



*“Creative activity may be the closest thing to a natural resource,
but it is also a little-understood and long-overlooked asset,
and one that can no longer be taken for granted.”*

- Center for an Urban Future, the City of New York

27 February 2009

THE WEST KOWLOON CREATIVE HUB

Written Submission by Planet Time

Panel on Home Affairs and Panel on Development

Joint Subcommittee to Monitor the Implementation of the West Kowloon Cultural District

Statement:

There has been a trend in major cities around the world to develop and promote centralized creative resources as a source of revenue growth. This has been given the term “Creative Hubs” and has been described as “the new wealth of cities” and “the new economy”.

Since 2005, this trend has mushroomed and every city with a vision is competing to be the first to set up creative economic hubs and attract the best talent.

Projects have started in Shanghai, New York, Singapore, London and throughout Great Britain, Berlin, Oslo, Amsterdam, Helsinki, and Barcelona. (Note: See Appendix 1)

The trend has gone from industrialization through manufacturing and is now moving into creative & intellectual property development.

We feel it is imperative for Hong Kong to tailor its vision of a cultural district to acknowledge this trend toward creative economic development. We also believe that

it is important for a cultural district here to provide the people of Hong Kong with access to its heritage and Chinese culture, and to give access to global arts to its citizens.

It is also important for the district to become an economically self-supporting entity. With the near future tainted by global recession, the Hong Kong public will not have much appetite for public purse spending on costly non-sustainable projects. An “exclusive” cultural district, which is not integrated with the adjacent areas of Yau Tsim Mong areas, would also cause an unnecessary cultural clash. The understanding of “culture” having at times opposite meanings. The public via Legco had also clearly rejected all notion of WKCD becoming a property speculation exercise. These are the main reasons why the whole project was scrapped and the start order was given again. At the end of the day, the WKCD project failed because the public could see no other vision other than those of the property developers. The public must see a vision, which works for them. Without that vision, the project cannot move forward. This is a common consensus within the creative community and the root of all discord to date.

Meanwhile we have been working since 2004 on refining our vision and development plan for the West Kowloon cultural district, as we believe that the uniqueness of Hong Kong’s culture truly merits a uniquely Hong Kong solution and are currently building our presentation models.

Vision:

It is our vision for Hong Kong to build a Creative district in West Kowloon with a distinctly Hong Kong identity, taking advantage of its strong profile as a global creative force and as worldwide financial and trade center, and integrating it with a public, cultural district. There is no city in the world like Hong Kong and we should emphasize that in any plan for this district.

This combined district, or Creative Hub, will be a center for showcasing Hong Kong’s creative arts and businesses, integrating them into a dynamic cultural and commercial area with a high visual impact. The harbour front location in West Kowloon, centrally situated with a spectacular view of Hong Kong and as a gateway to all waterborne vessels entering the city is not only of high marketing value, but also reflects the city government’s commitment to the future.

In our plan, the Hub will be divided functionally into three layers.

1. The **Public** (top) layer will be comprised of performance spaces, museums & galleries, exhibition areas, all related to Hong Kong's creativity, traditional arts and contemporary arts. There will be open public spaces, sheltered promenades, green park areas, leisure activities, restaurants and bars.

It is imperative that to encourage outdoor public use, public access areas must have full protection from the elements, especially in this day and age of global warming as an integral part of any architectural design. Failure to do so will limit the potential of staging big open-air events and attracting large numbers of people on a daily basis. Thus limiting true public access. In our earlier proposals to Legco we submitted designs for a low cost, low maintenance retractable floating canopy structure using a high-tech membrane, which is 10% more transparent than, glass, self cleaning and which can generate all the electricity needed to drive the outdoor cooling systems enveloping all public access areas.

We propose that our largest venue be used to stage the district's cultural main event, a "Greatest Show On Earth", an ongoing weekly saga, a huge extravaganza of Chinese drama, music, storytelling and large scale aerial acrobatics/visual effects, a Chinese version of a large-scale Aida opera with hundreds of actors that will be sure to please the public. In addition to the weekend shows, weekday rehearsals will also be a way to attract tourists especially those arriving by speed rail link from Guangzhou. Our proprietary space-frame structure technology for this venue uses the power of sunlight to create a dazzling array of colour and moving images on a grandiose and spectacular scale never seen before. The resulting combination of light, sound and vision would create the magic needed to stake claim to the title "Greatest Show on Earth".

