

Introduction

Hong Kong is a special administrative region of China and a modern international city. Its strength in cultural development lies in its foundation of Chinese culture and its open and receptive attitude towards other cultures. Hong Kong people are flexible, imaginative and capable of intercultural communication. Not only can Hong Kong play a significant role in the promotion of cultural exchange and integration of cultures, it can also actively contribute to the development of Chinese culture.

Hong Kong has achieved remarkable success in economic growth, but lags behind other world-class cities in cultural development. In this new century, information technology has accelerated the process of globalisation and the growth of knowledge-based economy, intensifying the interaction among culture, technology and economy. For Hong Kong to maintain its competitive edge, it must further encourage creative thinking and put greater emphasis on culture.

For years Hong Kong did not have a broad and long-term cultural policy. The establishment of the Culture and Heritage Commission presented an opportunity for addressing the issue.

Purpose of the Consultation

The formulation of policies on cultural development needs the active participation and support of the community. Through this consultation exercise, we would like to encourage the public to voice their opinions and expectations on cultural development in Hong Kong.

Our prime task is to let everybody understand the objectives, principles, strategies and direction of the work of the Commission. We hope that our priority of topics for future study will gain wide support from the community.

The Role of the Commission

Members of the Culture and Heritage Commission are appointed by the Chief Executive. Of the 17 members, 11 are appointed in their personal capacity, the others, appointed as ex-officio members, being the Chairmen of four statutory bodies (Antiquities Advisory Board, Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts, Hong Kong Arts Centre and Hong Kong Arts Development Council) and two government officials. The Commission is a high-level advisory body responsible for advising the government on the policies as well as funding priorities on culture and the arts.

The Commission is not an executive body for organising cultural activities, but it gives support to and is concerned with the operation of relevant government departments and statutory bodies. The key responsibility of the Commission is to formulate a set of principles and strategies to promote the long-term development of culture in Hong Kong. These strategies will be implemented by the relevant government departments and statutory bodies.

Progress to Date

Since its first meeting on 10 May 2000, the Commission has held 12 plenary meetings, two study tours, and two retreats.

In the first six months, the Commission's focus was to have a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the local cultural scene. The Commission was briefed by Leisure and Cultural Services Department and the four relevant statutory bodies on their operations and future development. Representatives from the following bureau/departments were also invited to make presentations:

- Education Department on arts education in schools.
- Planning Department on "Cultural Facilities: A Study on Their Requirements and the Formulation of New Planning Standards and Guidelines" and "Hong Kong 2030: Planning Vision and Strategy."
- Tourism Commission on cultural tourism.
- Planning and Lands Bureau on the heritage conservation strategies of the Urban Renewal Authority and the design competition for the West Kowloon Reclamation development.

In addition to the formal meetings, the Chairman and some members of the Commission met with representatives of major arts and cultural groups in Hong Kong to learn about their work and difficulties.

The Commission set up four Working Groups in November last year, focusing on arts and culture education, West Kowloon Reclamation development, libraries and museums. These Groups have commenced their work.

We visited Singapore in November 2000 and Macao in January this year. During the two-day stay in Singapore, we exchanged views with officials of relevant government departments and members of the arts and culture community. We also visited cultural facilities such as museums and libraries, and two academies of arts. During our one-day visit in Macao, we had discussions with officials from the Cultural Institute of the Macao SAR Government and visited several cultural facilities and historical sites.

In September 2000 and January 2001, the Commission held two retreats, during which a consensus on our future work was reached.

Consensus of the Commission

Vision

Hong Kong's culture is a component of Chinese culture. The long tradition of Chinese culture offers a great treasure house for the sustained development of Hong Kong culture. It is our long-term goal to expand our global cultural vision on the foundation of Chinese culture, drawing on the essence of other cultures to develop Hong Kong into an international cultural metropolis known for its openness and pluralism.

Our mission is to encourage Hong Kong people, in particular the young generation, to appreciate and participate in the arts; to enrich their lives with a greater emphasis on culture; to strengthen social cohesion and shared values; and to build up the confidence and pride of Hong Kong people in their country and society.

Strategies

Arts and culture are inspired by life and develop naturally as social and economic conditions evolve. However, we should note Hong Kong's favourable positioning in integrating Chinese and foreign cultures, traditional and modern cultures, as well as refined and popular cultures. We therefore put forward the following principles and strategies:

- **People-oriented**

The development of culture cannot be separated from the needs of the people and the community at large. The society of Hong Kong inclines towards short-term interests and utilitarianism at the expense of spiritual pursuit. We need a social environment that pays due respect to culture and the arts.

- **Pluralism**

Hong Kong is an international city in southern China with the overwhelming majority of the population being Chinese. We must assimilate the best of Chinese and other cultures, and build a cultural environment that is grounded in Chinese culture but pluralistic and open to the world.

- Freedom of Expression and Protection of Intellectual Property

These are essential conditions for the lively development of culture. Both the government and the community must maintain and advance the achievement of Hong Kong in these areas.

- Holistic Approach

The development of culture is closely related to many policy areas such as education, urban planning, tourism, creative industries, and trade and economic development. The government should take cultural development as an important consideration in formulating policies and enacting legislation in those areas.

- Partnership

The government must allocate adequate resources on culture, encourage community participation and establish partnership among the government, the business community and the cultural sector.

- Community-driven

In the long run, non-government organisations should take the lead in cultural development, and the government should gradually reduce its direct involvement and management in cultural facilities and activities.

