating with their constituencies—as in the case of the Greater London Council (GLC) between 1981 and 1986, when the arts were consciously used, according to Tony Banks, then chairman of the Arts and Recreation Committee, 'as a medium for a political message.'<sup>10</sup> But community arts and development workers have argued that local, participatory projects are valuable simply because they help people to become active and questioning in their own lives and the wider community. With no political agenda beyond helping people to participate in their own neighbourhood such projects are good for democracy, whatever the choices individuals make.

### **Future problems and solutions**

Cities are not static—that, after all, is the root of their vitality—and today's problems may not be those of tomorrow. Britain's towns face economic, social and demographic challenges which can be foreseen, and certainly some which can't. Local authorities must remain vigilant and flexible if they are going to respond effectively to these demands. We will need changing patterns of investment in social care, health and leisure facilities and other urban services, in the recognition that resources are finite. Attempts to promote employment in the next century will be inadequate if we model our aspirations and plans on the social and economic structures of the Edwardian era. The success of cities and enterprises will depend less on natural resources, location or reputation and more on the creation of competitive advantage, itself depending increasingly on the

capacity of cities to develop a clear and attractive presence in a world dominated by image.

These urban problems suggest that conventionally-framed conditions of community – social homogeneity, immobility and the need to co-operate – have eroded. Modern citizens have different interests, backgrounds and lifestyles, are mobile and find little need to co-operate with their neighbours. The specialisms of town planning, traffic management or urban policy seem not to have grasped the connection between the crises and nature of urbanity. Their focus on physical infrastructures, rather than the lived experience of people, underlines the limitations of these approaches. Our towns must become less standardised and learn to emphasise their individuality. Each has its character, uniqueness and authenticity. But there is a need to re-think urban management, to create less hierarchical structures and build new partnerships between public and private agencies and citizens.

### **The post-materialist city: a utopian dream?**

It has been suggested that, in the West at least, the late 20th century has seen a move away from material values. This feeling, labelled ‘post-materialistic’ by Inglehart is hard to define, though it has been picked up by different surveys. More people acknowledge that our economic goals need to accommodate other aspirations to do with the quality of our lives. As expressed by Campbell we are moving ‘from a concentration on being well-off to a concern with a sense of well-being’. The revival of interest in quality of life is widespread, perhaps because it appeals to political groups of differing ideological persuasions – one cannot argue against increasing citizens’ quality of life, though part of its appeal and political utility lies partly in ambiguity. Quality of life assessments need to take into account both subjective and objective factors. The character of a place and its viability as a living environment depends on objective factors such as housing, transport or social provision and what the place feels like for the residents living there.

### **Physical and social regeneration**

The recognition of the potential of cultural investment to aid urban economic regeneration reached a high point in the late 1980s. But it is increasingly recognised that the arts may have more to offer in complex areas of social renewal, on which regeneration itself depends. Arts buildings can help start the process of physical regeneration, but involvement in arts activities can create the conditions for individuals and communities to gain self-confidence and renew themselves.

Policies for urban regeneration have been led by physical development. It was argued that renewal would be achieved by clearing up degraded sites, rehabilitating old industrial buildings and creating new buildings for services or leisure. It was assumed that this would

create work in construction and allow economic benefits to trickle down. However, this approach has had little impact on our most deprived areas. It is equally important to encourage targeted economic initiatives and the regeneration of communities through the building of the confidence of residents as shown by the Easterhouse Project. It is only when people are motivated and confident of their potential that they feel able to begin to reconstruct their lives and the places in which live. The recent government report *Assessing the Impact of Urban Policy (1994)* on the effectiveness of programmes in deprived areas, concluded that the emphasis on physical infrastructure programmes had not had the anticipated effect, and that greater use should have been made of social and community programmes to enhance confidence and to use local skills. The authors conclude that it might be more productive to focus urban policies on giving people real access to democratic decision-making and influence over what happens in their area, as well as on capacity building at local level so that they can act to address their own needs.

It is the cultural resources of depressed communities which need to be harnessed—skills, traditions, ideas, communal stories, self-reliance, buildings, songs and dreams. Regeneration must engage the whole person, and the whole community, and arts activities are a flexible cost-effective and responsive mechanism for engagement.

## Section 3

### ARTS- DRIVEN REGENERATION: THE CURRENT EXPERIENCE

#### A sense of historical perspective

These days we tend to assume that lively cities were always so, and to forget the role of played by the arts 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, Chartres and Canterbury, generating a local cultural industry to support the image of the city. The pewter souvenirs bought by pilgrims at the Mont St Michel are still recovered from the sea. Ravenna was a medieval arts and tourism destination that ensured its wealth for centuries. In the 18th century, Bath built its prosperity largely on the cultural characteristics of the architecture of the Woods and the cult of elegance invented by Nash. In Scotland, the link between sophisticated urban design and economic development established by Edinburgh and Glasgow was imitated with varying degrees of success by Aberdeen, Oban, Dunoon 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. In 1900 Cardiff's bid for the status of a city (and eventually of capital) was underpinned by the development of Cathays Park as a cultural centre with local government, university, court and museum buildings grouped formally on the site.

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 Electric Cinema, which has helped make the Portobello Road the lively place it is today, a less obvious one. 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 St. Petersburg, Prague, Budapest and Krakow are the cities leading today.

The success of Victorian cities lay in the different 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 cultural successful cities. Where the wealth of the city once created patronage of the arts, today's challenge is to invest in the arts, and so to create a climate which can encourage economic activity and wealth creation.

Between 1945 and 1979 public debate about the arts in Britain focused on a limited range of cultural activity, deemed to require and be worthy of subsidy. 'Culture' was therefore 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. During the 1980s—under pressure of the Government's Value For Money initiative—new arguments were developed by the subsidised sector to safeguard existing levels of Government expenditure on the arts. Money spent on the arts was redefined as 'investment', and 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 the aggressive atmosphere which followed financial deregulation in 1985, the arts were anxious to prove that their braces were as bright red as anyone else's. Suddenly everyone was interested in the unsubsidised sectors of what was being redefined as the 'cultural industries', because by including the film, recording, and publishing industries (to say nothing of fashion and computer games) in the arts the subsidised sector was able to stand knee-high to traditional invisible exports like insurance.

In 1988, the Arts Council published *A Great British Success Story*—an invitation to the nation to invest in the arts, and subsequently contributed to the PSI study. By then many urban councils, often struggling to cope with the impact of the recession of 1981-3, had become interested in these economic arguments. The Arts Council responded to this interest by producing an influential document called *An Urban Renaissance: the role of the arts in inner city regeneration*. In 1988 four international conferences on the arts and urban regeneration were held in Britain. The local authorities—whose spending on the arts exceeded that of central government for the first time in 1988/89—found themselves beginning to shape the arts debate which had up to that point been controlled by arts bureaucrats, critics and practitioners.

### **Inspiration from the USA**

North American experiences of urban regeneration in the sixties and seventies proved to be an inspiration for Britain in the 1980s. 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.

In Baltimore, development was triggered by the city council in the late 1950s through MXDs, followed by a programme of architectural competitions and the establishment of aesthetic criteria in planning to increase quality.

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 Britain to replicate this imaginative approach to cross-subsidy, though generally without a comparable degree of success, for several reasons. First, British property developers (mostly London-based national companies) were usually less committed to the location of development than their US counterparts. As important though, was a reluctance on the part of local authorities to propose new arrangements or make conditions, for fear of seeing potential developers relocate to less demanding towns. A lesser factor was the variable understanding of the issues among local authority officers, and particularly uncertainty about the arguments underlying the use of the arts in urban regeneration. Finally and perhaps most importantly local authorities in Britain have from the 1980s onwards

had insufficient powers to raise resources locally. As a result, the principle American imports are policy models emphasising the contribution of cultural policy to tourism development (cf. Bradford) place marketing (cf. Glasgow) and place-making through public art and percent-for-art strategies (cf. Swansea and Dundee).

### **Inspiration from Europe**

Public policy making developments in Europe have, curiously, not yet been sufficiently promoted in Britain. Traditions of social public life are often more developed in Europe especially 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 new mediatheque abuts a 2,000 year old Roman building—could provide valuable lessons for Britain.

At a policy level, the American model has clearly been the more influential. Yet at the same time the pressure of Europeanisation on many British cities was also visible particularly in the case of Glasgow, which in 1987 was designated by the government as the UK choice as European City of Culture for 1990. The European theme became an important place marketing tool. A Glasgow Tourist Board brochure declared that 'Glasgow doesn't really feel like a British city. Glasgow looks like a European city...and feels like one.' The brochure claimed that the Princess Square shopping centre had 'an air of opulence reminiscent of the La Galleria in Milan'. European influence was probably stronger in Scotland than in the rest of Great Britain partly because of the long tradition of cultural exchange with continental Europe, clearly visible in Scottish architecture and urbanism.

European influences, however, were visible also in the development of English cities. 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 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.

European policy approaches influenced different cities in different ways. Between 1981-86 Greater London Council, for instance, introduced a cheap fares policy for London's public transport and a summer cultural animation programme which—according to some

commentators—where inspired by Swedish and Italian examples respectively. In Sheffield, the plan to transform Tudor Square, in the heart of the city into 'a place for people in which events both planned and spontaneous can be enjoyed', saw as its model the public squares created in cities like Florence and Siena during the medieval and renaissance periods. Plans for other European-style foci for public social life also emerged in places like Newcastle, Bradford, Manchester, Birmingham and Cardiff.

### **Cultural audits**

Myerscough argued that 8,000 people worked in the arts in Glasgow, with each creating 1.8 local ancillary jobs.

As local authorities grew to appreciate the potential of arts and culture, many began commissioning consultancy firms to provide audits of local cultural resources. Arts and culture in this context were seen as a magnet to support the tourism, catering, convention and retailing industries as well as contributing to business relocation and general image creation. Many economic impact studies restricted to this type of enquiry were undertaken imitating European and especially American examples, where over 100 such studies had been completed since 1975. These studies were important because they showed that the arts sector which had previously been looked at in isolation, if at all, involved far more people and resources than had been thought. Presenting these facts was itself a powerful advocacy tool.

### **The cultural industries**

The term cultural industries includes: the performing arts (theatre, dance etc.); music (classical, popular, folk); the visual arts (painting, sculpture and the decorative arts); the audio visual and media sector (film, television, photography, video); publishing; and digital technology. They also include those sectors where the creative input is a secondary but crucial means of enhancing the value of other products: design, industrial design, fashion and the graphic arts (including advertising). Also included are the often neglected craft sector, whose skills, ideas and methods of working are crucial in helping the cultural area to develop.

A further development was the approach the Greater London Council developed in a series of studies, summarised in a publication called *The State of the Art or the Art of the State?—Strategies for the Cultural Industries in London*, which explored the capital's cultural industries. Subsequently a number of authorities particularly in the north of England took on this approach as they were particularly affected by the change from manufacturing to services. For them the cultural sector seemed to be at least one area of activity that appeared to be expanding economically. Cities such as Sheffield, Cardiff,

Glasgow, Liverpool, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Hull, Edinburgh and Nottingham all established cultural industries strategies. They used them as the rationale to develop initiatives such as Sheffield's Cultural Industries Quarter, Birmingham's Media Zone, Cardiff's Chapter Arts complex. Abroad similar projects have been initiated such as Sydney's Powerhouse Museum and associated projects around Pyrmont/Ultimo and Darling Harbour or Cologne's Media Centre.

These studies did show that cultural industries were a dynamic, growing sector of the economy. This approach meant taking an economic view of cultural activities and interpreting certain areas of culture as industries. However, in order to harness their potential it was important to adopt the wider definition of culture and the resources it represented. The distinction between high arts and low arts, or populist and elite arts, were seen as unhelpful, as were strict boundaries between commercial, amateur and subsidised arts.

It is said that the creative industries are the fastest growing sector in the world economy after financial services, IT and tourism. Whatever the accuracy of these claims, they signal that we are describing a sector of substantial scope, scale, size and importance. By focusing on 'arts as industry' new local authority players including economic development and planning sections became involved in cultural policy making, because they could see the broader impact of the investment.

### **Cultural policy and urban regeneration**

The recognition of the value of the arts brought about by these different studies laid the foundations for more integrated urban regeneration strategies driven by cultural policy imperatives. These strategies were developed during the second half of the 1980s by cities which had recently undergone de-industrialisation. Well-known examples include:

Cardiff, where public art was used extensively to enhance the sea front in preparation for a new Opera House which is to be built;

Bradford, where the National Museum of Film and Photography and the Alhambra were used to develop the tourism industry;

Birmingham, where the International Convention Centre and associated new public spaces were built; as well as the development of the Media Zone in Digbeth focused on the Custard Factory

Sheffield, which developed a Cultural Industries Quarter linked to an audio visual enterprise centre (AVEC) centre;

Hull, where an international Festival of Time Based Arts contributed to its attempt to reposition itself as a European Gateway;

Manchester, where G-Mex was refurbished for broad cultural use as well as the building of a new concert hall for the Hallé Orchestra;

Newcastle, where disused warehouses are being identified for arts use.

