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**Yorkshire Cities and Culture**  
**A Review of Current Thinking**

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# ***Executive Summary***

## ***i Introduction and Outline***

- i This report was commissioned by the Yorkshire Cultural Observatory and the Yorkshire & Humber Key Cities group.*

*It is not a strategy document but an attempt to give an overview of the current thinking within academia and policy-making about the cultural agenda for regions and regional cities in the UK. In particular it looks at the challenges for Yorkshire cities in the context of the current and potential regional cultural offer.*

*The report is a snapshot of current academic and policy thinking, but it also draws on a series of interviews conducted with policymakers in the five key cities as well as regional agencies. These interviews were limited in number and are not meant to be a comprehensive consultation exercise. Rather they acted to focus some of the issues raised by the literature and policy review and to develop suggestions around priority areas for the region.*

- ii The report identifies long-standing tensions within existing cultural policy between publicly subsidised arts and commercial cultural industries, and between a traditional unitary ‘national heritage’ and globalized, diverse cultural consumption.*

*Culture is increasingly being asked to deliver to economic and social objectives – urban image and regeneration, creative industries, social inclusion etc. – and as such has moved to a much more central position in local policy making. This has brought with it a number of problems and challenges for cities and culture which are quite complex.*

*However, cultural policy can rise to these challenges by moving beyond a limited arts remit (with limited resources) to become a significant contributor to the framing of an urban vision. This urban vision needs to be more open to marginal groups and to dissenting voices, giving it a rootedness in real local conditions rather than as a simple piece of marketing. Developing and delivering this vision across a range of policy agendas is the mark of a ‘creative city’ more than simply a vibrant cultural consumption offer.*

- iii The report identifies five areas where these challenges are at their sharpest.*

- 1) Arts policy remains central to much of local authority cultural activity – how is this justified and what functions might it play in the face of accusations that it is elitist and based on outmoded notions of national heritage? How does popular culture fit into this?*

- 2) *What potential do cultural industries hold out for cities in the region? How might we approach these in terms of a wider cultural policy agenda?*
  - 3) *Multiculturalism has marked many recent policy attempts to come to terms with the challenges and potentials of the new migrant communities in our towns and cities. The report suggests that new developments demand a rethink of these policies toward the idea of inter-culturalism; and that the potential represented by these multiple cultures is huge and greatly underused.*
  - 4) *The design and programming of the urban landscape has represented ‘urban regeneration’ and ‘cultural vibrancy’ for most cities over the last two decades. The report suggests that our city centres are in danger of re-installing the monocultural uses they sought to replace – with chain retail and leisure facilities appealing to narrow bands of consumers, especially around the ‘night-time economy’.*
  - 5) *Yorkshire cities need a fundamental re-think of their relationship to the wider flows of knowledge and their ability to deal with them. New forms of partnership and a ‘critical infrastructure’ are required.*
- iv *The report goes on to discuss city-regions, suggesting that we need to think of Yorkshire in terms of polycentrism rather than as dominated by a single urban conurbation. The report discusses the implications of this for cultural policy.*

*The report then looks at these implications in direct relation to recent initiatives within Yorkshire cities. Rather than look at the cities in individual detail, we look at general issues around Yorkshire identity and how the region’s cities might benefit from and contribute to a new regional identity.*

## *ii Key Issues and Questions*

### *ii a The Policy of Cultural Policy*

The most successful cities have learnt to learn through **governance structures** which are open to different voices but which are more or less agreed on a longer term vision, and one that has some wider legitimacy with the local population. This is not about city branding and marketing but about a wider set of urban negotiations. Cultural policy is very much central to this articulation of a vision – based on a shared self-understanding, identity and values for the city.

Cultural policy is very much about trying to articulate this **urban vision**, too. Such visions do not fall ready made, and they are about articulating the new as well as responding to the traditional. Cultural policy does have to look to the economic, the social, the political, the urbanistic, but if it is to mean anything it needs to bring these together in a coherent vision, to show how this can be made to work across a range of agendas.

- *How can culture be mobilized in the key cities and across the region to stimulate a debate that will arrive at a shared urban vision?*
- *How can cultural policy be utilized as part of this process, without appearing to generate a purely ‘top-down’ strategy?*
- *How can the energy around local cultural strategies in Yorkshire be refuelled to keep culture high on the broader urban policy agenda?*

### *ii b Arts and Popular Culture*

Art and popular culture are mixed now as never before; in their forms and in their audiences and in their venues. ‘Audience development’ is frequently reduced to ‘marketing’ and ‘outreach’ – to the young or the socially excluded. This agenda also needs to include the search for new forms of cultural mixing – new kinds of audience for new kinds of events in new kinds of places.

- *How can cultural policy balance the needs and interests of the subsidised arts sector with the commercial cultural sector?*
- *How can cultural policy work to ensure the right ‘mix’ of cultural offer across the broad spectrum of both producers and audiences/consumers?*
- *Is cultural policy in Yorkshire cities striking the right balance in terms of arts and popular culture provision?*

### ***ii c Planning for Cultural Industries***

Cultural industries are a growing sector across the region, with Leeds and to a lesser extent Sheffield acting as regional hubs for the sector. Any cultural industries policy demands a regional strategy - and one that recognises the differential scales of activity and dependence within that region. Not all cities can develop a cultural industries sector as an autonomous growth pole, they need to find a niche within a regional economy. The cultural industries sector also needs specific policy tools; these are in part economic ones and can be delivered in part through the

- *What niches and specialisms can currently be mapped, what and where are the gaps, and how can cultural policy foster new development?*
- *How can urban planning and cultural policy be brought into closer productive dialogue around the cultural industries sector?*
- *Can a regional cultural industries policy be achieved in Yorkshire?*
- *What specific business development tools does Yorkshire need to capitalise on its existing strengths in the cultural industries?*
- *What relationships can the region develop with London as global cultural Industries centre?*

### ***ii d Interculturalism***

The contemporary challenge for Yorkshire cities is to find ways of building a common culture which includes multiple cultures, but also the spaces and occasions for intercultural encounter and shared experiences. The great public spaces of the city centre are crucial here, as are smaller sites of urban and suburban neighbourhoods, and different tools are required for each.

Cultural policy can give a lead, articulating a new urban cultural vision which moves beyond property-led urban regeneration and segmented multi-culturalism into an inter-cultural vision. Such a vision is also about a new accommodation between the local and the global; building on minority and majority local identities whilst acknowledging the immersion of *both* in global cultural flows. Public space is a crucial part of common culture and of the inter-culturalism agenda. There is a need to emphasize local spaces which are open and tolerant, and which are part of the symbolic identification with the city.

- *Can a policy shift from multiculturalism to interculturalism be facilitated?*
- *What forms of 'new urban vision' are needed to make the case for interculturalism?*

- *What would an ‘intercultural Yorkshire’ look like – would this mean a re-negotiation of regional identity in which the Yorkshire Cities could take a lead?*

## ***ii e Urban Planning as Cultural Planning***

Planning policies must not work against the ecologies of independents and sites of popular culture, which risk being driven out. This requires better ways of working with the small scale commercial sector, not just the subsidized sector.

Planning should be about spaces of difference, of chance encounter; about bringing something distinct to the urban offer. The experience of cities should be a key cultural asset. City centres must not be dominated by commercial activities, but must also include ‘civic’ spaces and uses.

- *To what extent has ‘regeneration’ led to a homogenisation of the urban landscape and a restriction of a local, independent cultural and leisure offer?*
- *What urban planning policies and processes are most needed in order to address key cultural questions, and vice versa?*
- *Can public, civic and commercial spaces all be planned from the standpoint of an overarching urban cultural vision?*
- *Are Yorkshire cities planned with culture playing a central role? What is that role?*

## ***ii f Global Linkages***

Yorkshire cities have a full range of global linkages and much potential to expand these. But Yorkshire’s profile has dipped in recent years and in many cases this is related to its low cultural profile. The local cultural offer as well as the broad quality of life is high in many places, and the region has some of the more successful region economies outside of London. Cultural policy can help raise this profile; but it must also be seen as a way of helping develop global connections, internal partnerships, and the circulation and manipulation of knowledge. It is that shift in self-understanding that is crucial if the cities of the region are to survive and grow in a global economy.

- *How connected are the institutions and agents of knowledge production, global trade and communication, and cultural policy in Yorkshire Cities?*
- *How can cultural policy integrate the global and local?*
- *How can cultural policy be brought ‘closer’ to developments in the knowledge economy?*

- *Why is the cultural image of Yorkshire understated and how does this relate to older assumptions of Yorkshire identity??*

## ***ii g City-Regions and Culture***

The geography of city-regions varies depending on different functions. Cultural flows might have a different geography to travel-to-work. So far, the city-region debate has engaged very little with cultural issues. Better knowledge of the complex flows of cultural production and consumption within (and indeed beyond) the city-region would enable region-wide cultural planning, while also enabling component cities and towns in the region to develop distinctive cultural profiles.

There are some thorny issues of collaboration and competition to be addressed here, with long standing rivalries getting in the way of a realistic appraisal of specialisation and leadership in different areas. Yorkshire cities present a very diverse offer, from heritage to contemporary culture, from countryside access to urban density – and of course each city has a distinct image and feel. In some ways this makes it a unique region and it needs to be capitalised upon.

- *What problems are there in agreeing a regional cultural offer?*
- *Can Yorkshire become a polycentric city-region?*
- *Is the regional scale useful for cultural policy?*
- *How best can the diversity of Yorkshire Cities be enhanced and promoted.*

**Yorkshire Cities and Culture**  
**A Review of Current Thinking**

**Main Report**

Twenty-five years ago British cities were seen as a ‘problem’, concentrations of all the ills and anxieties of society. Nowhere more so than in the decaying industrial cities of the North, their infrastructure rusting, blackened and frayed, their populations declining in numbers, opportunities and aspirations. Since then, many of these great Victorian cities have experienced a remarkable turnaround, negotiating the bumpy road of de-industrialization towards the challenges of a new global economy. Out of the shadow of nineteenth-century Gothic and twentieth-century concrete a new kind of urban vision has begun to emerge, and ‘culture’ – in its myriad guises – has been a central player in this transformation. Indeed, where the Victorian cities used culture to display and legitimate their economic growth and confidence, today’s cities are using it to help *generate* that very economic growth and confidence.

### **1.1 Researching Cultures and Cities**

It is in this spirit that we were commissioned by the *Key Cities Group* of Bradford, Hull, Leeds, Sheffield and York and the Yorkshire Cultural Observatory in trying to think through in detail what are the key challenges facing the region’s cities and culture in the next few years, and how these cities can grasp the opportunities that culture holds out. Central to this project has been to think how the profile of culture might be raised across the region. In our view, this means taking a broad but meaningful definition of culture, building on the renewed cultural agenda outlined in the local cultural strategies produced in the early part of this new millennium.