2. The **Creative Commerce** (inside) layer will be the home of businesses that will also create the "cultural software", the content, for the district's public cultural performances and exhibition venues. Creation from within, where local cultural resources can be harnessed. It is also, where other creative industry businesses will find a supportive and collaborative environment to create. We will have a condensed community of creative businesses all linked in real time fiber optics with communal areas for cross pollination of ideas, expertise, and passions. This will be the place where ideas are born, nurtured and produced.

These businesses will take full advantage of the Hub's proximity to support services, trades, and manufacturing districts in Hong Kong and China. Hong Kong is a destination for the world buying community. We have a commerce model long time in place, with a supportive financial sector, and world-class hotels etc., and most importantly, Hong Kong possesses probably the most ingenious population on the planet. known for getting the job done. The hub will become the world's leading one-stop- shop and thereby self-sustaining. Hong Kong brands will flourish globally. The hub will also attract high numbers of tourists both local and international who want to enjoy an unforgettable cultural experience. If we aim high in our standards, we will be successful and money will be made too. Mediocrity will only result in amplified losses.

It is widely accepted that the creative commerce sector includes, but by no means limited to, the following types of businesses:

- Fine Arts (museums & galleries)
- Film & Music
- Television and Radio
- Performing Arts
- Production and post-production facilities
- Entertainment and Event design
- Architecture & Interior design
- Advertising & Marketing
- Industrial and Product design
- Fashion design
- Interactive Software
- Software development
- Publishing
- Antiques & Crafts
- Arts Foundations
- Culinary Arts

3. The **Education** (adjacent) layer. The Hub and its creative venues and businesses will be integrated with Academies of higher learning, which will in turn produce the

artists, designers, entrepreneurs and managers of the future. Museums will be youth driven. Exposing the youth to the power of creativity will be their main focus. Trade schools will be affiliated with businesses in the Hub and with its performance and exhibition spaces. There will be museum classes, and art & design programs established for secondary school students to expose them to new career opportunities. Independent opera, dance and design, fashion etc schools will also find the Hub a dynamic and inspirational place to call home with unlimited opportunities for collaboration and support.

The West Kowloon Creative Hub will be a way of assuring that Hong Kong does not lose its “creative capital, its established artists and designers, and its future creative people to other cities around the world. Education is not enough – we need to keep the talent here. In fact, it is also our goal for the Hub to be a magnet to attract more talent to Hong Kong so as to help facilitate its transition into a world-class creative city flourishing in the new knowledge economy.

As you can see, our vision is for a district that is creatively driven with businesses that are fully integrated with the public good and integral with developing the future economic identity of the city.

Creative people and businesses thrive in a close-knit and collaborative environment. Hong Kong has a tremendous opportunity to create one that will pave the way for its future. Creativity uniting culture and commerce. The Hong Kong way.

DANIEL MARINOV
PLANET TIME

Appendix 1

A Global Trend

(Brief notes 2005 - 2008)

“Design, film, entertainment, music, games: these creative industries are considered drivers of economic growth with great potential, both by adding economic value to products and services as through creating new jobs.” - **Creative Capital Conference/Amsterdam - 2005**

Creative Capital Conference/Amsterdam - 2005

“The conference aims to design a new public agenda that connects culture, innovation and the public domain in the knowledge economy. To this goal, innovation experts, economists, social innovators, cultural entrepreneurs, urbanist and public policy makers are being brought together. Internationally renowned keynote speakers like Charles Leadbeater, Charles Landry, Stephen Graham, Pekka Himanen, Joichi Ito and Geoff Mulgan will give their views on how to build crossovers between culture and economy. In afternoon sessions, these crossovers will be further explored and translated into a public agenda. Therein, the following themes will be addressed:

Creative Crossovers

The time of industrial innovation models is over. No longer does innovation only take place within knowledge institutions or company laboratories. Innovation has become an open process of constantly making new combinations. New players like intermediary institutions, small companies and creative individuals enter the field. Separate domains become networked. Innovation is open, crossovers are crucial. What are the success criteria for such creative crossovers to take place? What are new models for innovation? What role does culture play in this process? And the public domain?

Creative Clusters

Design, film, and entertainment, and music, games: these creative industries are considered drivers of economic growth with great potential, both by adding economic value to products and services as through creating new jobs. Yet, to define the creative industries and their role in the economic process still seems to be difficult. How does the process of creative production differ from industrial production?

Can we speak of creative industries or are creative clusters a better term? In what kind of environments will these creative clusters grow and flourish? These are all key questions for designing a public agenda.