Perhaps most famous of all is Glasgow with its Garden Festival, the European Year of Culture celebrations, the creation of new venues such as the Royal Concert Hall and Tramway, and the celebration of Glasgow as 'City of Architecture' in 1999.

By 1987 Birmingham's economic development division was spending more on the arts than the arts committee itself. It funded developments in film, photography, video and music and set up a Media Development Agency to pursue these initiatives. However by 1994 a political realignment had taken place, which queried the focus on the city centre and the investment in cultural initiatives. It was argued that the benefits were not accruing to local people succeeding only in the realignment of Birmingham's image in the outside world. The fact that expenditure on the cultural industries was secured at the expense of the education budget caused alarm. In fact much of the investment in improvement of the city centre, from which the arts benefited, had been acquired from external agencies – e.g. some £217 million from the European Union between 1989 and 1994.

### **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. In 1989 the economist Gordon Hughes launched a serious critique of the Myerscough study, arguing that its definition of the arts was too wide and that 'the claim in the report that arts spending is a cost effective means of job-creation is highly suspect'.<sup>11</sup> By 1994, the study's claims had been revised sharply downwards: where it estimated that almost half a million people were employed in the arts, the PSI now calculated employment in the sector at 175,000.<sup>12</sup>

Most of the emphasis (and spending) on culture and regeneration in Britain to date has been on capital programmes and attempts to stimulate the cultural industries. Despite some major achievements, the limitations of the approach are now becoming clearer.

### **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. 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 200-300 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. 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, 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 it coincides 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**

<p>The Irish Arts Council ran into difficulties with its building programme, conceding that: 'Arts Centres...often involved large capital investment which was never matched by a com-mitment to</p>
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ongoing funding, so that gross under-staffing and under-maintenance meant that the buildings rarely developed their potential, either as resources for artists or as professional venues for the general public'.<sup>13</sup>

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 no cultural benefit is being derived by the local community. 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 focus on capital projects (of which more below).

### **Re-Assessing the response**

It is partly because of the identified weakness in current practice, that increasing attention has been given to cultural activity, rather than flagship buildings. 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.

In this, it has been possible to draw on a long tradition of socially-motivated art and cultural activity, from 19th century municipal initiatives to the work of the Pilgrim Trust in the 1930s and CEMA during the war.<sup>14</sup> Stifled during the 1950s by CEMA's successor, the Arts Council, these ideas re-emerged first through the community art movement, and subsequently through the work of black and disability groups deliberately working for change through cultural expression. This 'significant other' in the cultural life of Britain was sidelined in the 1980s rush to defend cultural interests by recourse to economic arguments, but remains a considerable sector both in terms of public spending and influence. 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 the National Lottery's focus on capital grants.<sup>15</sup> There may be a need to upgrade existing and develop new facilities, but the purpose of cultural investment is not to support the construction industry. The explosion of capital programmes triggered by the National Lottery has serious implications for creative activity. Will audiences expand to fill (and pay for) these new venues? Will future resources be tied to maintenance instead of participatory cultural activity? Fortunately the sometimes critical media attention given to the Lottery has allowed debate around these issues to begin.

Guidelines for National Lottery funding should be revised so that self-contained community-based cultural initiatives are eligible. This would go some way to returning some of the profit from the Lottery to the communities which provide its revenue. This should not be confined to the Arts Councils' funding. The Millennium Fund could support activities in urban parks, upgrading estates with the help of artists, new environmental art such as Grizedale in Cumbria, or celebratory work. The National Heritage Memorial Fund could help build community archives and fund the writing of local histories. The Sports Councils might support activities that straddle the arts and sports such as the new circus, physical theatre or dance. The Lottery Charities Board could support cultural programmes which address charitable objectives from children's playgrounds developed by children and artists working together to anti-drugs work through drama.

Wansbeck General Hospital commissioned a song by local choirs to celebrate its opening. Although this did not, in the end, go ahead, it remains a good example of an imaginative link between a building and its users culture.

Similar arguments can be made about other forms of funding. For example, PerCent For Art need not pay for art objects. There is no end to the scope for using participatory activity to celebrate and enhance new building developments. If a fraction of their public relations budgets were spent on cultural activities most new public projects would win local engagement far more quickly. It is notable that thinking through such changes would require a strong commitment



to an interdepartmental and inter-disciplinary approach, so that different departments with differing objectives can see how the arts can help them meet their varied objectives.

Outside London, in 1993 local authorities contributed 58% of the money spent on the arts.

If cultural investment has a value in social and economic terms, we should question the nature of public support to the arts and culture. Arts funding is often thought of in terms of central government commitment, and specifically Arts Council expenditure. But by the early nineties, local government expenditure on the arts had reached £750 million a year and overtaken the government's.<sup>16</sup> While this includes a wide range of recipients, from repertory theatre to community arts, with equally-diverse purposes, the expenditure is made for a purpose other than the support of the arts for their own sake. If the increasingly-important arts investment of non-governmental agencies (like health authorities and development companies) and charitable trusts is included, the annual figure must approach £1 billion.<sup>17</sup> (Nor, in passing, should the arts investment of the private sector, which often has a social purpose, be forgotten in this assessment.)

Social services objectives for the elderly—enhancing independence and reducing isolation, for example—can be met through arts initiatives like drama or community festivals, as well as or better than through conventional approaches like luncheon clubs.

As a result of the gradual involvement of non arts agencies in arts funding, the agenda has shifted. The Arts Council 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.

Should arts funding be a form of patronage? If so of what and for whom? Or should our aim be to change society or to improve the quality of life?

Comedia believes that it is time to rethink the purpose of state arts subsidy. As we spend large amounts of money on cultural activity, we should understand its impact, and be clear about our objectives. Developing our understanding in this field, and supporting it with

evidence, is essential as it affects the decisions made about all sorts of cultural programme. In its absence, people are prepared only to take low risks, so few resources are applied non-strategically, producing underachievement at best and failure at worst.

Art has always been employed by the different social classes who hold the balance of power as one instrument of domination—hence as a political instrument.

Diego Rivera<sup>18</sup>

We do not accept the dilemma presented by the arts funding system: to pursue high standards or extend access, 'Raise or Spread?' as expressed in the Arts Council's annual report in 1951. 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.

## Section 4

### A creative difference

#### The benefits of participatory arts programmes

In 1989, Paul Collard reported to the Department of the Environment that MSC drama trainees were more successful in gaining employment outside the arts than trainees on general courses such as computer skills.<sup>19</sup>

The arts are a vital ingredient in the quality of urban life. The most important impacts—creativity, imagination, vitality, questioning—are also the hardest to measure or control. But many impacts can be related to participation in the arts. In particular they offer a route to personal development which suits how people learn about communication, personal effectiveness and self-reliance, and have shown their attraction for those who have found conventional education opportunities inappropriate. As a result participation can improve and widen life choices and give confidence to individuals, who often become key agents in restoring vitality and confidence within local communities. This process has produced a wide range of positive impacts.

#### Enhancing social cohesion

Community projects such as Nottingham's Rock and Reggae festival can impact on people's attitudes to other cultures and increase awareness of racial issues.

Festivals, community plays and other events have shown how cultural activities can bring people together. Carnivals in towns like Bradford, Nottingham and Leicester have attracted mixed audiences celebrating different cultures. The community theatre movement in Belfast draws on Catholic and Protestant communities, and plays dealing with key pre-occupations of both traditions have been seen across the city.

#### Improving local image

Arts and Community by the Community Development Foundation (1992) recorded changing attitudes towards places or institutions as a result of participation in arts activity.

'Glasgow's Miles Better' campaign is only the best-known example of the recent trend to promote cities on the basis of their cultural character. From Edinburgh to Aldeburgh, arts marketing has changed the way places are perceived—or caused them to be perceived in the first place. Shrewsbury benefited from a tourism windfall following the success of the Brother Cadfael 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.

### **Reducing offending behaviour**

Arts programmes with young people in British cities have shown positive alternatives to addressing criminal behaviour in the community. Bolton City Challenge is one among a number of agencies able to show change in the young people as a result of the work, and cost-effective results when set against the cost of car crime and burglary.

### **Developing self-confidence**

The Collard report on the Manpower Services Commission's drama training projects was one of the first demonstrations that arts training provided an effective means of developing self confidence and helping people into work. Video training offered to people in the North West by First Take is one example among hundreds of such initiatives. The Nerve Centre in Derry was established by local artists and is now a vital training and education resource for North West Ireland, as well as contributing to the vitality of the city.

### **Promoting interest in the local environment**

Bryant Park, behind New York Public Library, has been transformed from a dangerous no-go-zone used by drug dealers. Over 5 years, the artist Lynden Miller created a people-centred garden which attracts up to 10,000 people a day.

Arts organisations have taken a lead in developing people's interest in the local environment. Groups such as L4a have specialised in using the arts to create a forum for discussion between planners and residents. The planners of North Kesteven were influenced by the work of Common Ground and its emphasis on local distinctiveness and the creation of new traditions. The National Forest commissioned People Express, a local arts organisation, to develop a strategy for art in the forest.

### **Building private and public sector partnerships**

The arts are unusual in spanning the range of public and private sector activity. There is scope for the entrepreneur, the small business and the grant-aided to work together. Alan Ayckbourn's long-standing commitment to Scarborough has won the town a £1.5 million theatre development, while David Hockney's association with Salt's Mill has been essential to its success. Richard Booth brought about the regeneration of Hay-on-Wye by transforming it into the world's largest centre for secondhand books.

### **Exploring identities**

The arts have been used by communities of all sorts to explore and affirm their identities. In the Fish Quay Festival, it was the identity of a run-down part of Sunderland. In the case of New Breed theatre, it is the identity of disabled people. In Belfast, mentioned above, community theatre has opened new dialogue, with a play about Protestant men on the Somme being performed to full houses in an Irish language arts centre in the Falls Road.

### **Enhancing organisational capacity**

The Craigmillar Festival Society, founded in 1964 on an Edinburgh housing estate, has become a model of community empowerment for many other initiatives from Easterhouse and Cranhill Arts to the Pilton Video Project in Glasgow.

Arts programmes have helped individuals and communities to develop the organisational skills to help themselves. The ability of people to come together around a common goal, to discover solutions to their self-determined problems and pool energy and commitment to achieving them are all natural outcomes of creative activity. With effective support new organisational capacity can be developed and applied to other initiatives, with or without an arts focus. Participation in the arts can help raise people's expectations and create the conditions for consensus to emerge, leading to the establishment of private, public and voluntary partnerships, and the confidence to secure commonly-agreed objectives.

### **Supporting independence**

Arts programmes with people with mental health problems and others have helped develop confidence, interests and support networks to make a success of living in the community. Work by East Midlands Shape in Derby has proved a cost effective form of support and empowerment for who have been able to articulate their views as a result.

### **Exploring visions of the future**

The artist's ability to see problems from a different perspective and offer previously unheard of solutions is vital to urban regeneration. Artists like Angie Hiesl in Köln, or Christo in Berlin, have created work which has challenged residents' ideas of their cities. In Bradford's Little Germany and elsewhere arts festivals have been organised as a way of drawing attention to the possibility of change and helping people imagine what the future might be. Small changes to bye-laws can have a great impact on urban life, as authorities in Manchester, Bradford and elsewhere have found. Helsinki's Night of the Arts is an annual event that has been running for 5 years. The city

allowed cafés and restaurants to put tables and chairs on the streets and extended licensing hours. This has been so popular that it has become the norm, changing the way residents enjoy and perceive their city.

### **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 Liverpool or Ilfracombe, 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 redevelopment of Temple Bar in Dublin as a sort of national cultural quarter is an impressive achievement by any standards. But it has left arts workers in other parts of the city—particularly those working with disadvantaged people—with serious questions about the role of culture in modern Irish society.

The most obvious catalyst for regeneration—though not always the most successful—is an arts building. After all, it was speculative development in the 18th and 19th centuries which did so much to create British towns in the first place. Building projects are often initiated by local authorities or, like the Tate of the North in Liverpool, by development agencies. They are expensive, flagship projects, which often—as in the case of the Cardiff Bay 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. But, 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**

Donegall Street in Belfast has become home to several arts organisation in recent years, each taking on a cheap lease on their own initiative. There is already 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 restaurant in the Canalot building in North Kensington. 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, with current arts activity in the capital having moved further out to Hackney and similar areas. The skill is in maintaining low-value uses with wider benefits such as creating liveliness in an area, while allowing the cycle of renewal to increase property values.

### **Events as regenerators**

Oldham Council has revitalised a moribund festival called Tulip Sunday which took place annually in 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 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 'Cittá 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 developments.

### **Flexibility as regenerator**

In Helsinki the Night of the Arts has been running for five years. The city 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.

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 encourages others to follow. The indoor, introspective life of some cities can be 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 an 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 and 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 as Paul Collard's 1987 report on the effect of arts led MSC training programmes showed.