There is no doubt that culture has played a central role in urban renaissance, and the DCMS has not been shy in trumpeting the success stories of culture-led regeneration (DCMS, 2004). The explosion of cultural production and consumption in the last twenty-five years has become a major source of economic growth. Cultural and creative producers are key generators of wealth and employment in many cities. Cultural consumption, in the form of the arts and entertainment, has transformed the urban landscape, bringing in new investment into urban leisure facilities (cafes, bars, shops) and in new city centre housing. The atmosphere of many of our cities has been changed beyond recognition in the last few years. And cultural production and consumption have given a new profile to cities, changing their image, changing their sense of themselves, and in turn stimulating more people to come to set up business, to shop, to sample the cultural offer, and to live.

We might not be sure as to how to measure this impact precisely, but it is clear that culture is woven into the very fabric of our cities - and of the policy worlds concerned with them. The common anxiety that culture is being used as a universal ‘fix-it’ for all kinds of social and economic problems points to this, as does our uncertainty in saying precisely what we expect from culture. We lack a clear language with which to describe this new role for culture, resulting in it being either bolted on to projects without any real understanding, or simply left quietly alone as somebody else’s concern.

This is a complex question, but one that we must address. On the one hand it is clearly an economic issue, with implications for jobs, image and wealth creation; but on the other it is by necessity about a re-invention of our vision for the city, of contemporary urbanity. It is fine in specific circumstances to try to isolate the economic dimensions and impacts of culture – as it is in many other areas of life like education, health or the environment. But ultimately, in order to mobilize culture for specific economic and social objectives, it needs to be grasped from a wider perspective. This forces a consideration of cultural dimensions on those for whom such issues might not immediately spring to mind as the business of economic development, or tourism, or transport, or education. It also forces new thinking on those for who ‘the arts’ are an unquestioned good demanding only to be spread as widely as possible. Working to rethink the meaning of culture in urban policy is at the heart of our report.

## **1.2 Redefining Culture?**

It used to be possible to make a distinction between culture as specific products of aesthetic and intellectual activity – let’s call them ‘the arts’ – and culture as ‘everyday life’. In the Victorian city both of these cultures had strong and distinctive local roots, from the universities, art galleries, theatres, churches, literary and philosophical societies, to the feeling that when travelling between cities you travelled between very different worlds. In the contemporary city it is increasingly difficult to separate these two senses of culture, just as it is difficult to untangle what is local from what is global. Culture concerns the local – how we live, how we think about ourselves, how we belong to the community – but it is also about the global flow of films, music, images, books, television programmes, magazines, brands, text messages, emails, telephone calls, migrant workers, tourists, lifestyles and consumer goods which increasingly make up our cultural world. Culture is thus important for identity, self-understanding and community belonging – but precisely how this is constructed and reconstructed in this global cultural flow is extremely complex.

Cities now compete on a wider scale - sometimes global, sometimes national or regional - and the struggle to attract (and retain) new finance, new business, investment in infrastructure, skilled workers, tourists, shoppers, students etc. is both difficult and unpredictable. Finding ways of mobilizing local assets and strengths in conjunction with these wider global opportunities is a primary challenge for contemporary cities. It’s very easy for cities aiming at global networks to jettison those aspects of the local that don’t fit in – or reduce them to the ‘community’ that surrounds the glittering new centre as some residual policy afterthought. So we have the big cultural showcases and attendant bars and restaurants for the internationally mobile ‘creative class’, and outreach and community projects for those left out of this. It’s also fashionable to oppose the two, setting the ‘real’ community against the ‘yuppies’ and the ‘gentrifiers’ who have taken over the city. But if culture is to be part of a new urbanity, a new kind of city, we need to genuinely include both these dimensions.

There are many people who benefit from these new opportunities for cultural expression, for doing business and for sampling the new urban landscape; and there are those who do not, who feel excluded. The challenge is to reduce the gap as far as possible. First, for reasons of social cohesion and equity - cities are supposed to

belong to all their citizens. Second, because in cultural terms perhaps more than any other, the success of a city involves the mobilization of local assets and skills, local identities, local visions. This is ultimately any city's unique selling point, its competitive advantage. Third, following on from this, too great a separation of a city's cultural offer from its sense of its own local identity and culture, or of cultural consumption from a strong local base of cultural production, will undermine the attractiveness and competitiveness of a city's cultural profile and economy. The challenge is to mobilize and maximize local assets, skills and cultures in order to take full advantage of the new opportunities opened up by a global cultural economy.

### **1.3 Yorkshire Cities and Cultures**

Responding to these challenges and opportunities demands new intelligence, new skills and above all new visions from city leaders. This does not come overnight, nor does it come from local government in isolation from citizens, businesses, consumers, institutions and visitors – from the varied and complex set of stakeholders in the contemporary city. But it is a challenge that can't be shirked without consigning the city to a more limited economic and indeed cultural horizon. Cities don't fail overnight; very few cities become bankrupt or go out of business, they are not like individual firms. But they get locked into slow decline; the quality of life gets worse and the brightest and most mobile leave. Cities do not go out with a bang but with a whimper.

Yorkshire is unique in the UK in possessing a network of diverse cities within close proximity. Yorkshire too is one of the few counties with a strong regional identity; but like these cities themselves, it is not always clear what this identity is! Towards the north, Newcastle and Gateshead have made a splash with their cultural flagships, and across the Pennines Liverpool's City of Culture sits next to Manchester's glitzy re-invented cultural profile. Yorkshire's cultural offer seems dimmed in contrast. In fact there is enormous potential in the region, just as there is enormous potential to think about the role of culture in a way that is more sustainable – that is long term and in depth – than some of these other models. How might this unique cluster of cities use culture not just as marketing, or as property development, or to attract tourism spend, but to truly re-invent itself as a thriving economic and cultural region? This is not just about soft factors such as 'identity', 'profile' and 'creativity', but also about transport, about business, about networks and partnerships, about education and leisure policy. The Regional Cultural Consortium, Yorkshire Culture, has a central role to play in networking and promoting the numerous agencies for whom culture is part of their remit (Wood, 2002).

The key cities have a crucial role in redefining local and regional sense of place in a new world, not just in terms of specific cultural products and images, but as an integral part of everyday life. This report does not propose all the answers, but tries to present the right questions, asked in such a way that they make sense to this particular region and can form the basis of a radical re-think about how culture fits with the aspirations of these five key cities and the whole region.



## Section Two History and Definitions

### 2.1 History

#### 2.1.1

Raymond Williams famously suggested three definitions of 'culture'. First, culture was 'a whole way of life'; it included traditions, customs, ways of thinking and beliefs, practices and habits. Second, culture was a process of 'cultivation' – including education, civilization and spiritual development. Third, culture was embodied in a range of material and immaterial objects – books, paintings, music, plays etc. In more modern times these last two have tended to merge together as 'the arts' (though sometimes this has also included science).

In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, two things happened. First, art became separated from science; second, art became separated from 'everyday life', and opposed to utilitarian values. It should be remembered however that at the same time artists – writers, painters, composers, musicians, actors etc. – who had formerly relied on direct patronage began to produce directly for the market.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, urbanization and industrialization brought literacy, leisure time and spending power to the newly visible urban masses; and in response new technologies and new business operations sprang up to provide new forms of culture which were overwhelmingly commercial – music hall, illustrated magazines, popular sheet music, recorded music, cinema and radio.

Many critics thought that this was not really culture, but a debased form of it. Others thought it was a corrupting and alien influence. And many thought 'art' needed defending – as 'real' culture and as central to each nation's heritage and traditions. Indeed, the USA had rapidly become leader in these new commercial cultures, and thus 'Americanization' was seen as a direct threat to historical, authentic national cultures.

Up to this point, direct support for the arts had come mainly from private patrons. In the new industrial cities, the local authorities had worked with local elites to raise money for opera houses, libraries, concert halls, theatres and so on – though many of these were financed by private subscription or philanthropy alone. National governments provided certain key institutions – the British Museum and the National Gallery are famous examples – often justified as a way to civilize the new industrial masses. But in the main the state stayed out of culture.

After the First World War to some extent, but especially after the Second, states across Europe dramatically increased their funding of the arts. There were many justifications for this: to protect national heritage; to protect art from the market; to give the mass public access to its cultural heritage etc. This support for the arts was mainly synonymous with 'cultural policy' (support for folk art was another aspect). The arts were held to be representative of a national and universal patrimony which needed to be supported in the face of the antagonism or indifference of the market.

### 2.1.2

In the 1970s and 80s this model of ‘state patronage’ in the arts began to break down, for two main reasons.

First, the growth in leisure time, education and wealth, coupled with the development of new technologies, business models and cultural content, meant that commercial or ‘popular’ culture was now by far the biggest provider of cultural products to the vast majority of the population. Against this backdrop, there were growing suggestions that the arts were at best a minority interest, at worst merely elitist; and that popular, commercial culture should be taken seriously.

Popular culture – film, TV and rock music especially – was seen now to have a certain ‘artistic’ validity; and it was seen as increasingly influential in wider cultural, political and ideological terms. In Europe, states already tended to own or regulate much of public broadcasting on the grounds of its perceived national importance and influence. Now the ‘cultural industries’ – as policy makers increasingly called them – were brought into cultural policy thinking.

This was not at first primarily motivated by economics, even if policy makers had to take economics into account when dealing with the cultural industries. The two main objectives were: first, the protection and promotion of national cultural industries (usually in the face of Anglo-American cultural exports around the world); and second, to promote increased access to the production and consumption of these new forms of culture (usually by trying to bypass the corporate controlled distribution systems). The Greater London Council, for example, tried to encourage independent film, video and music production and distribution, along with alternative publishing and opening up libraries and community cultural workshops. In the UK, this cultural industries approach was driven very much at the local level.

With the economic recession of the 1980s, an economic dimension was formally added: the cultural industries (and indeed the arts as such) were seen to provide new sources of employment and wealth creation. These arguments joined those about the role of arts and culture in attracting tourists and in changing the image and perceptions of towns and cities – especially those undergoing industrial decline.

The second reason that the ‘arts policy’ model began to creak was that the notion that the arts represented the nation was increasingly untenable. Not just because the arts were seen as a minority interest next to popular culture, but also because the nation itself was no longer to be seen as a single way of life. Post-1960s identity politics, individualized lifestyles, the rapid growth in assertiveness of ethnic minority cultures – all these meant that culture was increasingly diverse, and the established arts canon could no longer be held to represent this diversity.

Cultural policy had to open up to provide for the cultural needs and aspirations of an increasingly diverse population. As a number of high profile cases have shown, cultural experiences negotiate complex tensions between approval and prohibition, challenges to monocultural definitions of national identity and religious affiliation.

### 2.1.3

At the end of the 1990s things changed once more.

The renaming of the cultural industries as ‘creative industries’ by the new UK Department of Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) was an attempt to respond to these changes. The cultural industries had been seen as a hybrid – mass technological reproduction and commercial organization grafted on to artistic or creative labour – and thus industrial anomalies.