Creative Cities

In the knowledge economy, cities are competing on the international level to provide the best climate for innovation and creativity. This becomes clear in the debate on the creative city, a concept that is vividly being discussed. What are successful strategies and what are necessary conditions? Because making a city creative is much more than having a vibrant cultural scene. The key question is: how to organise a local environment that harbours and breeds creativity?

Creative Commons

In virtual environments, creativity also becomes an issue of growing importance. Digital technologies make unlimited sharing, editing and copying of creative work possible. That offers new opportunities, but control is also a much-heard request. Without control no incentive to create. However, control could lead to regulation that kills creativity and innovation. Moreover, public goods like free information, public content and social software could be endangered by too strict protection laws. So, how do we organise a creative public domain in the digital era but protect the people who create? And what does this mean for producers and consumers of creative work? And what role do schools, museums and public media have? Representatives from the Creative Commons movement in Europe will discuss these questions with each other and the conference participants.”

Charles Landry

The Creative City and beyond

The Creative City is an increasingly popular term. What is its substance?

Which cities have really been creative? What are the obstacles to becoming a creative city?

“Landry’s idea of the Creative City goes well beyond the current attention for the so-called ‘creative class’ that make some cities more successful than others. Rather, it focuses on the cultural resources as the core of innovation in the city, and challenges us to develop strategies to manage different kinds of creative developments. In this perspective, every city in the world has a niche that planners can help to develop around specific cultural resources. The ‘creative city’ concept points at a new paradigm for urban change, and a new agenda for cities in the knowledge economy. What then are the necessary

conditions and successful strategies for making cities into creative cities? How to organise an environment where the local cultural resources can be harnessed?”

Creativity and the UK

UK's DCMS (Department for Culture, Media and Sport) defined the creative industry as “those industries that have their origin in individual talent, skill, and creativity and that have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property.”

The creative industry is the most important global economy in the 21st Century. The creative industry equals banking as the largest sector in the UK. In 2006, it accounts for 7.3% of the economy and contributes £13 billion of export and nearly 2 million jobs.

Today, creative industry and creative entrepreneurship have transformed once-decaying centers of heavy industries in Glasgow, Manchester, Sheffield, Liverpool and Bristol into creative cities of design, music, fashion, games, film, and the arts.

The Creative Economy: New York City

On April 4th, 2006 the Center for an Urban Future, the City of New York, the Rockefeller Foundation and the Partnership for New York City co-sponsored Creative New York, a conference at the Museum of Modern Art which brought together more than 200 leaders from New York's creative communities and government to discuss how to keep New York City at the forefront of the world's creative economy.

Mayor Bloomberg announced the creation of a new city office to support nonprofits during a major conference at MoMA convened on April 4th by The Center for an Urban Future, The City of New York, The Rockefeller Foundation and the Partnership for New York City. The conference focused on the findings of the Center's December 2005 “Creative New York” report.

Dublin: Creative City Region

October 2007

The creative knowledge economy is bringing new strategies and sources of development for city regions, changing the nature and organization of work, bringing new definitions and factors of competitiveness, new structures and sources of employment, and new forms of living, quality of life and social development.

Berlin Creative Cities Conference:

‘The Creative Sector as an Engine for Growth and Jobs in Europe’

On 11 September 2006, Berlin hosted an international conference designed to give representatives and academics of Creative Cities the opportunity to share their experiences and know-how in assessing and developing the creative sector.

During the discussions, two key issues were raised. Firstly, participants affirmed the importance of the creative sector for economic development, as demonstrated in research and statistics provided by UNESCO and the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) as well as data concerning employment and small and medium enterprises (SMEs) gathered by selected cities. Secondly, the experts argued that creativity was an act and attitude of individuals that should be facilitated and nurtured. They stressed the need for a suitably enabling environment, cross-fertilization between the various economic sectors and continued consultation between the cultural and economic sectors.

Naples, Italy

Sustainable City and Creativity: Promoting Creative Urban Initiatives

“Human Sustainable City and Creativity”

Sep 24, 2008 - Sep 26, 2008

The aim of the Meeting is to analyze in depth principles and practices of the creative city for the formulation of policy lessons and recommendations able to contribute to the building of a creative city.

In particular, it will be focused on the following issues:

Topics

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1. What is a creative city; how the creative city actually works, which are the key features and the critical elements conditioning creativity; how ideas turn into urban innovations; the drivers stimulating a city to innovate, the barriers and the constraints;
 2. Which are the benefits of the creative city in terms of competitiveness, environment, welfare, social stability, quality of life, vitality;
 3. Which are the key assets, infrastructures and tools required to promote creative processes in cities towards competitive, sustainable and cohesive places, and how public policy can influence the creative city.