Current Focus

Based on the above consensus, the four Working Groups of the Commission have already started work on their respective areas of concern.

Working Group on Culture and Arts Education

Culture and arts education is one of the major areas in the current curriculum reform. The Working Group has given top priority to the issue of culture and arts education for the young. It will work out a set of policies which is in accord with the education reform and which enables schools to make good use of cultural resources in the community. It is studying the following:

- Can cultural institutions fully support school education, given the current education reform's emphasis on "support from the community, learning beyond the classroom"? How to strengthen interaction and cooperation between the cultural and education sectors?
- Can existing cultural facilities (such as community centres, museums and libraries) support the notions of "life-long learning, life-wide experience, development of potential" to facilitate students' all-round development?
- How to make use of the opportunity of the curriculum reform to increase the proportion of culture and arts education in primary and secondary school curricula? How to develop a pluralistic and coherent curriculum for culture and arts education in schools?
- Are public resources for culture and arts education sufficient? Are there duplications or gaps? How to encourage input from other sources (such as parents and the private sector)?

Working Group on West Kowloon Reclamation Development

The Commission supports the development of the West Kowloon Reclamation area into an integrated arts and entertainment district, and the launching of an open design competition for the development plan. The Working Group has made suggestions to the Planning and Lands Bureau concerning the format and content of the design competition, and will follow up the progress of the competition. The Working Group is studying the following:

- How can the facilities in West Kowloon Reclamation supplement and integrate with those in Tsim Sha Tsui and other areas?
- How to strike a balance between visual arts, performing arts and other cultural and entertainment facilities in West Kowloon Reclamation?
- Should the government undertake the cultural development projects in West Kowloon Reclamation? Should the government manage these cultural and arts facilities?

Working Group on Libraries

Hong Kong has already become an information and knowledge-based economy. The concept of "life-long learning" is generally accepted. The Working Group is studying the following:

- How to transform libraries into information centres satisfying community needs for the acquisition of knowledge, broadening of vision and self-improvement?
- Should changes be made in the current modes of management and operation of public libraries to cater for the needs of future development?
- How to enhance cooperation among public libraries and other libraries/ educational institutions for better utilisation of resources and better support to continuing education?
- Are current strategies to promote reading effective?

Working Group on Museums

Museums play an important role in preserving heritage, enhancing cultural awareness, and nurturing aesthetic sensitivity. Hong Kong museums should also be our cultural ambassadors to overseas visitors. There are a number of museums in Hong Kong but they lack coordination in terms of function and role. The Working Group is studying the following:

- How to re-position the role and development of public museums to reflect Hong Kong's distinct geographic location, history and culture? Do we need new thematic museum(s)? If so, what theme(s)?
- Should changes be made to the mode of management/operation of public museums and to their collection, exhibition and education policies?
- How to strengthen cooperation among public museums, private collectors, tertiary institutions and other cultural bodies? How to encourage private collectors to donate their collections to public museums?
- How can museums contribute to the current education reform?

Future Deliberations

Heritage

There are many historical buildings and sites which bear witness to Hong Kong's history. Preservation of this precious heritage will enhance our sense of belonging. Due to rapid economic growth and land shortage, the need for preservation has often been compromised in the course of economic development. The government should be committed to protecting our heritage. We will study the following:

- How to strengthen coordination among relevant government departments and public bodies involved in heritage preservation?
- How to incorporate a cultural perspective (including heritage conservation, the aesthetic quality of city environment) in town planning and urban renewal?
- How to enhance public awareness of the importance of heritage preservation through efforts in public education (such as publishing *a Chronicles of Hong Kong*)?
- Is it feasible to convert some government historical buildings for culture-related uses?

Cultural Facilities

We need to conduct a comprehensive review on existing facilities and put forward suggestions on long-term development. We will study the following:

- How to balance the needs for international, territory-wide, and local cultural facilities?
- How to develop other districts, in addition to West Kowloon Reclamation, into areas with cultural and tourism appeal?
- Are the current operation mode/resource allocation of government cultural facilities effective and justified?

Resources

Annual public recurrent expenditure on culture and the arts amounts to HK\$ 3 billion. The Commission will advise the government on the deployment of resources. We will study the following:

- How to formulate a funding policy/mechanism which is transparent and provides a level-playing field?
- How to encourage participation and contribution from private enterprises?
- How to promote collaboration among arts and cultural bodies?

Cultural Exchange

Cultural dialogue broadens our horizon. We will study the following:

- What is the general situation of cultural exchange activities in Hong Kong?
- Is there a need for a mechanism (such as the setting up of a special Fund) to promote cultural exchange?

Concluding Remarks: We Treasure Your Views

The Commission reckons that our vision to enhance public awareness on the importance of culture may take generations to realise. We have indeed a long way to go. However, we have taken the first firm step leading to a new chapter in the development of Hong Kong's culture.

Hong Kong is a place where people of different talents and different cultures gather; a place where innovations emerge day by day. Culture is about life. If Hong Kong becomes a city where life is celebrated through cultural pursuit; a city where its people are enchanted by the arts, enlightened by different cultures and enriched by social diversity, we will certainly have a vibrant cultural scene. Our vision to turn Hong Kong into an international cultural metropolis will not be an unrealistic goal.

This consultation paper lists only those topics to which we give priority. If you have any comments on this paper or any views on the future cultural development in Hong Kong, please forward them to us by 31 May 2001:

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March 2001

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