The industrial restructuring of the 1980s saw the rise of flexible specialization, involving outsourcing from large businesses to networks of small and medium sized enterprises, rapid market response rates based on information and communication technologies, and much more globalized operations.

These changes were related to new kinds of consumption - increasingly about ‘symbolic’ or ‘aesthetic’ desires rather than utilitarian needs, and thus very volatile, dynamic and generating fragmented or niche markets. The cultural industries, which had always dealt in these kinds of unpredictable and diverse markets, were no longer seen as an eccentric industrial hybrid, but as a template for a new emerging economic order.

The ‘new economy’ was held to be about ideas, knowledge and innovation. These, rather than cheap labour, would give competitive advantage, and crucial to them was ‘creativity’ – which the cultural industries had in abundance. This new ‘creative economy’ would be dominated by different forms of intellectual property – patents, copyright, trademarks and design – which would include science and technology – along with arts and cultural industries.

The DCMS did not use such a wide definition – but renaming the cultural industries the ‘creative industries’ and including the arts within them moved this whole sector beyond the traditional funding concerns of cultural policy towards economics. What was needed therefore was ‘joined up’ government, which would bring the Treasury, the Department of Trade and Industry (and others) together with the DCMS to develop policy across an expanded cultural and economic agenda.

However, the creative industries were not the only economic aspect of this retooled cultural policy. Using cultural flagships to launch urban regeneration programmes and re-image the city; providing physical infrastructure for cultural activities; using cultural festivals to re-animate spaces and attract residents and tourists; bidding for major sporting and cultural events – all these became essential components of any local cultural policy. Competing for a complex range of funding to facilitate such activities, supplemented by private sector investment and sponsorship, is now an essential part of the activity base of local cultural policy making.

Finally, the government also suggested that arts and culture might also be useful in dealing with those sections of the population that lacked the resources to take hold of the opportunities open to others. Self-confidence, a sense of participation and involvement, and the development of creative skills were deemed to be an essential part of any concerted attempt to tackle ‘social exclusion’.

## **2.2 Problems and Challenges**

### **2.2.1**

These changes have brought with them some hard questions for city policy makers and services.

The expansion of the brief of culture from the provision and maintenance of a limited range of arts infrastructures and activities to the present wide-ranging portfolio of cultural, economic and social outcomes has brought some problems. At one level this concerns the capacity to deliver on such an expanded agenda. Local authority arts and culture departments were traditionally marginal in terms of personnel, resources and political influence. The move from the margins to the centre of policy making has certainly increased the profile of culture departments (and occasionally resources), but it is not certain that a greater understanding has come with that shift.

Culture is asked to step in and deliver, but often with other departments' (closely guarded) resources and to an agenda it had no hand in setting. Indeed, culture as such is seen by other departments as somehow part of the mix, but they are not sure as to how and with what consequences? On many occasions when a cultural activity or agenda does gain centre stage it is deemed too important simply to be left to the culture department and is taken forward by more powerful ones with little reference to its cultural policy provenance.

Giving adequate resources to those charged with delivering an ever expanding cultural brief is a step many cities fail to take, with a shortfall between resources and aspiration that characterizes much of the contemporary cultural policy scene. But the issue is not simply the under-resourcing of culture departments; cultural policy is frequently taxed beyond its capabilities by the extent and complexity of the demands made upon it.

### **2.2.2**

To begin with, there is the sheer proliferation of ways in which people consume culture. The distinction Williams made between culture as a 'whole way of life' and culture as specific 'arts' product is becoming less and less relevant. The way in which cultural content is now experienced across a diverse range of technological platforms, and intertwines with goods and services marketed in terms of 'design', 'brands', 'lifestyles', 'experiences' means that our everyday life is increasingly about 'cultural consumption'.

Large and small companies are now selling us goods and services which previously were purely utilitarian or something provided by the state or by individuals, families and communities for themselves. Think, for example, of the huge commercialization of children's parties, or weddings, or therapy, not to mention the massive array of images, sounds, text and information available for a fee on your mobile phone.

These developments underlie the expansion of the 'creative economy' and its entrance into many aspects of our private lives. However, the increasing sophistication and assertiveness of consumers warns us against seeing them simply as victims here. Both

politics and business are witnessing a blurring of lines between consumers and citizens, as voters demand better services and customers are ready to take collective action in pursuit of their interests.

All this makes a clear designation of ‘cultural’ as opposed to the everyday utilitarian, or the educational, or the social, or the economic increasingly difficult. ‘Everything is cultural’, people say. But then what is the job of cultural policy, what can it do when culture is so all pervasive and – it seems – able to get on quite well without government? Of course there are regulations and the rule of law (such as on consumer rights or intellectual property); there is education policy in an age of creativity; there are business policies that might help small cultural businesses and start-ups, or trade missions and marketing campaigns. There might even be protectionism for some countries. But what should (local) government provide – what can it add to the market?

### 2.2.3

As we can see, the production of culture is now enormously complex. Even consumers are getting in on the act with the proliferation of user generated content, for example on *MySpace*, *YouTube*, *Facebook*, *Flickr*, and the social networking uses of commercial sites such as *e-Bay* and *Napster*. We might well ask what local culture is in the age of the internet.

Whilst it is certainly the case that cultural production is rooted in particular places, it is also true that the linkages between the local and the global across the different sub-sectors are very complex and dynamic. Pop music is in many ways intensely local and frequently emblematic of place; yet the finance, the managerial and legal expertise, the marketing and distribution logistics, are as global as any business you might imagine.

Even those elements firmly rooted in place – artists, aspiring musicians and writers, start-up fashion, digital and design companies – present a complex ecosystem which is not easily amenable to local government support and intervention. Simply providing direct subsidies to artists is no longer economically or politically feasible as a strategy. Infrastructure and space, competitive grants, stimulation through projects and events, local awards, targeted public art and design competitions – these are the sort of tools most cities now use.

The situation regarding creative businesses is even more fraught with questions of where, when and how to intervene. Long lead times between conception and implementation, unpredictable results, a fragmented set of individuals, organizations and businesses – all these demand a high degree of knowledge and sensitivity if they are to be supported as part of local cultural and economic strategies.

This is not all. The external image of a city is now increasingly linked to its cultural profile. It might be based on entertainment, leisure and shopping facilities, on its architectural or historical heritage, on its contemporary built environment, on its arts infrastructure, on its sense of vibrancy and ‘happening’ – more usually on a combination of these. There is now a cultural checklist of things each city (depending on size and location) needs to have to compete in this – concert halls, arenas,

galleries, shopping brands, signature architecture etc. – but this is not a straightforward set of acquisitions.

Real estate, urban design and culture are now closely intertwined, and cities are faced with challenges of capital, property, urban intelligence and cultural sensitivity which are quite complex. Getting it right is not easy. When these questions of urban cultural infrastructure are set next to the complex ecosystems of cultural production and consumption, we can see how holistic ‘cultural planning’ can take us beyond the traditional confines of cultural policy into a much wider urban vision. But again, developing a distinctive urban vision also has its problems.

#### **2.2.4**

In the last 20 years, governments across Europe have tended to withdraw from the prescriptive national planning models of the 1950s to 1970s. Cities are required to be more competitive, to show more initiative, to display a more entrepreneurial energy. As global forces have disempowered the nation-state on a number of fronts, political attentions have focused on the specificities of the local. And as we have seen, globalization has involved a much greater and more fluid interaction with the local. In the UK however, much of local policy is still heavily constrained by national government.

In the cultural realm, the Conservative governments of the 1980s had certainly demanded an increased scrutiny in terms of ‘value-for-money’ from its funded arts clients - part of a general shift throughout the period towards more a more ‘efficient’ management style and an openness to private sector sponsorship. As part of the ‘deal’ between the DCMS and the Treasury under Labour, culture would be given a higher priority and more money, but it needed to account for itself through an ever expanding range of social and economic outcomes.

Measurement (see below) is only one aspect of this; the DCMS along with the New Labour Government generally have set ever more prescriptive guidelines for cultural policy at local level. A great number of strategic policy documents have been required, along with a plethora of competitive funding initiatives and new national agencies with strong local remits.

These constraints are repeated in many aspects of local government, from education to health care to social and environmental services and beyond. This also applies, of course, to the ability of cities to raise and spend local tax revenue. Legislatively and financially, cities in the UK have little room for manoeuvre; and certainly little room to challenge the dominant (if unspoken) policy which allows the region of the South East to develop as the country’s main economic engine. Any culture-led renaissance in the older industrial cities must be set against this general economic background.

#### **2.2.5**

Part of this local policy scrutiny has involved making and testing claims about the impact of culture across a range of policy areas. There has been much debate about how to objectively measure this impact. It should be said that measurement is not simply some mean-spirited demand from the accountants at the Treasury; it is part of

a much wider shift to ‘managerialism’ in government, where aims and objectives need to be assessed against objective indicators of achievement. Though some in the cultural sector suggest that it encourages bean counting at the expense of artistic endeavour, this move is part of a wider question about legitimating the large amounts of public money spent on what can easily seem a minority interest.

In the first place, this concerns the efficient management of the funding the arts have, making spending more transparent and accountable, and linking public funding to more commercial income and private sponsorship. This then extends to the issue of what should be the aims and objectives of an arts organization and how might we measure the achievement (or otherwise) of those aims and objectives.

This is where the debates start. In the attempt to legitimate arts funding, the government (and indeed much of the arts funding bureaucracy) has added a range of benefits other than the merely ‘artistic’. Economic benefit, urban regeneration, social inclusion, audience development, education and outreach work – all these have been claimed for, or ascribed to, the cultural sector. The three key questions have been therefore: can culture deliver on this range of activities? If it could deliver, does it have enough resources, and how would you measure its success?

Recent commentary has focused on just how unsystematic much of the measurement to date has been. Work commissioned by the DCMS stresses the often indiscriminate mix of different expectations and objectives used to make claims around culture and urban regeneration. Trusting such claims thus becomes very difficult. This suggests the need for much more clarity in outlining objectives, more consistent, methodical research built in from the start, and the allocation of sufficient resources to measure and monitor cultural projects.

But one of the problems with ‘evidence based policy’ is that at some point political judgement has to be made about fundamental aims and objectives. An influential paper by John Holden at Demos has addressed this aspect, focusing not just on clarity of objectives but on clarity about *values* and their sources of legitimacy. Culture Secretary Tessa Jowell’s intervention over ‘intrinsic versus instrumental values’ in culture provides the backdrop here.

Holden uses the concept of ‘public value’ to suggest that we need to be much more clear about the values we ascribe to any cultural policy (national heritage, historical value, aesthetic, educational, economic etc.) and that these values, once agreed, should be pursued as such - without adding a range of statistical output indicators to which the sector is ill suited.