### **Mechanisms as regenerators**

Mechanisms and schemes, drawn from abroad or developed in Britain, have played a part in urban regeneration. Among the best known is the Percent for Art scheme modelled on that current 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. In the early 1990s the Arts Council initiated annual awards modelled on the European Cities of Culture programme. So Manchester was 1994 City of Drama, and Swansea 1995 City of Literature, and each was able to gain publicity and secure new resources as a result. The latest such mechanism is the National Lottery funding, whose long-term impact remains to be seen. However, its present emphasis on capital spending, which runs counter to much of the experience described here, is a disappointing restriction.

### **The individual as regenerator**

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.

The critical role of individuals in regeneration has already been mentioned. Their vision, tenacity, even obsession is always a factor. When the arts act as a regenerator there is always a project champion, though this is true of most successful regeneration projects. 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, Jonathan Silver of Salt's Mill or Bennie Gray who was responsible for the Custard Factory). 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**

Shrewsbury 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.

The association of artists with places has long been recognised as valuable in terms of local identity and tourism potential. 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 while they live—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 underground, and made the ‘largest art gallery’ in the world and a major tourist attraction for the city.

Artists see things from a different perspective. They turn weaknesses into strengths by recognising value in what the rest of us disregard. In the Lanes in Ilfracombe, artists saw the potential of an area of nooks and crannies which could be brought to life with a little care. At a time when our towns 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 in which they live and work than those whose occupations require them to move around.

The contribution of Simon Rattle to the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra proved a decisive factor in convincing the City Council to commit itself to an arts-focused regeneration strategy.

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.

### **Marketing as regenerator**

The marketing process itself can be part of the regeneration dynamic, as in Glasgow 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 the best example. 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 Public Art Development Trust in London and the Artists Agency in Sunderland have popularised the use of art in public places 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 British American Arts Association through its conferences the 'Arts and the Changing City' in 1988 and the 'Artist in the Changing City' in 1993 had a significant impact on local authorities attitudes towards the arts in general and their contribution to urban regeneration. 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.



## Section 5

### City Examples

#### Barcelona: City of Parks

##### Introduction

Countries and cities released from years of political repression invariably exhibit a sense of regeneration even if the practical effects take some time to develop. Barcelona is no exception, but it has the additional advantage of being the regional capital of the most independent and individual region in Spain, with an international standing for its distinctive cultural traditions. A lack of finance did not limit the imagination of the new administration's Public Works department, among whose first tasks in 1980 was to 'open up' the city as part of its revival. Bohagis, the spirited Director of the programme, launched a phased programme of new pocket parks and small plazas, concentrating on derelict spaces and the hidden historic areas of the city. The Spanish tradition of 'placas' provided an important cultural context for a long-term plan which developed organically into a master plan for the whole city. Artists were seen as an essential component of the new design teams charged with assessing and developing the city's public spaces in consultation with residents. By 1991, some 200 parks had been created or were planned, and 50 sculptures had, or were about to be, commissioned. The 1992 Barcelona Olympics only boosted a process which was already well-established.

##### Creative planning

The Ajuntament—Barcelona's City Council—was concerned to create a lively city which valued social and cultural traditions rooted in neighbourhood identity. Rather than release all land for commerce or housing, the Ajuntament prioritised local community needs and, in one of its most imaginative ideas, granted temporary order uses on land for parks. These 'temporary' orders may last as long as 50 years, but in allowing parks to be built they prevent dereliction in the city, while preserving future building land should the city's housing needs expand. The Ajuntament also purchases land especially for parks. This concept of 'temporary' allows collaborating artists and architects a great deal of freedom. Even given the Catalan predilection for the surreal, absurd and brightly coloured, many works may not have been designed in such quirky or humorous ways had they been commissioned as 'permanent' works. The Ajuntament also has a healthy attitude towards historical sites and are not afraid to mix the old with the new in the creation of living communities or inspirational city-sites. So, for example, the Tapies Foundation, housed in a 15th century building is now topped by an extraordinary sculptural 'cloud' of light filaments which float above the rooftop and

light the site at night. It is not easy to imagine a British planning authority approving such an innovative combination.

### **The art of many functions**

Since designers, planners and community leaders work in teams with artists their aim is not simply to place a work of fine art in a square and hope that its 'enhances' the space, but to exploit art's social value alongside its aesthetic function. A constant theme is 'greenery and water', with its obvious healing connotations. In many places the idea has been expressed literally with new lakes, fountains, well-planted walkways and covered plazas. The Parc Crueta dell Coll, at the city's farthest point from the sea, is a lido carved from an old quarry. Sculptures by the American artist Ellsworth Kelly form a dramatic gateway to the park, and a huge hanging crab-like sculpture by Catalan artist Eduardo Chillida makes an extraordinary centre-piece over the lake. The Parc de l'Esacio del Nord is a huge expanse where disused railway buildings are being converted into a new cultural centre in a landscape which is itself an environmental sculpture by American artist Beverley Pepper. Trees planted in a whirlpool patterns, and hillocks for children to skate and cycle on are decorated with ceramics in a tribute to Gaudi and Miro.

The choice of artist has balanced the international and the local. By 1991, 29 Spanish, 16 Catalan and 15 foreign artists had been involved in the city spaces programme.

Other parks run down the centre of roads, breaking up streams of traffic and creating canopied walkways. Most interlock through a system of 'greenways', always accessible to cyclists and pedestrians. Among the most exciting of these offers views of Calatrava's sculptural new road bridge. Most of the parks have some element of play as central to their design. This might take the form of 'play sculpture' for children—always brightly coloured and attractive—but the sculpture might include, or simply be, a wall for the hand-ball games so beloved by the Spanish, or mounds and decorated hills for roller skates and bicycle races. Each park is designed according to the distinctive character of the neighbourhood and the interaction between the locale and the design has been paramount. Internationally renowned artists like Richard Serra (not otherwise known for his interest in community-based art), have agreed to work 'in-residence' in the neighbourhood to discuss, consult and develop what is right for the space. It is notable that there is no hierarchy of city spaces, so that minor artists may well be given major city centre sites, just as artists with world reputations may be allocated less

prestigious neighbourhood sites. What is important is that the whole city is linked with parks and sculpture – quality is not zoned!

Barcelona has the largest public art programme of any city in Europe, and whilst addressing Catalan pride by commissioning local artists, it has successfully bolstered its international prominence by its clever patronage of the 'great names' in contemporary modern sculpture too. As a result, Barcelona has secured the atmosphere of an international capital, while retaining its distinct regional identity.

### **Key issues**

Imaginative planning processes dependent on teams of design professionals working with artists and architects, and flexible planning agreements, led to innovative schemes and interesting parks. The focus on community life as a key objective combined with interlinking the neighbourhoods, each with its distinct identity, has produced a city which feels good to be in and is easy to get around. The impact of traffic (which is bad) is mitigated by well canopied and well-greened walkways down the centre of roads and a by great deal of imaginative planting. Above all the regional culture, with its emphasis on a distinctive architectural and sculptural tradition are upheld and developed by a consistent policy in which art and architecture are given significance in the transformation of the city. Investment in the programme amounted to about \$50M by 1991.

### **The Bradford Festival and the Mela**

Bradford is a city with an ethnically mixed population of around 200,000. It has a history of addressing regeneration issues through cultural development and is well known for the quality of the refurbishment of the Alhambra Theatre and for securing the Museum of Film and Photography.

The Bradford Community Festival was started in 1987 by the Economic Development Unit of the City Council and runs over 3 weeks. In 1989 the festival organisation became an independent company limited by guarantee, but maintained the original objectives which remain the keystone of festival policy. The intention is to ensure that the whole community whether defined by origin, geography, or interests, is involved, and has a local voice through the festival. This aim depends on a programme which reaches beyond the limits of the actual festival dates but impacts on the city throughout the year via artists residencies, workshops and an education programme involving 20,000 children. The vacuum created by the paucity of effective arts in education provision means that the creation of any future arts audience is increasingly being left to the independent arts sector to provide on behalf of councils. Attendances at the festival average half a million visitors.

### **The Mela**

The Mela started in 1988 as a relatively small part of the festival programme held on the last weekend on a small sports field. Its success in attracting 15,000 people meant that in 1990 it was offered pride of place in the festival finale, an opportunity offered to different arts groups each year. Held in Bradford's new Lister Park the Mela exceeded all expectations, and the finale was completely reprogrammed so the Asian content was increased. The Mela became 'unstoppable', building up numbers quickly to its current 140,000 visitors.

The programme is varied. Held in the outdoors the emphasis is on the performing arts, especially music, dance and drama. In 1994 there were 40 such performances on 5 open air stages, in addition to a large number of strolling players and musicians who enliven the whole park. There are also a huge number of stalls specialising in Asian foods of all kinds and craft work. Artists and visitors are local and international. Although no detailed visitor survey has been undertaken, it is known that a significant proportion of visitors are from the Indian sub-continent and from elsewhere in the UK. Media attention is international attracting articles in European and Indian newspapers and magazines, as well as BBC World Service.

### **Local Impact**

Although the Mela has an undoubted impact on tourism to Bradford, its greatest value is the fact that it has succeeded in involving the local Asian community to the extent that it has become the city's Notting Hill Carnival. As a local businessman put it, 'They feel proud of it and expect it to be an annual event'. At the first Bradford festival finale in Lister Park, the Bradford Festival organiser remembered Asian community leaders crying with joy and hugging him repeatedly saying how much the Mela had 'made us feel that we are proud to be here'. The Mela enfranchised the Asian community culturally and boosted their local confidence. It has helped to improve race relations significantly: 40% of those coming to the Mela are white, participating in an event in which they are outnumbered by Asians yet they feel very safe and confident.

### **Investment**

The Bradford festival budget is about £600,000 varying slightly annually. Bradford Council provides on average 40% of its funding. An additional 20% is raised through sponsorship and grants from organisations such as the Arts Council of England, Yorkshire & Humberside Arts, European Union and Urban Programme related funding a further 20%. Tickets, merchandise and rentals from stalls provide the rest. The Mela Festival receives a direct grant annually of about



£90,000 from the above, but administrative assistance is uncoded so the total subsidy is actually about £110,000.

## **Hay-on-Wye: Book Town**

### **Introduction**

Until 1961 Hay-on-Wye was a fairly unprepossessing Welsh border town, dependent on declining farming and agricultural markets for its economy. The half-ruinous castle in Hay was owned by the Yardley Family who had made their money in cosmetics and had lived near Hay since 1903. Richard Booth, related to the family, attended Oxford University and decided that he wanted to deal in secondhand books. He did not wish to live in London and thought what better place than Hay where he could keep up the castle and quietly deal.

Hay's very remoteness protected it from domination by London and Booth believed that the town could adjust to, indeed would benefit from the international connections which he had. As a man of reasonable means he began to purchase secondhand books which quickly filled up the castle, and so when other buildings became redundant and went on the market—the cinema, the fire-station—there was always a ready buyer in Richard Booth.

### **Reaching critical mass**

The idea that a whole town full of bookshops could become an international attraction was before its time. The Cinema Bookshop quickly became the 'biggest secondhand bookshop in the world', and was sold onto a London businessman who had seen the financial potential of investing in bookshops in Hay. By the early 1970s Hay had established an international reputation and there are now 42 bookshops in the town. They cover specialisms as diverse as cinema, the arts, the occult, history, militaria, poetry, children, Americana, philosophy and economics. The publicity (and visitors) which the town and its eccentric trade attracted allowed more and more bookshops to be established, by Booth and by some of his early assistants—staff at Castle Street Books, Kemy's Forward, Derek Addyman, Andy Cooke were trained by Booth.

Hay's economy was now beginning to turn, not any longer on farming, but on secondhand books. Restaurants, cafes, and businesses associated with the book trade, such as bookbinding and edition printing, were also being set up. As Booth says 'You buy books from all over the world and your customers come from all over the world'. The bookshop trade created other openings. One of Booth's competitors established the annual Literature festival, supported by the Independent newspaper, attracting an increased number of visitors during the two weeks of the Festival each May.

### **Home Rule for Hay**

On April 1st 1977 Booth declared Hay on Wye an independent state with himself as King. Three national TV stations and eight national newspapers covered the declaration, and when the Chief Executive of Breconshire Council stated that Hay was an integral part of the British Isles this serious repudiation gave credibility to the event! 'Hay is between England and Wales' retorted Booth. The statement was however an intrinsic part of Booth's own passion for local, self-sustaining economies and manual labour. Appalled by bureaucracy and government he has spent much of his life attacking such institutions, whose actions he believes hide the ambitions of big business to capture all economic trade. He developed a series of slogans to bolster Hay's unique sense of identity: 'God Save us from the Development Board for Rural Wales' and 'Balls to Walls, Eat Hay National Ice-Cream' were amongst the inventive epithets of Hay's King.

### **Economic impact**

It is undeniable that Richard Booth's personal investment in Hay – with his staff of 26 manual workers and around 200 employed elsewhere – has brought it economic sustainability in a way that no chemical agriculture, factory farming, or supermarket retailing have been able to bring to rural areas.