Recognising where and which ‘intrinsic’ values are in play, and allowing them to operate within the appropriate artistic and cultural organizations and activities, is certainly crucial, and we shall return to this below. Be that as it may, there is no escaping the fact that culture does intersect with many other aspects of policy and everyday urban life. Some form of measurement or statement of clear objectives is therefore necessary in order to link the cultural to the agendas with which it must work.

## 2.2.6

Measurement is related to the need to make a fit with other agendas. If culture is to be linked with the objectives and the resources of other agencies and budgets, then some form of clear assessment against an agreed set of criteria – some of them not directly related to intrinsic artistic or cultural value – is inevitable. But as with public value, this is about agreed values and understandings *before* it is about measurement and objective indicators. This is most crucial because the linkages between culture and other departments within the context of the wider strategic direction of the city demand precisely these shared understandings and visions.

‘Cultural planning’ has been advocated as a holistic perspective which looks beyond the arts and cultural industries to the whole quality of life of a city. It includes transport, public services, planning, neighbourhoods, leisure and sport, along with education and health.

This is a daunting task. Not only do all these elements have their own distinct systems and forms of governance, but in linking them to cultural policy we don’t know who is serving whose ends – is transport serving culture or vice versa. Is culture serving economics or vice versa? What happens when they cut across each other? For example, if culture improves the image of an area and leads to raised property values, which in turn drives out smaller cultural producers, do cities have the resources to deal with this?

Nevertheless, this is a crucial challenge for cities and for cultural policy. The other side to globalization is the continued importance of place; and the realization that places need increasingly to be *made*. Place-making -- giving a distinctive profile to the city for both insiders and outsiders – is something that is not just given, but that demands care and attention. Whatever the difficulties, many cities have sought to confront this challenge and use it to their advantage, with greater and lesser degrees of success. Doing nothing is the worst option.

Richard Florida claims to be able to show a statistical link between a creative urban cultural policy and economic growth. He argues that a creative class which combines ‘talent, technology and tolerance’ is strongly attracted to the cultural ambiance of particular types of city and neighbourhood. An investment in cultural facilities, attention to the urban amenities of leisure and entertainment, and promotion of a diverse and tolerant public culture is thus good urban economics.

Aside from the criticism his statistical claims have encountered, the strong focus on attracting mobile talent from out of town by the cultural consumption offer has justified urban regeneration visions which are mostly about upmarket residential and retail opportunities for this elusive creative class. Cities would do better to look to local cultural production and consumption reflecting the real qualities and aspirations of a particular place; the social divisions in British cities can only get worse if the ‘non-creative classes’ are excluded from the cultural attractions of the city centre.

Place-making that gives a distinctive feel to the city for residents and visitors is a balancing act which involves some choices – the requirements of these two groups is not always the same. But the focus on local production and consumption is not

necessarily parochial; local cultures are already intertwined with flows of global cultures.

Place-making is about giving the space and resources to let local and global cultures gestate into a distinctive configuration. Cultural production has strong links to particular places. This is partly pragmatic (proximity to other businesses, clients, workspace and a pool of skills), but also partly symbolic; it is part of the identity and brand of many artists and cultural businesses. Cultural planning involves the careful intervention into the infrastructure - both hard and soft - which facilitates the specific social and economic interactions that underpin cultural production and cultural consumption and give rise to distinctive local cultures.

### 2.2.7

The 'creative city' is not just about an attractive and vibrant cultural offer, however characterized. It is also about the ability of cities to respond, to learn and to anticipate the changing circumstances in which they are situated. This is not just about the structures of local government, but also about the shared understandings which form the basis of local *governance* – that complex civic network of public, quasi-public and private agencies and individuals, set in a particular 'cultural' context. Governance works by negotiation and partnership rather than hierarchical, legal-political chains of command (though these are still important). Intervention here needs to be intelligent and to work within a shared vision – though contestation and conflict are also part of this process.

Jane Jacobs, the famous American urbanist, talked about the urban chess board, where each move reconfigures existing relationships in very complex ways. Charles Landry's work is replete with examples of such urban interventions, from the catastrophic to the inspirational. Mistakes will be made, but the ability to learn from these is key. And this learning takes place best within relatively open networks of urban governance – where dissident voices can also be heard, as well as those away from the mainstream.

The most successful cities have learnt to learn through governance structures which are open to different voices but which are more or less agreed on a longer term vision, and one that has some wider legitimacy with the local population. This is not about city branding and marketing but about a wider set of urban negotiations. Cultural policy is very much central to this articulation of a vision – based on a shared self-understanding, identity and values for the city.

Cultural policy is very much about trying to articulate this vision, too. Such visions do not fall ready made, and they are about articulating the new as well as responding to the traditional. Cultural policy does have to look to the economic, the social, the political, the urbanistic, but if it is to mean anything it needs to bring these together in a coherent vision, to show how this can be made to work across a range of agendas.

## Section Three      Five Challenges for Cities and Culture

### *3.1 Arts and Popular Culture*

After all that, it is still ‘the arts’ understood in the traditional sense that account for the bulk of public funding, attract high levels of private sponsorship and command continuing prestige. Given the amorphous and intractable demands of ‘cultural planning’, a focus on ‘the arts’ seems relatively clear cut. Funding for culture is more or less synonymous with funding for the arts; and this is targeted at relatively few large institutions which – for all their problems – represent a relatively manageable portfolio. More pragmatically still, what basic statutory duties local authorities do have in this sphere tend to be about the arts and the buildings that house them (though often without the statutory resources to do so).

‘The arts’ are therefore central to local cultural strategies. They often represent their main duties and their main spend. This needs to be acknowledged as such rather than hidden behind the pretence that culture departments can provide a universally accessible range of leisure and entertainment services. There are some real dilemmas with arts funding, but these need to be thought through rather than fudged.

#### *3.1.1 Against the arts*

The traditional justification for public funding of the arts went along the lines that they were one of the highest expressions of our culture, essential statements of what we are and might become. They represent a crucial part of our national heritage, in fact of our universal human inheritance; knowledge and experience of the arts is an essential part of what it is to be an educated and well-rounded person.

One of the main arguments against the arts is that they are elitist. They require particular skills that are not available to those without the necessary education. The response to this over the last 30 years has been around ‘access’ and ‘outreach’ – making the arts more available to ‘disadvantaged’ groups, ie. those without access to such advantaged education.

But the stronger accusation is that the arts are not just caught up in social divisions willy-nilly -- they are active participants within it. They are intrinsically about social distinction, about displaying knowledge and taste in order to gain social prestige. The education necessary for the acquisition of taste in the arts is not just about formal learning but about an informal (and thus often inaccessible) social sense of what does and doesn’t ‘go’. When something that was once deemed ‘difficult’ and ‘challenging’ is picked up by the mainstream then this is at once abandoned as rather ‘middlebrow’ and boring. The arts – so it is argued - are deliberately made difficult for those not in the know – this is what makes them so attractive to the elite!

Another version of this charge of elitism is that the national (or regional eg European) traditions of which the arts are held to be amongst the highest expressions are no longer working as they did. We are global – we consume cultural products and our

populations are made up of cultures from across the globe. The artistic canon is therefore decreasingly relevant to our contemporary cultures.

More strongly, the canon represents a western, elitist version of that culture which was complicit in much of the imperialist, orientalist and inter-culturally arrogant activities of the past (cf the debates around the abolition of slavery). The idea of a unified western art tradition, as portrayed in Kenneth Clarke's BBC TV series *Civilization* - with its Palladian villas, classical sculptures and daunting canvases -- sits very awkwardly with us today.

Not only that, but many of the values associated with western art have themselves been challenged. The modernist movement had already dismantled many of these values by the time it was picked up by the 1960s counterculture and the new radical avant-garde. The (by now) routine smirking incomprehension and vilification of contemporary art in the popular press suggests as much.

But equally the impact of popular culture – most importantly that drawn from the African slaves forcibly taken to America and bringing 'prehistoric' rhythms and melodies with them – has completely changed our understanding of what is art, what is culture. Classical music, for example, is now seen by many as being mainly of historical interest for all but a small handful of consumers.

In this context, it is unsurprising to find that in the culture stakes, for many, all bets are off. Art, argues John Carey as one example, is whatever people say art is. It is about personal pleasure; it makes no sense to talk about a higher taste. There are no grounds for aesthetic judges to say this is better than that: modernist art has shattered all conventions, and popular culture has offered a huge variety of cultural pleasure to anyone who wants them.

What then is cultural policy – who is to say this is better than that? And on what grounds does the state say this is better than that – especially when the market in cultural goods is so huge and with such a 'long tail'? We might also add that it is science and technology that are dominant in the contemporary world – art is about pleasure, not rationality, so why should it command so much public money and attention?

### ***3.1.2 In defence of the arts***

The most pragmatic defence has tended to be about the need to protect heritage and address market failure. We do have a heritage in the form of historical buildings and artistic products. These are no longer well served by the market. Old buildings need expensive maintenance if they are to be kept open to the public. Fine art is expensive to acquire, conserve and display. The classical performing arts are incredibly expensive – not just each production but the training and infrastructure involved. When the economist William J Baumol referred to 'cost disease' with respect to the performing arts, he wasn't being gratuitous.

To keep these alive and open to the public as part of national heritage demands some level of public funding because the economics suggest that productivity cannot be

increased and full houses would not cover the costs without pricing out all but the wealthiest. The alternative is to let these disappear.

A further defence would be that this artistic heritage is not just about preserving a history, it represents (John Carey again) a ‘vast storehouse of ideas’. If the future is about creativity, then surely it is our cultural patrimony – our cultural ‘capital’ - that is at stake here. We stand on the shoulders of giants: our culture provides us with a vast range of ideas, images, texts, sounds on which we build. The reason, it is argued, that our creative industries are so successful globally is that our cultural patrimony is still alive. It has been added to by popular culture and it still lives in dialogue with the contemporary world – which is why, for example, Chinese creative industries, in the absence of such a cultural reservoir, find it very difficult to innovate in terms of content.

It is not just a dead storehouse of ideas – anybody can get these on-line – but a living tradition understood ‘from the inside’ that counts. If creativity is to be a key cultural resource, then the arts represent this at a very intense level. They challenge; they attempt and encourage a different kind of thinking and vision. For many cultural economists the contemporary arts, though not as profitable as the commercial cultural industries, are the R&D, the ‘blue skies’ department, of our creative industries sector.

It might be difficult to prove, but the connection between London as creative industries capital and its rich artistic heritage (concert halls, galleries, art colleges, theatres, museums) stands very clear for many. The same holds true for other metropolitan areas. These things do not just attract ‘creatives’, they provide resources for them and their audiences and customers.

We also need to argue against the false democracy of the ‘anti-elitist’ argument. To some extent we can’t go back before cultural policy began to provide for public access; to return the arts to private patronage would not only make many aspects economically unviable but would restrict access more than ever. It would certainly not benefit those already excluded. And we would only have to accept part of the arguments around the economic importance of the arts in terms of employment and consumer spending to suggest that it would not necessarily save that much money.

Recent research from the University of Manchester has looked at the relationship between cultural consumption and social groupings. One concept this work tackles is the ‘cultural omnivore’. This figure has been used to suggest that there has been a significant erosion of the distinction between ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture. The new cultural omnivore is at home at football and the opera, knows about performance art and hip hop, likes *The Simpsons* and French *auteur* cinema.

But the research does not entirely bear this out. There are clear distinctions of preference in terms of gender, age and ethnicity; and in those preferences related to ‘art’ there are quite traditional distinctions in terms of social class. But the most significant distinction was not between art and popular culture, but between those who had strong preferences for different forms of art *and* popular culture, and those who had few strong preferences at all. Low income, poor education, restricted horizons – all strongly linked to social class – translated into low levels of cultural participation and lack of strong preferences of any kind

We can take a number of conclusions from this. First, though we might not embrace the full ‘cultural omnivore’ thesis it is clear there is no simple opposition between ‘art’ and ‘popular culture’ in social terms – the two intertwine in interesting ways for active cultural consumers. Second, the arts do not necessarily have to look to the models of popular culture to become ‘relevant’ and ‘accessible’ – the barriers to participation in the arts go much deeper than this and cannot be dealt with by presentation alone. Third, popular culture is no longer the ‘other’ of art, and vice versa.

The removal of public funding from the arts on the grounds of elitism would cut much deeper into the active cultural life of the population than the word ‘elite’ suggests; and it would do precisely nothing to provide for the socially disadvantaged. Indeed, it would lead to an overall reduction of the quality and vitality of cultural life which would be immensely damaging to the profile and lived experience of the city or nation.

### ***3.1.3 Art, urban regeneration and social exclusion***

This might be clearly seen if we look at arts funding from the other side: not the anxious self-examination of cultural inclusion, but the robust assertion of the qualities of distinction and prestige when the arts are linked to urban regeneration and city profile building.

Culture is up-market, it attracts the ‘creative class’ or the ‘young urban professionals’ or, indeed, the professional classes themselves. Cultural tourists spend much more than traditional day trippers. Cities use art to promote themselves as vibrant capitals of culture. Their economic attractiveness might lie elsewhere, but nothing works so well as art for improving profile.

Art is in many respects as global as anything in popular culture – artists are more professionally mobile than any but the wealthiest creative industry personnel. Its circuits of validation and peer recognition, established via networks of galleries, curators, magazines and publishing houses, are global. Art exhibitions, new artistic trends, signature architecture – all these regularly fill the pages of in-flight magazines, city listings sections, guide books and TV travel slots. A major investment in the arts infrastructure – Bilbao, Gateshead, Linz – can transform the external image of a city.

It is also clear that culture has been a major driver of urban property values in peripheral cities or peripheral areas of cities. Urban regeneration from the 1980s on has been strongly predicated on the presence of some form of cultural flagship – the gallery, concert hall and museum. But perhaps more importantly, the cultural makeover of particular urban areas from dirty and redundant to hip and cool has transformed property markets in city centres.

Learned by accident in New York’s SoHo, the ability of artists, bohemians and trendy consumers to re-landscape the city was picked up by astute property developers. New urban growth coalitions emerged where artists, creative businesses and (at first) small

property developers created new, trendy urban areas and began to demand a similar cultural makeover of the city as a whole. Manchester is a prime example here.

There are links between art and social distinction, between art and economics, and between art and power which it would be foolish to deny. The question is how to manage these. On the one hand distinction is one of the everyday pleasures of art and popular culture; it marks us off, gives out the right signals to others; generates the enthusiasm of being an insider 'in the know'; allows interest groups and scenes to develop. On the other, art can act as a rigid social barrier and an engine of gentrification and exclusion which serves to undermine the good faith of the art work it promotes. There are many art and cultural centres – old and new – which have worked in this way.

Cities are frequently caught in a dilemma. If they promote a cultural offer led by the arts and intended to achieve an international profile, they can often be accused of ignoring local cultural products, local social problems and falsifying an authentic local identity: *whose culture, whose city?* This is partly about the local being more 'authentic' than the global (though the global also comes from somewhere). It is partly about a perceived responsibility to promote local production. It is partly about what image, what story, is being told about the city and how it might misrepresent different local identities. And it is partly about the implication of art in established social divisions and exclusions.

There is truth in all these accusations. But the choice is also one between an open, exciting cultural offer which feels plugged into the global circuits in which we live now, and a dull, isolated, provincial culture secure in its own limited horizons. Such a culture does not encourage participation amongst the socially excluded any more than a new art gallery does; it simply lowers the local cultural horizon for everybody.

All this suggests that local authorities have to be clear that art cannot be asked to overturn social divisions, and that it would be best to recognise these limits rather than try to deliver an undeliverable social agenda. This is not to abandon education and outreach activities, or to give up on efforts to make arts venues more accessible and attractive. There are many good examples of how arts projects have really added to the lives of people who do not go to the arts; and these are expensive, time-consuming and difficult. They can deliver benefits which might be said to be 'socially useful' – self-confidence, new skills, community empowerment etc. – but these cannot be a substitute for education, employment and access to political representation.

In fact, what they mainly deliver are the pleasures that art brings to others as a matter of course. What community artists resent most is not the difficulty of the task but the interference in, or burdening of, their activities by objectives and outcomes external to their core artistic aims – which are, after all, to give a certain form of aesthetic 'knowledge' (understanding of self and others) but also to add to the sweetness of life.

What brings together critics of art as urban regeneration and art as social work is a shared concern that the autonomy of art is not being respected. This autonomy does not mean it is free from all social, moral, financial or political constraints. It is not absolute; it is simply that it has its own *modus operandi*, its own internal rules and

regulations, its own logic, its own field of operation. Art resists outside interference for good as well as bad purposes; it has its particular space. Cultural policies have to respect this space.

### **3.1.5 What good are the arts?**

What then of the argument that ‘art’ is whatever people say it is; there is no canon, there are just fragmented taste cultures; each of which is no better than any other? More: any judgement of ‘quality’ or ‘excellence’ is simply the imposition of one taste culture on the rest. So why – apart from the preservation of a heritage, maybe – should local authorities have arts policy?

First, the ‘anything is art’ argument is to some extent undermined by the ‘social prestige’ argument. It is clear that what is ‘in’, what is ‘cool’, is a social construct, recognised – and frequently contested – as such. Judgements are personal but they are so in a deeply social context. Culture is a form of communication, as any *fashionista* will tell you. There are certainly different taste cultures, but they are not impenetrable individual universes; all tastes have the potential to be discussed and disputed because they are more than simply personal.

How then (the second charge) is art – or the judgment that such is art and such not, or that this is good and this is bad -- anything more than the imposition of one taste on another? There is no denying the close connection between art and social elites; but there is no denying either the deep-seated and continued aspiration of art to speak *beyond* social elites.

Nor can we dismiss the value ascribed to the arts by a wide range of the population, even those who don’t actually participate. Indeed, the terms ‘art’ and ‘artist’ are widely used and deemed great compliments amongst popular culture audiences of all kinds. The ridicule and anger regularly inspired by the Turner Prize, or the glee at news of the Momart warehouse fire, does not indicate a dismissal of art and artists - just the view that their contemporary representatives are trying to pull the wool over our eyes, that they are not *really* artists.

Cultural policy has to hold on to the potential of art to speak beyond its immediate audience. These are its democratic aspirations. And in doing so it links with the issue of fragmented, personal taste cultures. Many of those who have argued against the idea of a recognised canon of great works of art have done so in order to give value to all those things high culture had left out or dismissed, and to make us aware of the power relations embedded in ‘disinterested’ artistic judgements. But in destroying completely the idea of a canon, a mutually agreed criteria of ‘excellence’ or ‘worth’ they also destroy the idea of a ‘common culture’.

As we have seen, common national cultures which attempt to impose singular unified identities have been challenged from many quarters. The great narratives of singular national culture are no longer tenable in an age of globalization and mass migration. But there are dangers that come with the ending of these kinds of common cultures – as the debates around ‘Englishness’ and ‘multiculturalism’ indicate. We are now all individual and live amongst diverse cultural groups – but what do we have in common, what binds us?

Part of the aspiration of art to speak beyond its audience is precisely to speak to a common culture. This is an ideal, rarely achieved, but the attempt is crucial. The German sociologist Jürgen Habermas spoke of a 'public sphere' that emerged in the 18<sup>th</sup> century – part of the wider emergence of the modern democratic state. This public sphere was a civic space made up of a range of public and semi-public institutions (newspapers, coffee-houses, journals, pamphlets, academies, political parties) in which dialogue and debate and dispute take place – and not just among the social elite, as the historian E.P. Thompson amply illustrated.

This public sphere is one where a *common* rather than a *unitary* culture emerges – out of dialogue, not the imposition of an official story. It was also within this sphere of dialogue that 'art' came to be seen as (relatively) autonomous from political, religious and social interference. Art speaks about and to this common culture; and it is a part of it. That is why exclusion from cultural participation goes hand in hand with exclusion from wider social and political participation.

What we now call art no longer has any monopoly on this common culture. The cultural industries as we have seen are now the main source of cultural consumption. But art is not opposed to this common culture; it is a specific part of this on-going dialogue. In part its importance lies in its links with the past, and the links it allows us to make with this past.

We now know more about how art is rooted in the social and political context of its times; but we also know about how it contrives to partly transcend these. It brings a particular historical experience and knowledge directly into the present, transmitted by the unique mix of reason and emotion that marks aesthetic pleasure. Art reflects, affects, and transcends its time because though dealing in pleasure it also has a challenge built into it; this challenge is its autonomy, and its great value.

Popular culture is also about challenge; all great popular culture begins as unpopular culture. But its ability to do this lies buried in the complex ecosystem of the cultural industries, where making money and making things that appeal to people give rise both to throwaway products and works of great power. Art comes from a more historical tradition, a tradition which would find it difficult to survive in a pure market context; apart from certain profitable areas it needs public support to survive.

Judging to spend money on art rather than something else is not (just) about the imposition of one taste culture but about keeping open a space for challenge, for dialogue, even for a 'sanity check'. It is particular part of our common culture; rather than a victory for some democratic culture its disappearance (or restriction to private patronage) would be a diminution of our common culture, a closure of horizons.

### 3.1.6 Local arts policy?

What does all this have to do with local cultural policy?

First, it implies an acceptance of the arts as valid part of local cultural life, one in which they have a special responsibility, and should not be hidden behind an apologetic, populist facade.

Second, an arts policy should have a commitment to a common local culture. This means thinking about access, education, outreach, local relevance and local production; but this common culture reaches far beyond the local and policy should reflect this.