### **Tourism and sustainability**

Hay's population is now just over 1,400. It supports 15 large guest-houses and 4 hotels, plus many B & B's in the town, with more such places in the adjacent surrounding countryside. A dramatic rise in the number of cafes and restaurants has been seen, with 12 opening in the last 4 years. Ten antique shops have sprung up in Hay over the same period. The new Tourist Board office is now housed in a Craft Centre with working crafts studios and an exhibition area. It estimates that over 110,000 visitors come through the town each year; though there is a slight concentration during the weeks of the Literature festival, by and large visitors come all year round. The bookshops have replaced some traditional shops suffering from a declining trade, those which remain survive because of the book trade. Hay has not suffered the retail blight experienced by many rural towns in the 1980s, despite a large out of town supermarket.

### **Villes des Livres**

Richard Booth has helped set up an international book town movement which includes Montolieu in Southern France, Bredevoort in Holland, Redu in Belgium, Becherel in Brittany, St Pierre de CLages in Switzerland and Stillwater in the USA. Most recently

Fjaerland in Norway has joined the network. Others are planned for Kampung Buku in Malaysia and Miyagawa in Japan. The network is supported by 'Booth's Gazette of International Book Towns' and has recently applied to the European Union for funds to enhance co-operation and to show how very small towns can be revitalised through secondhand book-selling.

### **Key issues**

Hay is now one of an elite collection of towns around the world which deal in secondhand books and associated cultural activities. Hay's catchment area is international, and at a time when there is a plethora of literature festivals, Hay can still hold its own economically because of its specialist trade. Hay has benefited because of one man's perhaps eccentric commitment to place and independence. The specialist nature of the activity created a niche market for Hay – anyone who was in the second hand book trade had to come to Hay to deal effectively.

## **The Custard Factory, Digbeth**

### **Introduction**

When the original Birds Custard Factory in Digbeth was destroyed by fire in 1887, a whole new factory quarter was developed on the site employing more than 12,000 people. By 1980 most of the industry, including custard powder making, had gone and despite having some of the finest listed buildings in Birmingham, Digbeth became a kind of 'no-mans land'. There were hardly any residents left and fewer than a thousand people were employed in Digbeth's 45 acres. In 1989 Birmingham City Council commissioned Comedia to identify solutions for the area, and, as a result of that report it was earmarked as Birmingham's 'Media Quarter'. The development of the Custard Factory became the most important of all those initiatives because of the imaginative entrepreneurial spirit of one man, Bennie Gray.

### **The Individual as Regenerator**

Bennie Gray is a developer with a difference. His idea of profit is linked with a sense of what is good for people and communities, and an astute awareness of employment needs and work trends. So he saw the potential for a site which would attract and could be converted to suit small creative businesses. Involved in market developments in London, Gray purchased the Custard Factory in 1989 shortly following the publication of the Comedia report. A DoE City Challenge grant was awarded to help initiate the first phase of nine. This involved the refurbishment of Scott House to provide 180 workshop/studio units ranging from 100 sq.ft. to 1,500 sq.ft., a 220 seat theatre, restaurant, art gallery, dance studio and shops. The basement will be a gymnasium. Scott House overlooks the River Rea

and surrounds a lake which will double as a skating rink in the winter. Bennie Gray's touch is quick and light, inviting artists to respond to the space through commissions (e.g. 'The Digbeth Dragon' a huge sculpture on the wall of Scott House), encouraging companies to move to the Custard Factory by attractive leases and rents (e.g. DanceWorks who left London for Scott House) and providing the infrastructure such as cafes which make an attractive centre.

### **'The Largest Single Concentration of Creative Activity in Europe'**

When the Custard Factory was first marketed over 1,000 artists expressed interest in it. Scott House is now complete and fully occupied. The studio workshop side of the building is supported by on-site outlets for work. The 'Lakeside Custard Gallery' holds regular shows of work by young artists. Public art is commissioned on site from artists working in the studios. The Custard Factory Theatre is open and has held a number of productions, including one by a resident Theatre Company. DanceWorks run well-attended dance and movement classes. The Café des Artistes opened with an exhibition of 'Food as Art' and is so popular that a second restaurant seating 150 on 3 levels overlooking the lake opened very recently. A newspaper has been started. Called 'Stirring the Custard' it is full of information as well as being 'gossipy and funny'. The liveliness of the project at all times is guaranteed partly because of the availability of rented accommodation -60 flats for arts students of the West Midlands Art & Design College – on site. There are all too few such rented units in the city centre.

Links with other arts projects in the USA and Europe have started with exchange residencies and reciprocal studio facilities being negotiated. Interest from all over the world has started to flood into the Factory, and regular information sessions are arranged for visiting politicians, planners, arts administrators and others. A symposium on arts and media led regeneration projects like Custard was held there in 1995.

With Scott House complete and deemed a 'runaway success', 8 other phases are in the planning stages. Pie Studios will provide rehearsal and recording studios, private offices and other facilities designed for music enterprises. The Strawberry Fair will be an arts, design and media exhibition space of 15,000 sq.ft. Although still incomplete, it has already hosted shows from art colleges. The listed Old Library building will be a jazz club and café. Trinity Works will provide crafts and sculpture workshops for artists requiring roof height and heavy vehicular access. At the core of the whole quarter will be Custard Court a public open space with cafés, public art, seating and greenery. An international competition will be run to commission Triangle House, which will serve as the headquarters and public face of the whole Custard Quarter. The final phase will be the conversion

of Devonshire House, a decorative turn-of-the-century factory, into more studios and workshops.

### **Arts and Employment**

Custard Factory has used the potential of the arts to provide employment as its key marketing tool. With statistics comparing the numbers employed in the arts with those in manufacturing, it is argued that new jobs will come from small, individual businesses based on self-reliance and a fair amount of risk: 'There is no substitute for a culture that values enterprise and risk and does not stigmatise failure' states the Manifesto. This approach has attracted a variety of local arts organisations, including Crafts Space Touring, Photo-Pack, Shooting Stills, the National Association of Youth Theatres, Rage Theatre Company, many in receipt of funding from the City Council and/or West Midlands Arts.

### **Helping young artists**

The provision which the Custard Factory claims to make for young artists is proving to be more challenging. Rents are comparatively high and local artists fear that once the Custard Factory starts to build on its success it will, as it is already doing, attract other types of small business, forcing rents up and artists out. The original initiative provided cheap units for young artists but with no security of tenure, and the image sticks. Birmingham City Arts Department already funds a non-profit organisation the Birmingham Arts Trust which finds and runs cheap studio units (e.g. at Union Mill)—and has suggested to Gray that he work with that body. Similar discussions have been held with the Regional Arts Board. The issue for Birmingham, as in most big cities, is the need for more affordable space. The Custard Factory's commitment to the arts sector is increasingly directed towards its small business end, with in-house encouragement given to tenants through hosting government sponsored 'Business surgeries'.

### **Art and Education**

The artists of the future will only be able to run viable businesses if there is a wider community interest in the arts. The Custard Factory has established links with all tiers of local education: with Art Colleges to provide exhibition facilities, accommodation and the like, and with schools through Birmingham's Education and Business Partnership, and with career 'taster' sessions. Custard is also a venue and facilitator for BTEC and NVQC training courses. It is seeking sponsorship to support short term intensive training courses to help school-leavers to get a start in media industries such as TV, and music.

### **The Custard and the City**

The city of Birmingham is not directly involved in the Factory. Organisations funded by the City may be tenants at the Custard Factory but it maintains an arms length relationship with the company, which has been criticised by Bennie Gray. The complex nature of the project and the range of interest groups and planning issues (street safety and lighting, for example) has led the City to respond by setting up a high level interdepartmental team to meet the developers each quarter. Although team work is not unusual for Birmingham (it was used in the Convention Centre development) it is still not common, and the scale of the Custard factory has necessitated this kind of discussion. Representatives from planning, economic development, leisure services, the arts and education departments come together to plan how the Custard Factory can help the development of the centre of the city and identify ways in which the Council can help the initiative.

### **Investment**

It is estimated that completion of all the phases will require an investment of £20 million over a seven year period. Much of this has come from central government grants made directly to the property development company, and not through the City of Birmingham.

### **Key issues**

A combination of factors have led to the regeneration success of the Custard Factory. The first was initiated by the City of Birmingham which commissioned the initial study. That study led to recommendations which in turn led Bennie Grey to undertake the enterprise, capitalising on a Government and local authority backed opportunities. The convivial mix which Gray has created at the Custard Factory is an important factor in the success of the enterprise and the regeneration of the area. Perceptions of Digbeth are still slow to change, (issues of safety at night and accessibility for instance) but the closer involvement of the City Council should ensure a positive way forward.

### **Penzance: Mazey Day and Golowan**

#### **Introduction**

This extraordinarily popular event came about as a result of what the project officer has called 'synchronicity'—a series of coincidences, projects and issues which between them have changed the town of Penzance not only for the week of Golowan but now for the whole year.

Eight years ago the Penwith Community Archive was working with local schools developing local history and reminiscence projects. One school became particularly interested in the history of the traditional local festival of St. John and contacted Knee-High Theatre Company to work with them on it. At the same time the Penzance Chamber of Commerce, concerned to regenerate a town depressed by declining fishing industry and poor quality retailing, requested that the local authority organise a 'pirate's day' or something similar for the town. A group of representatives got together to consider what could be done. The work that Knee-High Theatre had developed with Alverton Primary School was a serpent dance, based on an 18th century Cornish processional dance linked to St. John's Day, and celebrated on 'Mazey Day'. This became the focus of the proposed celebration of Penzance.

### **Flagging Spirits and Flying Colours**

Very quickly the festival idea caught on and a number of other schools became involved in the project. Workshops, grant-aided by the Calouste Gulbenkian Foundation, were organised to produce banners and flags to accompany the serpent dance. A large number of local musicians and dancers became involved in the workshops for the procession itself, so there was a cumulative effect on the whole of the community. After six months of work Mazey Day, June 26th 1991 was launched and nearly 20,000 people led by 500 children joined the dance, with banners, flags and musicians as they wove through the streets led by Knee-High. The success was such that the Council agreed to extend the festival to a week in 1992, and by 1993 over 30,000 people were enjoying the event.

### **A Festival Business**

The success of the festival gave the few voluntary workers an immediate problem. The possibility of turning the festival into an organisation or professional association was explored, but difficulties were encountered when the Charity Commission refused to acknowledge the non-profit basis of a festival organisation. These discussions and the need to extend the variety and breadth of the preparatory work gradually turned Mazey Day into a year long process and organisation. Oral history projects were started ('All Our Born Days' for example); banner-making workshops in several schools run through the year; performance workshops with local companies (e.g. The Common Players) work on the special songs and dances. The Gulbenkian Foundation agreed a major grant in 1992, and so it grew. An old warehouse, the Barbican, now houses the offices and workshop and exhibition space. 100 committed volunteers support 15 or so unpaid core workers: two or three people are paid a minimal remuneration for their work. Fundraising has become a central activity, as has marketing the festival as part of a wider process to rethink the image of Penzance for residents and outsiders.

In fact, the festival is now an ongoing series of powerful cultural activities rooted in the traditions of the area, with the fortnight-long Golowan (the feast of St. John) celebration the mid-summer highpoint.

### **'Native Cultures not culture for the natives'**

The celebration has captured the imagination and enthusiasm of the people of Penzance. On Mazey Day itself the town shuts down apart from the pubs – who, it is said, make more on that day than in the rest of the year put together! A small, vocal minority oppose the festival. They question the economic impact of the festival and argue that tourism, Penzance's only 'industry' does not substantially benefit. The organisers, by contrast, argue that the festival is not just about commerce, but a balance in which local people can find and reinforce their own local identity and pride of place. The festival has very real support locally and has snowballed as a result. It challenges the debilitating effects of a depressed area, uplifts the spirits and builds confidence. It also helps knit together a community which is a complex, and not altogether easy mix of old Cornish people and relatively recent incomers. Nor does the festival go away; it is there throughout the year adding meaning and richness to a developing, but stable tradition. It is, as the project organiser argues, 'native culture, not culture for the natives'.

### **Investment**

Exeter University assessed the financial viability of Golowan three years ago, and expressed concern at the low level of investment relative to the impact and value to the community. The project is still not revenue funded ('we are desperately under-funded and have no security'). In 1993 grant aid was £22,000, but the annual costs of organisation were £35,000. The contribution of District and County Councils is only 7-8%: this puts a constraint on the enthusiasm of joint funding bodies like South-West Arts which only match local authority grants. One-off grants for different aspects have been made – for example to the Foundation for Sports & the Arts and the Calouste Gulbenkian grant already mentioned. All other funds are raised by benefit concerts and performances, street collections and stalls (jumble sales etc.) through the year. Penwith District Council has just completed an arts and cultural strategy in which Golowan is to take a key role.

### **Key issues**

Arts festivals – indeed most cultural events – are primarily not about business but about other factors which, may eventually regenerate, but not in the linear way of business. Events like Golowan are about



an expression of local identity, enrichment of meaning in everyday lives, and pride of place which gives rise to a sense of individual and community confidence. Making use of local traditions and resources is all part of regeneration. Mazey Day and the Serpents Dance is, at its simplest, the reinvention of a long-lost tradition. Picking up on those kinds of cultural threads is what art is often about – teasing out real things and re-defining them for today. Successful regeneration often comes about organically, even accidentally, and it takes a certain kind of sensitivity to be alert to these possibilities and allow them to happen. We can only respect the local Chamber of Commerce that it didn't attempt to force the 'Pirates Day' it had originally aspired to, but allowed a more imaginative but riskier and richer idea to develop.