Third, a commitment to a common culture should not be set against the idea of challenging or ‘difficult’ art. Art can be unpopular culture; it needs to challenge – this is not the same as shock, but an attempt to say the unsayable or what has been left unsaid. A robust arts policy is about providing the space for challenge and disruption. It accepts that the arts are pleasurable and familiar but also that they must change and develop. The ability of cities to recognise and encourage these complex dynamics is a mark of a truly creative city.

Fourth, just as the juxtaposition of high levels of social deprivation can cast a shadow across the arts, so too the close association of the arts with the power of local elites can make culture stultifying, self-congratulating and exclusive. Creative cities are also those that try to build new creative alliances and networks that allow different cultural currents to make a difference at policy level. They enrich the wider cultural vision for the city.

Fifth, if an overwhelming link to local elites can be stultifyingly provincial so too can an over-emphasis on ‘international art’ disrupt local production. New ideas are crucial. The brief visits of the *Ballet Russes* to the capitals of the West before the First World War changed their notion of art. A visiting exhibition (like the famous Oriental Art exhibitions in late 19<sup>th</sup> century Paris) can transform a local arts scene. A Sex Pistols concert one afternoon over thirty years ago transformed Manchester music.

But what does it mean when an imposing gallery heralding a new vision for the future of a city is full of art which has no connection whatever with the life and history of this city? Cities can buy space in travel magazines with a new building; but the attention lasts only so long. In the end it is the embeddedness of the cultural offer that counts, and this comes from investment in local spaces of production and consumption. Cultural policy should stage the encounter of the global and local, not their mutual displacement.

Sixth, art and popular culture are mixed now as never before; in their forms and in their audiences and in their venues. ‘Audience development’ is frequently reduced to ‘marketing’ and ‘outreach’ – to the young or the socially excluded. These are fine, but this agenda also needs to include the search for new forms of cultural mixing – new kinds of audience for new kinds of events in new kinds of places.

This is precisely what an active cultural policy can do. The *Proms* now includes music from an enormous spectrum; but it has also thought about new venues and new audience mixes. New curatorial spaces – such as *Meltdown* – bring in programming from outside established audience/ content mixes, and have been replicated in many other areas.

The visual arts in West Yorkshire, in the absence of a flagship gallery, have sought out the most varied and imaginative spaces in which to display their work. New kinds of music and performance, new mixes of technology and live art, new uses of public and private spaces are changing the expectations of audiences.

This is not the same as making arts accessible by popular programming. This strategy has its place – but this is not the only way to make links with popular culture; the most productive encounters are those where art and popular culture take each other seriously, rather than simply the arts ‘letting their hair down’. Classical music in many cities, it might be argued, is further than any other art from the dynamics of contemporary culture, and ripe for this form of innovative programming.

Finally, popular culture is seen to be commercial and therefore not needing cultural policy support, except as an economic tool. But in fact popular culture also needs to be seen as part of the cultural policy offer. However, the fact that commercial popular culture is produced and consumed outside of the orbit of subsidised art means different approaches and tools are required here. Cultural policy should not only make attempts to mix its ‘art’ audiences with these wider cultural currents and possibilities, it needs to develop robust principles on which it can give more direct support to popular culture. ‘Market failure’ and the modes of public intervention might be different from the arts subsidy model – the economic dimensions of this are discussed below – but leaving popular culture entirely to the vagaries of the market is not adequate.

The urban property market and the globalization of cultural and leisure industries (including bars, clubs, restaurants, cafes) has meant that local spaces for the incubation and showcasing of local cultures is getting increasingly difficult. Local authorities often fear some ‘unfair competition’ argument, with public resources being used to compete against private business. There are many justifications for such caution. Similar caution might be advised in terms of local authorities intervening in the world of popular culture – being both ignorant of its dynamics and associated with everything that is ‘uncool’.

But arguments need to be developed nonetheless, because the erosion of local popular cultural spaces is one of the more frequently heard complaints. Here a debate around ‘public value’ is most appropriate – a discussion of what we require locally involving the various stakeholders, rather than a refusal of any intervention against the ‘free market in culture’.

Examples could be sought in the many European cities which do subsidise popular culture in different ways, or from the role of student unions in the development of local music scenes, and also from the BBC, which is quite sophisticated in its understandings of its role as a public body dealing extremely successfully with a highly competitive (and litigious) private media sector.

## 3.2 *The Cultural Industries*

### 3.2.1 *Background*

In the 1990s, many towns and cities (and rural areas) looked to the cultural industries as part of a new post-industrial economic strategy. Though the Greater London Council was the first to develop a local cultural industries policy, it was Sheffield that adopted it as a primarily economic strategy, and other old industrial cities followed. Liverpool, Birmingham, Manchester, Glasgow, Nottingham, Bradford and others adopted some form of economic strategy for this sector. After the 1998 *Cultural Industries Mapping Document* by the DCMS, this economic dimension became almost *de rigueur* in local cultural and economic policy making.

The (re-branded) ‘creative industries’ were seen to hit a range of economic and social agendas, as well as seeming to shift the emphasis of cultural policy from the arts to popular culture. Individual creativity and talent, linked with entrepreneurial energy, could open up a rapidly expanding ‘new economy’ of information and ideas, where intellectual property rights not employment contracts and wages would be the order of the day. This was the ‘upside’ of de-industrialization. The end of 9-to-5, job-for-life employment would release creativity, self-empowerment and economic growth.

The DCMS figures showed higher than average rates of growth in the creative industries. They also showed that the great majority of employment was in the freelance, small and micro-business sectors – all of which had low entry barriers. Creativity was thus a democratic force requiring human capital as much as, if not more than, finance: indeed, if properly supported and empowered, the cultural industries could open up new possibilities for excluded social groups.

Ten years on we know more about these claims. The cultural industries are still a growth sector, and they do come with important economic, social and cultural implications, but these have to be assessed carefully.

First, the CIs are geographically very unequally distributed. London is by far the largest concentration, followed by the big metropolitan areas. In England, Manchester is the only city outside London showing sustained growth in the sector. Though there is always a certain level of economic activity in smaller towns and cities, and indeed in dispersed rural areas, there are clear limits as to how far these sectors can grow. They are not going to be major economic players in every place, and this needs to be recognised.

Second, employment in the CIs is disproportionately made up of well educated, white people. University education, social connections, a sense of financial security, a confidence in operating in a risky business environment demanding high levels of cultural competence – all these map onto established patterns of social class divisions. The picture is complex, with significant differences across the sub-sectors – pop music, journalism, television, film all show distinct employment profiles.

And this is certainly not to say that the CIs do not open new paths to a range of social groups – but these need to be treated realistically. The CIs do have the ability to address the social inclusion agenda, but this should be clearly delineated from a

general economic strategy – the social and the economic do not seamlessly overlap, and policies need to be very clear about this.

Third, the CIs are often presented as part of a virtuous circle where local cultural vibrancy and creativity lead to greater local economic activity, and vice versa. But – as with the social and economic agendas -- there are areas where they cut across each other. In particular, CIs have been associated with urban regeneration strategies, bringing marginal urban areas back into viable economic activity.

Again, they have been over-optimistically linked with social inclusion agendas on this basis. Cultural production clusters do have regeneration effects, but this usually implies a significant impact on property prices, which works to drive out small cultural businesses. As they get better known, these cultural clusters also experience a substitution of consumption for production– with the former more capitalized and more global than the latter.

There are real choices between global and local, mainstream and innovative, large and small companies involving both economic and cultural considerations, which do not always sit easily with one another. In this sector the intersections of the cultural and the economic are complex. Thus one key measure of the success of a city centre is property prices and rental value. Yet how might a city assess its creative assets or its ability to provide infrastructure for those business clusters which thrive within networks of diverse human capital which can be easily disrupted by overheated property development?

Fourth, the ecology of local production clusters is very complex. Though there are increasingly strong global linkages (cf. 6 below), these clusters work within a local horizon which includes the broad arts and cultural offer of the city. This broad cultural offer is not just about consumption but about the artists, freelancers and businesses that produce this offer. They are not only part of the circulation of new ideas and activities but also these – often publicly funded – activities cross-subsidise the activities of many creative businesses.

It has been argued that ‘creative industries’ is a policy makers’ construct and throws together sub-sectors with very different structures and dynamics. There is force in this argument. However, to disaggregate the ‘creative industries’ into separately identifiable sub-sectors based on a simple product classification runs the risk of policy actually undermining the very inter-connectedness that is the strength of the creative industries. The scope for developing counter-productive policies here is large and policy-making needs to be thought through carefully.

The combination of economic and cultural policy is crucial here, requiring a subtle approach to the governance of a local cultural production complex. There is certainly scope for different approaches to the different sub-sectors, but an overall vision of their inter-connectedness is required if the different elements of local strategy are to hang together.

Fifth, the CIs are frequently presented as a sector made up of talented individuals driven by creativity and entrepreneurial energy. This is not a full picture as, like all sectors, it has a complex value chain and consists of a range of complementary skills

– accountancy and legal services, technical services, material supplies, manufacture, transport and distribution. The DCMS model never went beyond encouraging creativity and protecting IP rights, another symptom of the UK’s failure to preserve its industrial development infrastructure.

It is very difficult for local authorities to develop the intelligence and the sectoral embeddedness necessary for a real industrial strategy, and few have attempted it. Under the policy rhetoric there are many useful initiatives, but these hardly make up a concerted, informed strategic model. An industrial strategy for CIs demands resources and intelligence, and needs to be linked to a wider cultural vision; pieties about enhancing creativity are extremely limited and give false hope to those areas which are unlikely to develop a local sector beyond a certain limit.

Sixth, the CIs were often presented as uniquely linked to the local – they consisted of clusters of small and micro-businesses rooted in complex networks of skills and know-how which had grown up locally and could not be easily transplanted. Distinct local cultures of consumption and production could be used to give localities a competitive advantage. But the CIs are also becoming increasingly global.

On the one hand this involves the penetration of local markets by more global businesses (including local employment markets, hoovering up talent and business); on the other it means that local businesses need much better access to global knowledge and skills than before. This is the reason that the CIs have become more and more dependent on the metropolitan hubs. There is less room for local creative economies to become global players themselves; their development tends to lie more in building global linkages and closer ties to their dominant metropolitan hubs – which in the UK demands that we look at London as partner/ resource rather than rival.

### ***3.2.2 What sort of policy priorities and directions can we identify?***

First, intermediary organizations have proved very successful ways of delivering local/ regional CI strategies. They help give voice to the sector and channel its demands, and allow a coherent voice at local policy level. The status of intermediary organizations will always be different – but some relative autonomy in terms of style of delivery, flexibility of response and distinctive knowledge base is crucial. The agency needs to gain trust, to embed itself in the sector and to build up intelligence – but it also needs to be able to give recognition to the sector.

The sub-sectors tend to be fragmented, often barely recognising the term ‘creative industries’ as a single sector; but there is a shared sense of cultural and creative businesses within a local urban cluster. The recognition they look for is as much symbolic as it is about practical support consequences – and this recognition can reinforce bonds between the sector and locality. But there are important forms of practical support that also need to be delivered or brokered by such an agency.

Second, the provision of urban space for the CIs needs to be uncoupled from its dependence on real estate development. In the 1990s, many small-scale, independent developers linked innovative refurbishment to the attraction of creative businesses, and this still continues. But the model of ‘creative cluster- urban real estate

development' is increasingly about large scale development capital and with increasingly contradictory results.

Though some businesses benefit from new office space, many others are forced out of central areas by the consequent rise in rental values. Many cities across Europe are looking to ways of dealing with this. In the UK dispersal outwards across the urban space is an emergent pattern. Rather than thinking about another 'creative quarter', it might now be time to look at a more fluid and networked set of urban creative spaces.

Third, the CIs do benefit from a wider urban 'brand' (though not necessarily the official brand) and quite frequently want a chance to contribute to it. This is partly about recognition of the sector within the city/ region and partly about their greater involvement in both economic and cultural policy networks. The CI sector does add to the vibrancy of publicly funded culture, and this public culture is part of the local mix of the CIs.

Richard Florida's 'creative class' notion might be overblown but it does indicate the close connection between certain kinds of cultural worker and the wider cultural offer. There is a complex ecology here that demands a cultural policy input. The separation of arts and CIs policy regimes may have certain operational pragmatics but in the long term the cultural and the economic policy visions need to run together.

Fourth, there needs to be recognition of the key role of the metropolitan hubs as centres of knowledge, networking and business dealing. The manufacturing and technical services associated with the CIs certainly have no strong reason for a central city location – quite the opposite. Certain kinds of creative businesses might also be dispersed across a region in term of residence and office location. But they are strongly networked with and dependent on the metropolitan hub.

How this maps onto the Yorkshire region we discuss below, but it certainly means that any CI policy demands a regional strategy - and one that recognises the differential scales of activity and dependence within that region. Not all cities can develop a CI sector as an autonomous growth poles, they need to find a niche within a regional economy.

### ***3.3 From Multi- to Inter-cultural***

The other side to cultural individualization and fragmentation has been a strong reassertion of collective identities in the form of ethnic and religious groupings. There are some similarities with collectives formed around lifestyle and/or political interests – gay and lesbian groups, women’s’ rights, environmentalism etc. – but the former tend to draw on traditional beliefs and traditional forms of authority which have often been at odds with the mainstream dynamics of contemporary culture.

The accommodations between modernity and tradition are complex and can include opposition and amiable juxtaposition. However, this situation is made more complex by the position of ethnic and religious groups as migrants and minorities in a different (and dominant) culture. The classic response has been a strong assertion of traditional culture as a form of collective identity and solidarity – often resulting in an exaggeration of the traditional or emblematic aspects of that culture in a way that outdoes the home culture. That American Irish are more Irish than the Irish is a well known cliché.

The role of the nation-state is crucial here, and different states have taken very different approaches. There is the US ‘melting pot’ model – where ethnic identities can be kept within an overall acceptance of the American way of life. There is the German and Japanese approach, where national identity is firmly linked to an ethnic identity which migrants cannot share – so they are consequently denied full citizenship. In France, full citizenship is open to all migrants, but they are expected to leave particular ethnic and religious identities at the door. In Italy, Greece and Spain – traditional exporters of migrant labour – there are no coherent state policies as yet, though problems are becoming increasingly difficult to handle in such a laissez-faire manner.

In Britain and The Netherlands, a multicultural approach has been taken. Within a general acceptance of the laws and customs of the host country, migrant communities have been ‘free’ to keep their own cultures. Indeed, both national and local governments have found it more manageable to deal with distinct ethnic and religious communities and their leaders.

Multiculturalism in the UK began as a response to the ‘assimilationist’ approach of the 1960s and 1970s, recognising the distinct cultural traditions and aspirations of the migrant communities and their British-born descendents. The approach became prominent following extensive rioting in the large urban conurbations in the early 1980s. Since then cultural policy has attempted to identify these different constituencies and built strategies of audience development and access, and increased representation of minorities in the cultural organizations – both with mixed success.

Alongside this, local authorities have tried to move away from constructing ethnic minorities as a ‘problem’ towards a positive evaluation of the rich diversity of cultures in Britain’s urban areas. Restaurants and markets have been used to brand certain areas of the city with an ethnic identity – outside London these tend to be Indian, Pakistani, Chinese and sometimes Italian areas. More recently ethnic businesses trading on local and imported cultural goods – food products, fashions, art and craft objects etc. have been encouraged as a potential economic strength. These

businesses have been added to the cultural industries agenda in some cases. But they are also being used to promote the overall cultural offer of the city as a place of vibrant street cultures.

The growing international profile of India and China has also begun to impact on global flows of cultural products – now Chinese art and Indian films are being used to programme events and exhibitions in the West. The recent spate of Chinese art exhibitions in Manchester, Liverpool and London, and the ‘Bollywood’ Film Awards in West Yorkshire are cases in point. *Monkey* opens the Manchester International Art Festival and a major new production of the *Mahabharat* was launched in Bradford.

There is no doubt that the growing economic and cultural confidence of many previously ‘Third World’ countries is rapidly transforming the local UK ethnic minority landscape, with major implications for local cultural policy.

However, it was the 2002 rioting and the fall-out from the ‘war against terror’ that have been most prominent in putting a question mark next to multiculturalism. The juxtaposition of distinct communities with their own leaders and channels of political representation is now seen by many as increasingly problematic. Though for some this relates to a reluctance to take on ‘British values’ – hence the ‘citizenship’ agenda launched by the current government – for others it is more a question of the lack of encounter between the different communities.

Research for the Leverhulme Trust has begun to explore this in some detail. Forms of urban governance and planning which rested on a convenient segregation of neighbourhoods with their own political and religious leaders are seen to result in a lack of contact and communication between urban communities.

Inter-culturalism has been suggested as a way forward. This focuses on creating spaces and occasions for encounter, communication and shared activities between communities. This is no easy task when the ethnic group least likely to meet members of other ethnic groups is White British. Here lie some of the thorniest issues of urban policy and planning that have emerged in the last 20 years, and we cannot hope to solve them here.

Nevertheless, the consequences for urban cultural policies are important.

First, increasing ethnic minority access to and representation within the arts is important – but this policy has some limits which it alone cannot tackle. Social exclusion is one of these limits, but so too are the differences and conflicts between western modernist notions of art and those from different traditions. This can produce real conflicts such as recent controversies in Leicester; more normally it produces an everyday ‘switch-off’ by many in these communities. The idea of art speaking to a common culture is greatly challenged here – but this is not solved by the (self) censorship of ‘political correctness’.

Second, minority popular cultures have been badly served by policy – though this is different for different communities. Lack of finance, legal expertise or political influence; a small local audience base; heavy handed policing of ‘dangerous subcultures’; a fear of visibility by minority groups – all these have contributed to a

low profile for the popular cultures of many ethnic minorities. As we saw above, food cultures (restaurants and markets), ethnic arts and crafts, distinctive dress or celebrations have all begun to grow as distinct economic and cultural activities – but there has been little concerted support for these businesses as *cultural* businesses, or as businesses within a broader cultural offer.

Third, global cultural industries are beginning to have an impact on how ethnic minority cultures understand themselves and are understood in the wider society. African-Caribbean culture has long been marked by this sort of ‘transatlanticism’, where cultural developments in the West Indies and North America have been rapidly absorbed within a distinct Black British culture. The wider visibility of this has fluctuated over the years.

Similar developments are now happening in other ethnic minority cultures as global cultural flows arrive in the UK and Europe in a much more visible way. This visibility has certainly encouraged the sort of ethnic entrepreneurialism noted above. For example, many new restaurateurs are trying to move ethnic cuisine up from ‘cheap and cheerful’ to more value-added niches – gourmet, or healthy, or urban trendy. These sorts of development have been generally welcomed by local authorities, and the bidding for the ‘Bollywood’ Film Awards represents a real pro-active step by the Yorkshire region. Now is the occasion for a full rethink of cultural policy in this area – and we suggest it will be a crucial element of any new urban vision for the region’s cities.

Fourth, in a number of Yorkshire cities, the settlement of ethnic minority groups coincided with the decline of indigenous traditional industries, for example, New Commonwealth settlement in the 1950s just as the textile industries went into decline. As a consequence, questions of cultural diversity were more often than not addressed by urban policy in terms of what to do with a newly arrived population that was increasingly being left high and dry by de-industrialisation, an experience that their white counterparts would not face until the 1980s.

As a counter to the prevailing mood of pessimism around the prospects for genuinely inter-cultural living, we have to ask what can be learned from the ways in which minority groups have adapted to urban deindustrialization? What has been the role of strong cultural identities in reinforcing entrepreneurial solutions to poverty and exclusion? What has been the role of social networks in creating and distributing opportunities? Are these kinds of solutions so radically different from the solutions being sought by young creative entrepreneurs as they look to use culture to create economic opportunity? The Yorkshire cities have been fertile environments for this kind of localised cultural entrepreneurship. What is needed are ways of thinking about contemporary urban society that can capture and work with it.

Fifth, there are many factors underlying social divisions in Yorkshire cities. Local authorities are asked to find ways of mitigating these divisions whilst delivering on economic development and urban planning agendas which often exacerbate them. This is not unique to Yorkshire or indeed the United Kingdom. In response, a long standing tradition of European urban policy has been to create or build on a sense of common belonging, a civic identity or even ‘pride’ which might somehow accommodate these persistent social divisions without denying their existence.

City centres have always been central to this; dominated by the wealthy and powerful elements of the city they have also provided the great public spaces of the city, where the population can rub shoulders with the monuments of money and power and even make them their own, at least for an afternoon. But city centres can easily become symbols of social division if the aspirations they embody become far removed from those of the mass of the population.

The emphasis on city centre sites in the current urban regeneration model excludes the 'inner city' neighbourhoods which have traditionally (but not exclusively) been home to migrant communities. These areas need much stronger links and pathways to the city centre. This is in part an urban planning issue, with the infrastructure of 1960s planning frequently impeding such links – something which all inner city pedestrians have long been familiar.

But it is also about the enhanced visibility of minority cultures in the urban centre. This visibility is most often reduced to branded ethnic restaurant quarters; it needs to go beyond this. The skylines of Bradford and Leeds are dotted with huge mosques; Cyrillic covers a new generation of shopfronts; Chinese herbalists squeeze in next to South Asian fruit and veg stalls; Black British music continues to be the urban soundtrack for a whole spectrum of young people.

This all disappears in our city centres, which continue to seek out an increasingly ersatz and generic 'European-style' café bar culture. This is discussed more in 2.4 below; but Yorkshire cities have a great opportunity to move beyond this pallid regeneration image and build a city-centre culture based on a much more robust cosmopolitan and multicultural urban mix than many European cities.