## **Halifax Piece Hall**

### **Introduction**

Halifax owed its prosperity and wealth to the wool industry. Some of the most skilful handloom weavers in the world lived in the small terraced cottages in the valleys and hills surrounding Halifax. Trading in 'Pieces' of wool was traditional and as the status of the wool merchants grew so they needed a building which reflected their wealth and ambitions. In 1779 the ornate Piece Hall was opened not long after Square Chapel alongside in 1772.

### **Architectural Quality**

Both Piece Hall and the Square Chapel were outstanding buildings of their time. Piece Hall was a stone colonnaded cloister housing 300 merchants' rooms, with a central courtyard overlooked by double-tiered galleries. The cobbled courtyard was originally grassed and sheep grazed here while trading went on. Square Chapel was described by John Wesley as 'very commodious...its structure is rather superb and the whole is finished in the most elegant taste imaginable'. It was the only brick building in Halifax and possibly designed by John Carr of York. Both buildings fell into disrepair; the Piece Hall in the mid-sixties as its use as Halifax's Fruit and Vegetable Market ceased, and Square Chapel a little earlier as congregations declined and churches rationalised' services. Both faced imminent danger of demolition – to make way for a town centre car park!

### **Restoration**

A local and national campaign was launched and Calderdale Council voted to restore Piece Hall by a single vote. In 1976 Piece Hall was opened, becoming an overnight success. Known as 'the town of a hundred trades' the basis of the rescue was as a monument to trades and shops. Over 40 small businesses, including antique shops, gift

shops, book shops, crafts are now thriving alongside a museum. The courtyard space is also used for a variety of events.

Square Chapel's fate was slightly more tortuous. Two Trusts were formed The Chapel Building Trust and the Square Chapel Arts Trust who bought the Chapel for £25 from the district Council (a counter offer of £27,000 was rejected because of the community benefit to be derived from the Trust's arts scheme). The Chapel was structurally dangerous so a grant from English Heritage was secured plus a loan from the Architectural Heritage Fund, secured by personal guarantees from two Trustees. With the structure safe, the Lindsay String Quartet performed and a Granada TV programme was filmed there. This helped the project gain profile and credibility. A director was appointed to fundraise and manage and she developed a programme for renovation based initially on a Peat Marwick McLintock study which identified the need for a small multi-purpose arts venue in Calderdale. This study convinced Calderdale Council to offer grant aid.

### **The role of the Arts**

The arts play a crucial role in both developments. The Calderdale Industrial Museum housed in Piece Hall has a history of working machinery. The Piece Hall Art Gallery shows contemporary art and has a thriving educational and arts workshop programme. All kinds of cultural events and entertainments are invited to and commissioned for Piece Hall as part of creating and maintaining a lively atmosphere to aid the main retail purpose of the building. Square Chapel is now an arts centre funded by Yorkshire and Humberside Arts and Calderdale Council. It set up a Young Musicians' Chamber Music Festival with the Royal Northern College of Music. 1994's programme included classical, jazz and folk music, a juggling and dance project and theatre performances and developing community arts work. The space is available for community use and since there is disabled access throughout the building (backstage as well) it is an increasingly popular local venue.

### **Regeneration**

The rescue of Piece Hall and its continuing success as an attraction has helped renew the centre of Halifax. The distinctive architectural qualities and the character of its shops make the Piece Hall a successful alternative shopping centre. The Square Chapel makes an important contribution to the evening vitality of the larger Halifax regeneration area. Adjacent to these projects is 'Eureka!' a children's experiential museum which attracted over 1 million visitors in 1994.

### Key issues

The Council's recognition of the potential for the architectural gem in their midst was hard won, at a time when other towns were demolishing historic buildings which are now much regretted. The intense commitment and vision of a group of local people was critical to the success of both initiatives. The buildings provided a physical and symbolic focus for an important part of the town, and have helped underline richness of the cultural experience which Halifax can offer resident and visitor.

### Brickbottom Artists Co-operative, Boston

The aim of the project was to maintain the property for artists, so re-sale rights of individual units were limited to other artists, and a limited equity mechanism meant that re-sale rights for the building as a whole had a ceiling imposed to ensure that rents remained affordable for the life of the project.

Boston's large artist community was like many others in North American cities, in that as soon as people identified disused buildings in which to work, they would be evicted as a result of gentrification which had been partly triggered by their presence. The Fort Point Arts Community formed a co-operative to buy property to break this cycle, receiving a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts for a Design Demonstration Project—the first of its kind in the USA. With the grant they hired a planner as Director and quickly found a mill building in the Fort Point area of Boston, which was renowned for its historic mills. As an advocate for artist tenants, the co-op works with Boston City to develop policies which will ensure the continuing presence of artists in central Boston. The co-op also channels grants and sponsorship for artist's studio space, and there are now many examples of such workshops throughout the city.

### A planning challenge

In 1987, a group of 100 artists formed a second co-op and, with the help of Fort Point Arts Community, purchased and refurbished Brick-bottom Mill, a 250,000 sq. ft. warehouse complex in Somerville, Massachusetts. One of the objectives of this project was to enable artists to live and work in the same place, thus cutting transport costs to individuals. However, a city zoning policy prohibited people living in 'industrial' areas, even though the area was derelict and all industry defunct. The Mayor saw that the initiative's potential for revitalising the area and that the studio workshop space was in itself a cultural facility. He therefore changed the City's zoning policy by special permit to allow residential units to be included in the old warehouse building. The effect of this flexibility was not simply to allow a group of 100 artists to live and work in an hitherto derelict area, but to rejuvenate the area making it attractive to other businesses which

have since moved into the area. Brickbottom Mill cost £1 million. Each artist contributed £650 as a deposit and selected a workshop space in a lottery. To raise the extra funds required to sponsor the refurbishment the artists chose 58 units as commercial residential apartments and pre-sold them (to non-artists on the whole). Proceeds from the sale of the apartments underwrote the artists' 91 artists' residential/studio units owned by the co-op, and secured bank loans.

### **Key issues**

A responsive Mayor, seeing the potential for regeneration at no expense to the City, altered conventional planning regulations, benefiting the artists co-operative and the town. By underwriting their scheme through the private property market the artists have been able to secure their own futures and the development of their own practices.

## **Segal Self-Build: An ARCHITECTURAL artform**

### **Introduction**

Walter Segal was a German architect who came to Britain because of the War. During the period of reconstruction he designed a system for building which was simple, adaptable but above all could be built by ordinary people. It provided people with the means of expressing themselves by offering an infinitely variable core structure which encouraged everyone's inventive spirit. Importantly people participated directly in building their own homes, creating a bond that cannot be achieved with mass produced housing. The result is that the buildings are unique and at times quirky: the artform is architecture, comparable with the permaculture settlements in Crystal Waters in Australia.

### **Segal In Britain**

Segal's methods were generally overlooked until, the late 1970s when the London Borough of Lewisham, in an inspired move to help solve their housing crisis, agreed to adopt the Segal method for a small housing project in Forest Hill. As a result of that successful initiative groups have built their own homes in Birmingham, Brighton and Bristol, and other self-build projects are in progress in Greenwich, Islington and Lewisham again. With the present homelessness crisis, local authority housing programmes frozen and interest growing in ecologically sound homes, the idea of self-build has gained status. The Walter Segal Self-Build Trust is a rapidly-expanding charity, offering information, advice, support and training to the public (especially those on low incomes and from minority groups).

### **The Segal Method**

The method of building is flexible and simple and can be used by those with no DIY expertise. Among those who have benefited are those on council waiting lists, men and women near retirement age, single parents and homeless young people. The method allows poor quality ground or steeply sloping sites (like those in Lewisham) to be used, and enables buildings to be fitted unobtrusively into the landscape with minimal site works and environmental damage.

The houses use a simple timber frame system, based on traditional English methods used since medieval times—a historical cultural resource, but updated to take advantage of contemporary standard components. It is a dry method of construction which produces lightweight buildings, individually designed to the usual planning controls. The timber frames take the structural load and sit on simple pad foundations dug at existing ground levels, designing around landscapes rather than imposing on them. The Segal method of building encourages participation by whole families, so a working group grows into a stable community as it builds. This fosters self confidence and enhances employment prospects. Recent schemes are organised around formal training sessions with qualifications included as part of the end product. The Segal method is becoming very popular with community and environmental groups as it provides permanent, inexpensive, energy-efficient buildings which are quick to erect. The buildings are easily extended as funding permits so are particularly suitable for community projects where fundraising is often phased.

### **The Lewisham Experiment**

Lewisham was the first local authority to recognise the potential for building homes and re-building lives. Serendipity brought together a local councillor (who was the architectural correspondent for the Observer) and an officer in Lewisham's architect's department. They offered 4 pieces of derelict land on steeply sloping sites, as an opportunity for self-build. All were on deep clay which makes land 'a nightmare' for conventional housing developers. One was an old dump, again making it expensive relative to scale, for developers. Segal Close, the first completed site, is now an attraction in its own right, a shrine for every self-builder! Lewisham were so impressed with the results that a second phase was agreed in 1982 and 13 families built their homes on one site about a mile away from the first, again with steep slopes unusable for the conventional housing market.

The Segal method of building was generally regarded with suspicion by architects but recently several schemes have won major awards. Twice Segal schemes have won the Gulbenkian/Times/RIBA Community Enterprise award—for the Calthorpe Project and the London Wildlife Visitor Centre. The DoE/RIBA/NHBC Housing Project

Award has been won twice as well, by the Fusions self-build black housing co-op in Lewisham and by the Diggers self-build project in Brighton – the latter characterised by its wild flower turf rooftops.

A number of British cities including Brighton and Bristol are encouraging self-built housing. Bristol City Council is providing land, building materials, an architect and a trainer – the self-builders provide the labour. In this way the city manages to reduce the impact of Government restrictions on its ability to fulfil local housing need. Future schemes will be a partnership between the Council, housing associations, self-builders and training organisations. Self-builders will recoup their 'sweat equity' (an agreed sum for their labour) after a qualifying period. The City's Local Plan has also recognised a new Segal method headquarters for the National Federation of City Farms in Bristol as a demonstration facility and visitor attraction. Recognition of the Segal method is now reaching further afield and last year a self-build village in St. Petersburg Russia was started.

### **Investment**

This varies according to size but each house costs between £24,000 – £28,000. Site set-up costs, including architect's fees are about £5,000 and site services may be extra according to the location. Land costs are additional and often provided at below market rates by the local authority. Labour is provided by the self-builders. Many councils are now funding associated professional training schemes as a 'bonus'.

### **Key issues**

Provision of housing through involvement of house-owners not only helps build self-esteem but also confidence, training and helps improve future employment prospects. Housing sites are notable for the way in which they are looked after, the attractiveness of their surrounds and the way they sit in the landscape. Segal homes create stable communities, as people who have survived building together usually enjoy living together. The Segal method of building is intrinsically less environmentally damaging than conventional house building (local materials are purchased) and increasingly all Segal buildings are constructed to higher environmental standards than other schemes in the country, with organic paint and stain finishes, waste paper insulation and home grown local timber. The houses offer improvement of derelict sites which would otherwise be unusable.

## **Hull: Gateway to Europe**

### **Introduction**

In the 1970s Hull suffered dramatically from the decline of the fishing industry, and recession in the eighties compounded the problems of an already depressed city. In 1988 the Labour Council, with the

Economic Development and the Tourism Units of the City, felt that Hull was missing out on an increasing tourist trade based on urban heritage and which cities like York had benefited from. Hull was, at the same time, making its argument within the long drawn-out debate of local government reorganisation. It was argued that a festival could underpin Hull's case to be accepted as a Metropolitan centre. 1992 was targeted to market Hull and develop a regenerative strategy with the arts and heritage as key components. This year, the 350th anniversary of the English Civil War (with which the city had important links) and of the Single European Market, was judged appropriate for a year-long festival called 'Hull – The Gateway to Europe'.

Humberside County Council, one of the partners in the event, had a new Public Art Unit but otherwise there was no local body with the expertise in the City to organise a festival or public arts programme. The City therefore set up a new Arts Unit, and committed £250,000 to the 1992 festival budget.

### **Using Local Resources**

Hull already had a number of events and resources which the Arts Unit could capitalise on. For example, Hull hosts the largest fair in Europe (larger than Nottingham's Goose Fair, but hardly known beyond the city) so this was marketed much more widely. Hull's existing local tradition, a sea-shanty festival, was supported by the Arts Unit in 1992, its 5th year, and became the largest such festival in the country. The city's small but popular Literature Festival based originally on the connection with Philip Larkin was also substantially developed. Hull is also the birthplace of William Wilberforce, the anti-slavery campaigner, so this connection too was built on. With its roots in Hull themes the festival is designed not to compete with Hay-on-Wye or Cheltenham. Since the Economic Development aim was to attract visitors, links were established with ports in Europe, most importantly Rotterdam, but also the UK, including Liverpool at the opposite end of the M62 motorway. The city began to build up its relationship with North Sea Ferries who sponsored some events, hoping to benefit from increased trade generated by the Festival.

### **Local Co-operation**

Humberside County Council's Public Arts Unit took an important role in the festival. The historic aspect of the festival was keenly pursued by councillors, who wanted to encourage both locals and visitors to appreciate Hull as a walled port city with an important architectural heritage. The Public Arts Unit invited sculptor Gordon Young to consider this aspect and he proposed a walk around the town guided by a series of paving stone reliefs depicting fishes. The witty nature of this 'fish trail' (a bronze sole outside a church; a shark outside a bank; a fleet of sardines outside an old canning factory)

drew an immediate response from the public and the trail has been an overwhelming success. It is difficult to count visitors as the trail is a wholly accessible artwork; suffice it to say that feedback has been wholly positive and groups of people are seen throughout the year following the fishes and seeing the surrounding city in a new light. Unfortunately the collaborative momentum generated by the festival could not be sustained after 1992 by the county and city councils as there was no focus for joint activity. Although the Public Art Unit's contribution was vital to the festival, broader political issues around local government re-organisation complicated official relationships.

### **Investment**

Approximately £2.2 million was generated for the festival from a mixture of private and public sources. The City's investment was £250,000; Yorkshire & Humberside Arts gave £50,000; the County Council gave £20,000 over 2 years for the public art programme and supported the Public Arts Unit itself.

### **Key issues**

Hull had hoped the festival would bring rapid results and national publicity on a par with that achieved by national garden festivals. The organisers had not reckoned with the timescales and complexities of marketing to the European travel trade. Even the 'Gateway to Europe' slogan, although well received, will take some years for British visitors, let alone those from abroad, to identify. In 1993 'Gateway Europe' was set up specially to develop tourism, but without an anchor event the slogan is in danger of becoming one of many that cities the world over use. The lesson is that a festival can make a contribution towards a more sustainable form of tourism, but that there are no massive, immediate rewards. Benefits come from sustained commitment and a long term strategy within which a festival can play a part. Yet what was important was the impact on Hull people themselves. The festival gave local people a renewed sense of self-esteem and there is now 'definitely a feeling that Hull is on the rise'. The city is 40 miles from the nearest centre and the festival helped it realise that it can make its own culture. Helping to build up a sense of pride in people and what they can do is the most important effect that a festival can have.

## **Hundertwasser Haus, Vienna**

### **Introduction**

Vienna was heavily bombed by the Allies in 1944-45 and remained occupied until 1955. Reconstruction architecture was functional and featureless, consisting of cheap grey concrete high-rise blocks. One artist, Friedensreich Hundertwasser focused his practice on a sustained critique of this type of building. Paintings and water-



colours were not his medium; between 1958 and 1975 he toured the world developing his 'Mouldering Manifesto against Rationalism in Architecture' and giving his 'Naked Speech for the Right to a Third Skin', which proclaimed the rights of all people to choose their own type of dwelling and arrange it as they would their own clothes. 'Your Window Rights—Your Duty to Trees' was another popular lecture which recommended that trees had rights in cities and buildings and if we build nature into our architecture then we would not spend all our spare time driving into the countryside to seek it there far away from our homes.

Hundertwasser said that all architects should swear oath refusing to 'build houses that harm nature, animals and people, and especially peoples' souls'. In December 1977 The Mayor of Vienna offered Hundertwasser a derelict site in the middle of the city and a year later an agreement had been reached to design and build what we would call council flats. Hundertwasser collaborated with the City Architect Pelikan. By 1983 the foundation stone had been laid, and two years later the building was complete.

#### **A crazy unique house: Architecture as art**

The apartment block has 52 apartments, an adventure playroom for children, a doctor's surgery, a cafe with terrace, and a winter garden, which serves as the central core of the house. There are three communal roof terraces, a laundry room, store-rooms, and a garage for 37 cars. The house is mainly concrete and brick but characterised by very heavy insulation with greened roof terraces. The 'tree tenants' are a special part of the building, for they pay for the area they occupy by providing oxygen, noise abatement and climatic regulation. They grow from special steel troughs between the house wall and the recessed windows and they grow out of the building enlivening the facade. Hundertwasser calls them 'the ambassadors of the forest in the town'.

The house is designed on organic lines from the outside to the inside. Decorative ceramic tiles line the windows in such a way that each tenant can recognise his or her own flat from the outside decoration. The house uses the traditional Viennese design by incorporating part of a facade of an old house that used to be on the site. All openings are irregular, and there are many pillars and towers—sometimes whole rooms project out of the facade. Staircases are inlaid with mosaic and ceramics and a massive vault decorated with gold and platinum slabs of ceramic links the two parts of the building. The children's playroom overlooks a courtyard which provides a central green lung for the whole tenement. The walls bulge and wave; even the floor is slightly uneven providing 'melodies for the feet'. Each apartment is completely different and there are no edges or corners in the rooms. All windows are triple glazed for energy conservation and

to keep out noise. Great attention has been paid to detailing such as door handles, taps, and other fittings. No two lights are the same.

### **Reactions**

There were far more applicants for the apartments than the city could deal with. The turnover of tenants is much slower than in other council properties. According to a commissioned survey 85% of people love the house and identify strongly with it. They like the closeness of the trees and plants and the way the design enables them to live both privately but also as a community with shared social facilities. All tenants accepted the higher rents and costs, though there has been criticism that the building could not be considered genuine social housing. A recent survey of visitors asked about their reaction to the house and only 5% rejected it outright. Their only problem is with the increasing number ('several hundred thousand each year') of tourists wanting to see the house. Not unsurprisingly it was architects who found most to criticise with the building.

### **The Future**

The building has helped regenerate a 1,300 sq. m. derelict site in Vienna, attract tourists to the city and provide inspirational housing for people. Interest in the project has generated the publication of guides, booklets and postcards, but significantly more housing designs by artists in the city. The next project being commissioned is by painter Arik Brauer in Vienna's 6th District: a 5 storey dwelling with 25 apartments distinguished again by roofs with flowers trees and grass. In addition Peter Pelikan the architect who collaborated with Hundertwasser has completed a new Post Office on the Hundertwasser philosophy—organic shapes, columns, trees and flowers growing on the building. Hundertwasser himself has received several more commissions including the refurbishment of the St. Barbara Church in Barnback, Styria and the reorganisation of the rubbish incinerator plant in Spittelau.

### **Investment**

The construction of the Haus was probably 15% more expensive than a comparative structure designed conventionally and built commercially, but the City feels that the Haus has more than repaid the investment because of the favourable response from all quarters, not least the tenants, in addition to its tourism impact, apart from a beautification of the city as a whole which will last for decades.

### **Key Points**

The artist in this case played a key role in the regeneration of ideas regarding city architecture. Years of conviction campaigning finally

achieved the enlightened response required from a mayor willing to take the risk of failure. It is difficult to envisage a private developer taking a similar risk—‘eco-housing’ pilots set up by Wates plc and others in the UK have been characterised by stalwart attempts to keep design as heavily normalised as possible.

During the building phase the artist worked on the site with the building workers. Details were changed in situ with the workmen contributing to these changes. Their creative participation in the variety of detailing required added to their enjoyment of their work and to their commitment to the job. Not only was it not desirable to change workmen during the construction (as flexibility, involvement and pride in the job was essential to the final piece) the workmen actually did not want to leave for other jobs. The success of the Viennese project is now resulting in a plethora of similar commissions for a range of public buildings throughout the city. Tourism in Vienna has benefited from these distinctive buildings too.

## **St. Ives: Tate of the South-West**

### **Introduction**

St. Ives has attracted artists and craftspeople since the latter part of the 19th century. Whistler and the young Sickert spent part of the winter of 1884 in St. Ives. From then on the town has captivated ‘professional’ artists and craftspeople. In 1928 Ben Nicholson and Christopher Wood made a visit during which they ‘discovered’ the local painter Alfred Wallis. Since then a small but active local art community has organised annual exhibitions, developed a distinctive style, and run art classes for residents and tourists. The outbreak of war in 1939 drove several important artists to St Ives, including Barbara Hepworth and Ben Nicholson, and the potter, Bernard Leach. This group was to be pivotal in raising the artistic status of the town in and beyond the contemporary art world. Thus St. Ives, a town with one of the strongest regional schools of artists also became home to a powerful set of abstract artists, compelled by their new surroundings to re-think their position vis-a-vis the natural world. For some years in the late 1950s St. Ives was, in fact, an international centre for art.

### **The Tate Gallery's Regional Policy**

A move to make the Tate Gallery collection more widely accessible in the late 1970s was pursued vigorously by Alan Bowness, director from 1980. The regional sites ‘selected’ were chosen opportunistically rather than as an essential part of an integrated strategy. Liverpool was selected because funds were available during the 1980s from the Department of the Environment and the Albert Dock building was an ideal gallery space to provide a 20th century complement to the collections at the Walker and other local art galleries.

Alan Bowness had close personal ties with the Hepworth-Nicholson family, and had been involved in the Tate's management of the Barbara Hepworth Museum & Studio from 1979 onwards. The 1985 St. Ives Exhibition at Millbank was a catalyst for the collaboration which was to ensue between the Tate and Cornwall County Council for a new regional Tate Gallery. (The initial idea was, in fact, that of an enlightened Cornwall County Councillor Richard Carew-Pole). The building, completed in 1993, is now owned by Cornwall County Council.

### **Architectural Quality**

A building of exceptional quality was a crucial element of this project. As a result of a national architectural competition the architects Evans and Shalev were invited to design and build the new gallery. They had recently won and completed the highly esteemed new Courts of Justice in Truro, a winner of at least five national Awards for Architecture. However, their most significant contact with Cornwall lay in the fact that Eldred Evans' father was the painter Merlyn Evans who had spent much of his lifetime painting in St. Ives. Accordingly the plan of the gallery is reminiscent of a Ben Nicholson painting, and the building, whilst being dramatically sited is like the town itself, of white walls, grey slate roofs and small windows. The building stands on the former site of a disused and polluted gas holder, for which locals had long wanted a new use. The new gallery not only provided a solution to an 'eyesore', but has formed part of regenerating the town of St. Ives itself.

### **Local Impact**

70,000 visitors a year were estimated. Before the end of the first 12 months, the Tate St. Ives had 220,000 visitors, about 65% of whom are new to the town. A core staff of 7 had been planned; today, there is a staff of 50 – all but two recruited locally. The Tate St. Ives is one of the largest local employers, and this in itself has had a significant effect on the St. Ives economy.

### **Wider Impact**

A County Council survey of 66 local craftworkers and gallery owners countywide showed a remarkable 18% increase in business since the Tate opened its doors. The benefits have spread over the whole of Cornwall with an 8% increase for crafts outlets within 20 miles, and a 3% increase over a 70 mile radius. Craftworkers who took part in the survey referred to the 'air of optimism' and said they had also had a lot of enquiries in addition to increased sales. Three new quality outlets for art and craft opened in St. Ives in 1993-4, and one business 70 miles away commented specifically that their new customers were either returning from or about to visit the new gallery.

A further survey of 115 St. Ives 'all-year-round' shops showed the Tate had created an identifiable 5% increase in trade with some shopkeepers reporting a 20% increase in sales. This survey was undertaken by the County Council to fulfil its obligations to the European Union who had granted £878,000 to the new gallery. A survey of seasonal shops conducted more recently also reports increases in sales.

The main exhibits are complemented by an exceptionally strong educational policy with regularly changing study displays. The gap between a historical collection and contemporary art activity in the region is successfully bridged by employing local artists to lead gallery guided tours and to work 'in-residence' with local schools and community groups. Initiatives with artists are lively and locally inspired, for example the work with 'Surfers Against Sewage' in a 1993 'Ocean Fever Project'. The Tate continues to manage the Hepworth Museum and Studio and strong partnerships are being forged with other local galleries such as the Newlyn Orion, and with theatre and performance groups. This collaborative ethic has quickly dispelled initial fears from other arts projects that the Tate would be a sponge soaking up local funds; in fact, as the figures show, the Tate is a net contributor to the local economy.

### **Investment**

The total cost of the project was £3.3 million. The local authority provided £700,000 and European Union Regional Development Funds an additional £1.2 million. £1 million was raised through private foundations such as the Henry Moore Foundation, the Sainsbury Family Charitable Trust, and the John S. Cohen Foundation. The Foundation for Sports & the Arts gave £150,000 and the St. Ives Tate Action Group £125,000. Further donations are being sought to complete the building costs. Running costs are partly being met from income raised by an active friends organisation and sponsorship. The first year's sponsor was South Western Electricity plc.

### **Key Issues**

The Tate St. Ives has quickly become recognised as a social and economic success, despite the potential dangers of a project which might seem to be imposing high culture on a small town. Good community and education work has enabled people to see cultural benefits, while recruitment policy has helped the town directly. A relatively wealthy group of new tourists visiting the gallery has had an immediate impact on retailing and restaurants in the town, and the building itself has set a very high architectural standard for the whole region.

Culture is now seen by the local authorities to be an asset in the promotion of the area, and the problem now is staving off local requests for more Tates! Both the Gallery and the County Council are aware of the potential problems of ensuring that the tourism generated is sustainable, as they do not wish to see St. Ives become 'another Siena'. The demands of tourism can generate problems within the gallery itself—for example a heavy handed approach to labelling—and the gallery rightfully is pursuing a thoughtful policy towards these aspects. The integrity of the collection and the rights of artists remain uppermost. To fulfil their obligations to the EU, the County Council Planning Department is undertaking a whole series of surveys to show the economic impact of the gallery on the town and its surrounds, thereby contributing an invaluable set of statistics showing precisely what impact a new cultural facility can have on a town centre.

### **See the Lights: Come to Maidstone**

Maidstone, a town with a population of just over 100,000 was the 7th pilot in the 'Town Centre Initiative' programme. It was fortunate that the Borough and County Council officers Alan Glover and David Matts were also involved in the initiative at national level. Coincidentally at the same time Maidstone appointed Jan Dungey as its first arts officer. Her arts strategy, completed six months later, was devised as an educative process in itself, using a variety of arts consultants to conduct workshops for Council officers and members, rather than writing a report. As a consequence the strategy located arts and culture at the very heart of the Town Centre Initiative. Working parties were set up to tap wide support in the town and integrate the management structure of the whole initiative. So the Town Centre Initiative reports to the Town Centre Management Team, which in turn reports to the Borough Council Planning Committee and the County Council Highways and Transport Committee, with the Chamber of Commerce and the Traders' Associations representing the town's private sector interests.

#### **A Pragmatic Approach**

One such working party focused on Town Centre Cultural Development, dividing the town into a number of areas where interdisciplinary teams consider policies and priorities. Integrated architectural, social, economic and cultural appraisals were carried out to address both short and longer-term action in rolling programmes. 'Culture' was considered in its widest sense, so that for example, even the setting up of a traders' association was seen as part of a cultural process. Urban Design Frameworks resulted from these intensive sessions, and so far three have been fully developed.

## **Earl Street**

The interdisciplinary approach presented opportunities for arts development which might not otherwise have been seen. The Urban Design Framework for the Earl Street area initially identified fairly minimal, engineering improvements to a tertiary shopping area which was run-down and 'pretty rough'. The arts officer suggested that lighting improvements be enhanced by an artist, so the area was re-packaged as an environmental improvement zone. A major public art commission grant was awarded from South East Arts, and a competition held to find an appropriate artist. The competitive approach was designed to raise the profile of the project, to effect wider consultation with the public and to show officers and members the potential of involving artists. An exhibition was held showing all submissions and an associated public questionnaire revealed a high level of popular enthusiasm for the artists' ideas, something the Council had not expected.

### **The potential of street lighting**

A large number of exciting submissions from nationally prestigious artists were attracted to this unusual (but local) scheme. This alerted the arts officer to the fact that lighting design was an under-explored area of interest to visual artists. Apart from Leeds, Glasgow and Edinburgh there was little evidence at a national level of exciting town lighting design in the UK. She therefore felt that Maidstone might attract national if not international attention if it focused on lighting as a local 'speciality'. When the opportunity to redesign the town's Christmas lights emerged in the same year the arts officer was supported by all the officers and members, and a 'short-term lighting strategy working party' was established. This project too was offered to artists in a competition.

### **Christmas Lights**

The popular conception of British Christmas lights is figurative, imitative and 'down-market'; the arts officer was concerned that the opportunity to commission something temporary, challenging and a 'bit more wacky' might be lost. Peter Fink, who had been a runner-up in the first competition, won this second Maidstone lights project. Fink's idea was abstract, pulsing coloured light movements, but more importantly the concept excited the greatest public approval in the exhibition of ideas. A lantern procession was held with local schoolchildren in the run-up to the switch-on of the lights, and BBC TV filmed the event for 'Artefacts'.

### **A Success Story**

The Christmas lights were the first completed initiative. The rolling programme of commissions shows a progressive development for

artists. The first, by Jon Mills, was to a brief determined by engineering requirements, so the works are rather like pieces of street sculpture. The Christmas lights have shown the impact of an artist working as part of a team and paved the way for the appointment of another artist, Steve Geliot, to work in one of the Urban Design Framework teams as an equal participant with engineers. As the value of using artists is recognised, they are participating in urban design at every stage. In 1995 Peter Fink was commissioned to develop a strategy document for the Highways Department for lighting for the whole road network, though financial restraints have since prevented the implementation of this inspirational project.

### **See the Lights: Come to Maidstone**

Meanwhile the lighting strategy is beginning to have an effect on the Town Centre. Traders in the Earl Street area, influenced by the quality of lighting design, have chosen a comparable standard of street cafe furniture. The pub, previously described as rough, has been upgraded by the brewery in response to the change in the street's character. Maidstone's Christmas marketing became linked with the town's tourism campaign—See the Lights: Come to Maidstone—as traders picked up on the interest of visitors in the lighting project. Maidstone's investment was £30,000, but patently so successful that a special investment fund of £250,000 has been created by the developers of a new and much feared out-of-town shopping centre to commission and promote Christmas lights. It remains to be seen what the longer term impact of this will be, but the success of innovative lighting systems as a marketing tool have made the private sector re-think their local marketing strategies and join a bandwagon.

### **Investment**

The schemes required an investment of £60,000 from the Borough and the County with an additional grant of £2,000 from South East Arts. £250,000 has been invested by the shopping centre developer.

### **Key issues**

Sound team-work and tightly knit line management has established the links and structural strength to integrate projects, and the public and private partnerships to build a creative cross-disciplinary approach which still has the flexibility to adapt to changing opportunities. The public art commissions programme has brought imaginative solutions to Maidstone's town centre and helped involve people through the consultation exercises. Lighting is a new area for the arts in this country, so the programme has brought a new 'arts' status to the town. One result of this is that Maidstone recently received a large Arts Council grant to host an international conference and publication on innovative town lighting.



## Temple Bar, Dublin, and The Green Building

### Introduction

The Temple Bar area of Dublin is an inner-city regeneration area, consisting of a square mile in the west centre of Dublin on the south bank of the Liffey. Small lanes and alleyways, tiny shops and river warehouses with old, empty apartment blocks of relatively little architectural merit characterise the area. Temple Bar Properties is a development company set up in partnership with the City Council and the Irish Government with the objective of renovating and rejuvenating the whole area. The idea is to create a cultural quarter for Dublin akin to the 'Left Bank' in Paris.

From the very outset the company expressed a commitment to a creative approach, with a percent for art at the heart of their programme and a commitment to good design at all levels. Faced with criticism from the arts community which disliked the very idea of upgrading the area, Temple Bar Properties commissioned a series of temporary installations by 20 artists on all the derelict sites in the summer of 1991. Since then the company has put on festivals and exhibitions as witness to their engagement with the idea that arts can help set off the regeneration process. Of particular importance is the company's understanding that artists are often used to start the ball rolling, only to be priced out of the market as rentals values rise. For this reason they have allocated and reserved a number of spaces within the area to artists on long term preferential leases to ensure that the lasting vitality of an arts community. Ironically the director of the development company is herself an arts professional turned property developer, rather than a property developer with an interest in the arts.

### A creative programme for residential development

The development company is aware that success in Temple Bar depends on a good mix of projects—cultural, retail, employment, leisure and residential. In 1996 an arts resource centre will be completed to act as the cornerstone of the overall project. However, residential development—to bring people to live in the area—was a priority. The first apartments to be completed are now ready, and their flagship is the Green Building, consisting of eight 2 and 3 bedroom flats, plus studios, shops and offices on the lower floors. Grant-aided by the EU, it is seen as a model for planners, and developers wanting to construct energy-efficient buildings, and acts as a promotional tool.

The building is a collaboration between the developers and Trinity College Dublin, which researched ventilation and heating systems, and between artists and the architects Murray O'Laoire & Associates. It is designed to exceptionally high standards of energy efficiency, encased in an insulated cover with a roof which opens automatically

during good weather. Ventilation is assisted by chambers containing selected plants and trees, and planting enhances a central light well by fixing CO<sup>2</sup> levels. Solar photo-voltaic cells, solar thermal and wind powered energy generating devices provide most of the energy. A heat pump transfers energy from the bed-rock to a large water tank which acts a thermal release during the night. A computer forecasts climatic conditions activating the needs the building's needs. Water is collected in a large rainwater tank on the roof. Construction materials were chosen on the basis of the impact of raw materials with least environmental implications.

Wherever possible recycled materials have been used and artists have contributed to this. Copper cladding on the exterior was designed and made by a local artist from old cisterns. The decorative balconies are made by the same artist from recycled bicycles. The central air duct is also a sculpture and was designed and made by another Dublin artist. Inside kitchen units have been designed and made by local furniture makers, and include salvaged sinks. Light fittings and tiled bathrooms are designed by local craftspeople, and in the penthouse apartments there are mosaic floors. The shop exhibits furniture designed and made by local craftspeople, an obvious recommendation to purchasers.

### **Reactions**

Although the building has only recently been put on view there have already been more than 1,000 enquiries for 8 apartments at prices between £70,000 and £125,000. Viewing closed in October 1995 with nearly 10,000 visitors through the doors by that time.

### **Investment**

The total cost of the building was IR£1.5 million, of which a third was a European Union grant based on the fact that the building will serve as a demonstration of a minimal environmental impact building.

### **Key issues**

The combination of concern for the environment with imaginative and high quality design acts as a positive lever in the regeneration of cities. Temple Bar Properties are an innovative public-spirited company who have foreseen the impact that this building will have on the whole development, and who will ultimately benefit from investment into the combination of good quality art, architecture, design and sensitivity to environmental issues.

## **Fish Quay, Sunderland**

### **Introduction**

Sunderland's waterside sites suffer from extensive dereliction, a situation which goes back some twenty years. In 1978 Fish Quay was targeted by Sunderland Borough Council for renewal through the Department of the Environment's Inner Cities programme. Some environmental work ensued—tree planting, new paving and bollards etc.—along with improvements to the fishermen's stores. Highway improvements were carried out by the Tyne and Wear County Council. Although a DoE report agreed that some change had been achieved there was still a high level of vandalism in the area, to the detriment of the overall refurbishment programme. In 1987, therefore, Sunderland Economic Development Unit commissioned Free Form Arts Trust to participate in a new round of regeneration for the area, funded by Urban Programme grants. At the same time (1987-88) Metropolitan Council responsibility for the Riverside passed to the new Tyne and Wear Development Corporation.

### **The Fish Festival**

Free Form Arts Trusts' philosophy is based on drawing people into the whole process of caring for their local environment and being involved in the process of creating improvements which are suited to their needs and not the needs of institutions or bureaucracies. Free Form's particular strength lies in the way it can tease out local issues and develop local traditions to engage a community in its own improvements. One of Free Form's common strategies is to strengthen dialogue and commitment through a temporary festival or community event. Free Form then provides the technical and artistic expertise which the community can draw on to put ideas into practice.

At Fish Quay, Free Form quickly discovered the potential of an existing Fish Festival which had become moribund. The revival of this festival became both the rallying cry and the catalyst for the neighbourhood, but also attracted national publicity and interest in the area. The local community, schools and other groups especially the fishermen themselves, were drawn into the whole process of designing and making fish costumes, sculptures and figureheads for the boats and fish banners and songs. The festival was overwhelmingly successful with several hundred people involved in the first year. By 1990 over 40 boats were being decorated and there were 20 huge figureheads.

In 1988 the council wanted a second Fish Festival to be held and a derelict building was rented on the Quay to store all the costumes and materials. This building was to become the Design Centre. The Fish Festival grew in strength until 1991 when the Corporation

abruptly changed policy, deciding that it could fund itself through a commercial enterprise, Fish Quay Festival Ltd, set up by a group of local businessmen keen to reap the potential benefits of such a successful event. They appointed an outside consultant to organise the festival but alienated the local fishermen who were of course the key to the festival's success. The festival suddenly shrank with very few boats involved. The consultant was not re-appointed and in the second year Fish Quay Festival Ltd were helped by a Council secondee as organiser. By 1993, even with the incentive of the Tall Ships Race on Tyneside, Fish Quay Festival Ltd became bankrupt. They left bad debts and bad feeling. In 1994 North Tyneside Council recognised the importance of Free Form's involvement, and re-appointed them as co-ordinators. It is generally felt that the 1994 Festival and regatta has started to regain the momentum lost during the three years of 'privatisation' and an insensitive dealing with the local community.

### **Environmental Improvements**

In 1988, in tandem with the first festival, Free Form worked on a huge fish mosaic 'our White Horse', on Natter's Bank overlooking Fish Quay. They were asked by the Development Corporation to prepare a strategy for the overall physical improvement to the Quayside. The study recommended heritage trails, sculpture, seating and so on, and was to be phased over several years. However the Corporation took a long time assessing the study, and the strategy was only adopted in parts. From Free Form's point of view this was not satisfactory as it meant that their commitment to the area could only be dependent on annual grants, rather than a longer-term involvement. The heritage trail was rejected, as were the sculptural proposals. Slowly functional items such as seats and bollards have been commissioned, undermining an integrated environmental improvement initiative. But Free Form's approach has recently gained ground. The private sector is becoming involved—Scottish and Newcastle Brewery has commissioned a dolphin sculpture; a large retaining wall will be enhanced with artwork, and, more importantly, Free Form achieved arts funding for the establishment of a permanent, independent local 'Free Form' which will serve not only Fish Quay but the Northern region.

### **Fish Quay Design Centre**

The project which has really clinched Free Form's commitment to North Tyneside is the refurbishment of an old fishing warehouse as a new Design Centre for the Quayside. First used by Free Form as a temporary storehouse for the fish festival costumes, they spotted the potential for the building. Free Form's objectives include developing skills workshops for local people. The building is leased from the Council through a wholly owned subsidiary of Free Form Arts Trust. Free Form negotiated the grants and funding for the refurbishment of the building and the project became a collaboration between artists

and architects, winning a Royal Society of Arts Award for the achievement. The building is now an important local arts resource, housing Northern Print, (a fine art printing facility), Free Form Arts Trust North, and other tenants.

### **Investment**

The Fish Festival cost £30,000 in 1994, (£15,000 from Northern Arts and £15,000 from the Arts Council). Project Funding in 1994-5 will include £100,000 for a play area.

### **Key Issues**

Free Form's expertise in the area of community arts work was not always fully appreciated by the local authorities, to the extent that they risked undermining Free Form's festival work which was an integral part of their environmental improvements strategy. Only Free Form's own persistence, and tenacity in the area, plus support by arts funding bodies, held the northern group together. It is notable that private enterprise operating on its own is not always the answer to regenerative arts based strategies, unless they find appropriate ways of getting commitment from voluntary groups and local people as well.

Free Form's achievement is a complex one based on short-term events, community workshops, the creation of physical projects on the ground and the refurbishment and re-use of an old building. The achievement is based and indeed works with the intuitive (spotting the old building) and the organic (working with local threads), but always clear thinking in terms of commitment to the philosophy of genuine community involvement.

## **Ilfracombe: A Civic Trust initiative**

### **Introduction**

Ilfracombe was one of the most fashionable sea-side resorts on the North Devon coast until changing attitudes and opportunities for cheap holidays abroad triggered its decline in the post-war period. At one time Ilfracombe's population of 11,000 could increase to over 30,000 during the summer, and employment was geared to this. In 1984 North Devon District Council commissioned a study from Coopers & Lybrand to recommend how the economic decline of Ilfracombe might be reversed. One suggestion was to invite the Civic Trust to set up a town improvement scheme. The Civic Trust agreed to a 3 year commitment from 1986, after which the Ilfracombe Project would be managed by the District Council. The project had a wide brief including building renovation, development of new spaces, landscaping, traffic management and public art, but above all bringing together the community to support the actions needed. It is a

catalyst 'relying on persuasion, partnerships and the support of local people'.

### **The Civic society**

A Civic Trust Advisory Group was established which gradually developed into a local Civic Society with over 200 members. It has taken responsibility for all the small scale improvements, particularly those cultural projects which enhance and bring life to the town. A new Tourism Association has also been founded to re-examine different marketing avenues with the private sector.

### **Individual commitment**

The leading individual spirit in the cultural initiatives in Ilfracombe was Jon Bell, a teacher at Ilfracombe School and Community College. His continuing commitment has sustained a long-term programme of exciting projects. As Chairman of the Channel Arts Project, and supported by the Civic Trust Project, he pioneered 'Victorian Week' which proved to be a sustained and hugely popular community event. He helped promote and raise funding for the Music Rehearsal Centre, the Lantern Community Centre (converted from a redundant chapel) and a series of 6 large banners in the Great Hall of the Congregational Church which has since become a Visual Arts Exhibition space.

### **Landscape and traffic management**

Streets and spaces were given early priority and major improvements, such as widening pavements in the High Street, were managed by the County Council. A new bandstand was built on the town's seafront gardens, and Lantern Hill, the town's most important landmark was improved. Now the town's improvement scheme receives a grant of £60,000 a year.

### **The Lanes Project**

One of the most problematic but key projects was the transformation of The Lanes a network of narrow passages and derelict alleyways which runs behind the main High Street. This area had been identified by the Public Art Development Trust as a key asset in a brief public art study for the town in 1988, as a result of which funding was secured from Devon County Council to assess various sites. Free Form were invited by Ilfracombe to consider the Lanes. Free Form organised a very well attended ( and 'impassioned') community meeting to devise some initial design ideas. These included metal grilles fixed to the windows of buildings in the Lanes, making the entrance to the Lanes accessible and attractive from the High Street, better signposting and plaques, the renewal of street lighting, paving and cleaning. The window grilles were funded by the Civic Trust and BT. The entrances to the Lanes were given

pictorially designed archways depicting local scenes, and the main one was designed and made by a local blacksmith. The signposting and plaques were created and made in workshops with residents in collaboration with Free Form artists. The programme generated and continues to generate work for local artists and craftspeople and has helped extend and give confidence to the town's skills base. Despite initial community pessimism about the project the Lanes has been a great success, turning a central derelict area into a colourful and attractive environment.

### **Assessment of Impact**

It is difficult to assess the impact of the cultural programme statistically. The gravely depressed nature of the area has meant that achievements are difficult to measure and when they are they are at best anecdotal. But achievements can be seen. Dozens of people attended public meetings, revealing community interest that was later translated into community involvement. 150 people turned out to discuss proposals for a new Town Pavilion (in Barnstaple, a much nearby larger town only 5 people turned out to discuss similar proposals). Hundreds of people participated in the designs for the large banners whilst they were being developed in a disused corner shop on the High Street. Arts and crafts in all their forms are now accepted as being an intrinsic part of Ilfracombe culture and they contribute to the overall sense of the town's well being and liveliness. Expectations of the quality of the town environment have risen, and people now expect to be involved in cultural activities, and in contributing to the design of the town.

### **Key Issues**

Although the arts did not contribute directly to securing funds, they helped build the confidence of the Council to go ahead with the project. Ilfracombe now has a 'Vision for the Future' a 10 year plan for enhancement—a major step indicating the psychological change the town has experienced as a result of the project.

Ilfracombe had and still has deep-seated problems which the arts can address as part of an overall regeneration package. What is crucial is the commitment of individuals and organisations to the town. The arts are a proven resource for community inspiration, and a creator of confidence and self-esteem. People involved in the arts, like Jon Bell, are usually the kind of people to stick with a problem and see it through—precisely the kind of people that towns like Ilfracombe need.





## Section 6

### Culture- Driven Regeneration:

#### Some proposals

If cultural activities are to play a strategic role in supporting urban regeneration initiatives, many new kinds of partnership will be needed—between departments and disciplines, between the public and private sectors and, critically, with the voluntary sector and community organisations.

#### **Raising awareness, laying foundations**

The starting point should be a programme of awareness-raising within local authorities and government agencies working in a given area. This should highlight the importance of cultural issues in urban development, and link professionals in the arts and leisure with colleagues in planning, transport, environment services, and social provision to think through ways in which their work may be enhanced by cultural initiatives. Such a programme should subsequently be extended to include the private and voluntary sectors, and the local community.

#### **Appropriate expertise**

Local authorities should make use of professionals with experience of cultural development, to assist with the development of a cultural strategy. Outsiders can contribute by leading seminars and similar developmental events : for example Urban Design Action Teams have been involved in intensive brainstorming events to consider the role of the arts in their work.

#### **Mapping the cultural landscape**

Audits of local resources are always useful, if they are well done and have a wide-ranging and imaginative brief. They should include existing professional and amateur arts activity, and embrace the individual, the transient and the oppositional. The usable fabric of an area should be mapped, to identify possibilities for housing artists and cultural businesses and open spaces, multi-use areas and the apparently useless any of which may become the site of activity. A mapping exercise should try to gauge people's feelings, ideas and interpretations of the area, and incorporate their dreams and proposals.

#### **Inter-departmental partnerships**

Some local authorities have created cross-departmental forums bringing together officers working in economic development, environment, housing, leisure and other departments. In some cases this has led to the creation of new committees of elected members. This

model can be extended to link with the private sector, universities and colleges, voluntary organisations, artists and community groups.

### **Resources**

An audit should also include the external resources which might be brought into partnership. Obvious examples include Regional Arts Boards and other arms of the arts funding system, including the Crafts Council and BFI. But there are also a large number of organisations like public art agencies, charitable trusts, disability groups, and many more.

### **Precedents and models**

It is also useful to look at the success and failure of comparable cultural projects in this country and abroad. This book provides a starting point, but it will be possible to identify other, up-to-date examples through the arts funding system, the DoE and similar sources. There is no point in making other people's mistakes.

### **A cultural strategy**

With the results of the audit, it will be possible to develop a broad cultural strategy which identifies a range of practical initiatives. Some should be cheap and easy to implement quickly, both for their own value and to inspire confidence in the strategy and people's ability to deliver it. More costly and complex initiatives can be phased in subsequently. A strategy should always state the basic principles which the partners have agreed and which will guide its implementation.

### **Balancing capital development and activity**

It is critical not to allow the physical presence and financial scale of building-based developments to dominate the team's thinking. Projects intended to promote activity, whether short-term or ongoing, are at least as important in mobilising the interest and commitment of local people. That an area can be regenerated entirely through this type of active initiative, though the reverse is not true, should give some indication of the real value of activities compared to infrastructure. If in doubt, invest in activity rather than capital projects.

### **Cultural Development Partnership**

It is essential to consider where the responsibility for and ownership of the proposed development will lie—who will ensure that it is made to happen successfully. A local Cultural Development Partnership (CDP) between the public and private sectors can be developed from the forum described above. While local people should participate in the CDP, it might be appropriate to involve a wider cross section of the local community in a forum which can pro-

vide a space where artists, members of the public, politicians and business people can meet on equal terms to debate and agree development proposals.

### **Monitoring and evaluation**

The need to develop effective systems for monitoring and evaluating progress should not be underestimated. This will require the development of new approaches, if it is to extend beyond management objectives (i.e. are outputs being delivered), to review whether the initiatives are actually having the impact intended. In the end, it is only outcomes that matter.

### **Transparency and fairness**

Partnerships are made to work by ensuring that all partners are treated fairly and that communication is effective. The transparency of action is an overarching goal. This applies not only within the circle of the formal partnership, but with the wider community: the residents and workers of the designated area, the city as a whole, the business community, central government, the media etc. Good marketing is vital, but cannot be applied as an afterthought to process which are not already open, co-operative and well thought out.

### **Recording and documentation**

Finally, it is good practice to record and document as much as possible. Without such information it is not possible to measure achievement, register problems, understand failures or communicate progress to others. But one view can never tell the whole story, so it is worth considering commissioning others to document the work. Academics can do so from one perspective, but artists and local people, perhaps working together, can do it from another.

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- <sup>2</sup> Re-using Redundant Buildings, p.8
- <sup>3</sup> Neal Ascherson, Independent on Sunday, 11 February 1996.
- <sup>4</sup> Gardens Illustrated 18, February/March 1996 pp46-51
- <sup>5</sup> Urry (1995), p.114.
- <sup>6</sup> For an account of urban regeneration initiatives in Britain since the late 1960s see Hill (1994)
- <sup>7</sup> See Hill (1994) p. 73-77.
- <sup>8</sup> Kreisberg Local Government and the Arts
- <sup>9</sup> Victoria Neumark's report, The Magic Exercise, for the National Association of Arts Centres (1989), p 29
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted in Hewison, (1995), p.238.
- <sup>11</sup> Quoted in Hewison, (1995), p.277.
- <sup>12</sup> Cultural Trends No 20, May 1994.
- <sup>13</sup> *The Irish Times*, 26 January 1995
- <sup>14</sup> Hewison, (1995), p.34.
- <sup>15</sup> See *Winners and Losers: The Impact of the National Lottery*, Luke FitzHerbert, Joseph Rowntree Foundation, 1995.
- <sup>16</sup> Hewison (1995) p 46.
- <sup>17</sup> Spending on music by the Armed Forces exceeds that of the Arts Council.
- <sup>18</sup> From 'The Revolution in Painting' *Creative Art IV 1929*, pp 28-30; quoted in Goldwater & Treves (1972) p. 476.
- <sup>19</sup> Unpublished report held in the Library of the House of Lords

Introducing The art of regeneration, a platform for artists and citizens to engage in spreading a message of hope. We can all find a way to use our gifts to regenerate ecosystems and help reverse climate change. [youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com). The Art of Regeneration Intro. Commit to living regeneratively through art and through a regenerative lifestyle. The Art of Regeneration is a platform where you can upload your art at thea The Art of Regeneration. 14 October at 11:05 Â. See this wonderful collaboration between rock star Bryan Adams and Nicaraguan team of tree planters for Taking Root, a non-profit organ