Finally, this is about a new common cultural vision. The contemporary challenge for Yorkshire cities is to find ways of building a common culture which includes multiple cultures, but also the spaces and occasions for intercultural encounter and shared experiences. The great public spaces of the city centre are crucial here, as are smaller sites of urban and suburban neighbourhoods, and different tools are required for each.

Cultural policy can give a lead, articulating a new urban cultural vision which moves beyond property-led urban regeneration and segmented multi-culturalism into an inter-cultural vision. Such a vision is also about a new accommodation between the local and the global; building on minority and majority local identities whilst acknowledging the immersion of *both* in global cultural flows.

### ***3.4 The Urban Landscape***

#### ***3.4.1 Key issues***

The intersections of cultural policy and urban policy are diverse and complex. As already discussed, for example, cultural industries policy is directly related both to the cultural offer (or ambiance) of a city or neighbourhood, but also to real estate, property development and gentrification. The ‘cultural planning’ approach stresses the importance of a wide range of cultural assets to place-making, and of place-making to shaping (and being shaped by) urban cultures.

There are direct cultural interventions in the urban landscape that attempt to stage a dialogue about urban cultures and ways of life. Public art is perhaps the most obvious example, though one also fraught with contention. Flagship cultural institutions designed by ‘starchitects’ have also been prominent tools in urban cultural promotional policy. These too have also attracted criticism. Assessing the benefits of large-scale investment in cultural infrastructure has become a pressing concern, not least in the run-up to the Olympics.

A more problematic but potentially fruitful intersection of cultural and urban policy concerns the planning of land use in cities. The ‘creative class’ agenda suggests that the broader ‘cultural climate’ of a city correlates to their fortunes in the creative economy, bringing a cultural planning dimension to questions such as commercial property use, housing development, design of public space.

Beyond the ‘creative class’ agenda, too, urban landscapes are now conceived as both cultural products and as settings for cultural production and consumption, formal and informal. Policies creating cultural quarters are perhaps the most explicit manifestation of this ecology, though the application of rational spatial planning principles to foster that ecology has produced mixed results.

There have been calls, too, for greater contact between cultural policy and urban design. Architecture and urban design have been included in official definitions of the creative industries, as has advertising – two professions which have made substantial impact on our experiences of urban space. Town planning is cultural planning in the sense that the geography of the city relates to the cultural practices that take place there.

Debates about the night-time economy and the broader consumption cultures in cities have also opened up space for cultural policy to intersect with the urban landscape, for example around the retail and hospitality sectors. While problematically inter-related by property markets, there are emergent examples of complementary working, with for example retail entrepreneurs aligning their interests with those of the CIs, rather than pricing them out of neighbourhoods.

The opposite of such complementarity can be witnessed in the monocultural ‘landscapes’ of some cities, where the dominance of multinational chain stores and serially reproduced urban form erases local distinctiveness and any distinctive cultural offer. Excessive focus on the night-time economy, for example, renders city centres

one-dimensional pleasure grounds, marginalizing other forms of cultural consumption and expression.

The same is arguably true of attempts to ‘manage’ urban consumption cultures, for example through the designation of distinct cultural quarters. Such spaces can be seen to impose an elitist view of what counts as culture, zoning out or pricing out other uses. The export of the cultural quarter model risks further banalizing the urban cultural landscape.

Yet urban landscapes are inevitably shaped by global as well as local forces, and policy makers scout widely for ideas about what works. The take-up of Florida’s ‘creative class’ agenda is the clearest example of the desire to find workable policy interventions to address urban ‘problems’. The government’s urban renaissance agenda similarly emphasizes the cultural function of urban planning and design, and the economic and social functions of culture in cities.

This agenda is unlikely to disappear. What is needed is a better mechanism to interlink cultural policy with broader urban policy. The traffic must be genuinely two-way, but without instrumentalizing culture as purely part of the arsenal of inter-urban competitiveness.

### ***3.4.2 The agenda***

The flurry of interest and activity around the idea of the 24-hour city was about extending usage in many areas, re-activating the public space of cities, making them more inclusive. It did not just mean more and later drinking. Re-badging the 24-hour city and the night-time economy to remove their over-association with alcohol is a vital task, given the potential of a revived city centre to changing the culture of cities. The current concerns over ‘binge drinking’ and alcohol-related public order has overshadowed this potential; there is a need for policies that encourage a wider social mix into cities, day and night, to participate in a wider range of uses.

Planning policies must not work against the ecologies of independents and sites of popular culture, which risk being driven out. This requires better ways of working with the small scale commercial sector, not just the subsidized sector.

Planning should be about spaces of difference, of chance encounter; about bringing something distinct to the urban offer. The experience of cities should be a key cultural asset.

Public space is a crucial part of common culture and of the inter-culturalism agenda. There is a need to emphasize local spaces which are open and tolerant, and which are part of the symbolic identification with the city. The quality threshold needs to be raised in the design and maintenance of public spaces. City centres must not be dominated by commercial activities, but must also include ‘civic’ spaces and uses – the great European cities are marked out precisely by such distinct public spaces. When there is a celebration or an important event, where do people gather?

## 3.5 *Global Linkages*

### 3.5.1 *Knowledge cities*

Cities have long been part of global flows of capital, labour and ideas – indeed, since the Middle Ages this has often been seen as *their raison d’etre*. This became ever more so when the industrial revolution and the expansion of European trading empires established a global economy in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Since the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, with the invention of new information and computing technologies and the creation of new agencies of global economic governance and regulation, this process of globalization has exploded.

Industrial cities traditionally combined capital and labour in a concentrated space; but they were also vast accumulations of formal and embedded, ‘tacit’ knowledge. The collapse of industry untied the knot of capital and labour – leaving the latter in redundant concentrations of unemployment and the former searching the globe for more profitable activities. In doing so it took with it – or also made redundant – much of this formal and tacit knowledge, leaving post-industrial cities exposed to rapid economic decline. Many of these cities have managed to re-invent their economies around new forms of business, educational and public services which include a high knowledge/ skills based combined with more routine occupations.

We are now offered the prospect of a global ‘knowledge economy’ where the success of cities depends on their ability to manipulate symbols and process information. Cities are seen as nodes in global knowledge flows, but also key locations where these flows are both produced and consumed – they are the places where global flows ‘land’. This not only includes businesses operating within the city but also the complex range of agencies and institutions which form the knowledge infrastructure of the city – educational institutions, R&D outfits, public sector services and the local authority itself.

It is increasingly obvious that Western Europe, whilst continuing to be one of the wealthiest economies on the globe, is experiencing the ‘twin squeeze’ of inward migration on the one hand, and economic competition from the rapidly expanding economies to the East on the other. Places such as London, Paris and Frankfurt will continue to enjoy their global status for some years to come, but what of the more peripheral regions? If the UK is to avoid becoming a single city-region called London, the regions need to reformulate their relationships in the global economy.

As with place-making, the interaction between the global and the local used to be left to chance; now it demands more deliberate policy thinking. How best might this knowledge infrastructure be enhanced, what sort of partnerships might be brokered between public and private sectors and between different public sectors (such as economic development and local universities, or R&D facilities and local health authorities), are now questions that all cities must face. Manchester’s ‘Knowledge Capital’ strategy is based precisely on these sorts of questions.

### 3.5.2 Culture, knowledge and global flows

As we have noted culture has been implicated in these global flows.

First, culture has been used to enhance the image of cities. Signature buildings housing cultural institutions and events have become key symbols of a contemporary city looking to the future and open for global business. Skilled personnel who might want to relocate need not fear a cultural backwater; and latterly, the creative class might find the diversity, tolerance and relaxed ambiance of the city a reason to live and work there. We have noted the tensions this brings to cultural policy. Vigorous pursuit of such international profile always threatens to dissolve local cultural production and distinctiveness; yet to ignore it is to sink into torpid provincialism.

Second, as we have seen, culture itself has become globalized, with art, popular culture, ethnic cultures, lifestyle products, celebrities and images of the 'good life' now forming part of the life-blood of contemporary cities. Again, these cultural flows, along with the business investment which follows them, always threatens to undermine any distinct local identity and transform city centres into an identikit landscape of international leisure and retail brands. A city without these is felt to be third rate.

The distinctiveness of the local cannot be rigidly set against the global – it has to assimilate, to transform, to give it local meaning. Contemporary cities need to interpret and use these flows, adding value to them. At their best, cities are sites for the folding together of the local and the global in all sorts of ways. To some extent these distinctive urban scapes of the local and the global exist *de facto* in most cities, each with their local quirks: place still matters in all sorts of ways. But at a higher level cities need to be more self-aware and more proactive in the facilitation of this mixing and folding.

This points to a third dimension, which involves culture in a much wider sense – culture as ways of thinking and doing things, of local identities and self-understanding, as the horizon of what is acceptable and possible. Do these local cultures act as a drag on innovative thinking, do they tell us that we can't do this or become that because it is not what we are? Do they inhibit certain partnerships, or prevent certain links, or generally restrict ambitions in all sorts of subtle ways?

There has been much talk of the 'creative city'. This does not mean simply a vibrant cultural offer, but an ability of cities to respond to change, to be flexible in the face of new challenges. This does not mean blindly following what seems like the latest craze, it means reflection on what local identity is and how this might become a resource for rather than a barrier to change.

The arts operate in a global circuit of critical reputation, information and creative ideas. This is why they are leant on heavily when cities and regions want to raise their international profiles. But the institutions of art also operate in these global circuits – exchanges of objects and expertise, exhibition and performance touring, recruitment and exchanges of personnel are all part of some strong and long-standing international networks.

These institutions can also be used to develop connections between cities and other locales – culture’s ambassadorial function is recognised but under-utilized by Yorkshire cities. The Northern Ballet/ Leeds Metropolitan tour of China was one such success; perhaps Opera North’s collaboration with the University of Leeds will lead to another. These global connection need to be developed in synergy with wider linkages which can benefit city and region – not just their reputation and profile but also spawning smaller multiple links which can have all sorts of unexpected outcomes.

The same applies to the creative industries, many of whom also trade globally and are certainly plugged into global knowledge flows in this area. Creative industries can also act in an ambassadorial function, though this demands a different approach from that of the arts. A parallel linkage of general trade missions and city marketing events using the creative industries, and a proactive intermediary agency at regional level would allow the accumulation of a critical mass of these small businesses to make the sort of impact at international level that the arts agencies do through public subsidy.

We have already pointed to the potential of cultural policy to develop the links around ethnic minority cultures. The International Indian Film Academy Awards are the obvious example, but also the Clipper Round the World Yacht Race; and more sensitively there are all sorts of connections that might be developed on the basis of old imperial links. The slavery abolition celebrations are a good example, with the old brutal global connections providing the basis for new kinds of links.

Here we might also include religion and religious groups, which are deeply involved in cultural definitions of ethnicity. These two have vast and long-standing global connections which should be seen as a resource for the region’s cities. The separation of ‘contemporary culture’ and religion which marks western culture might not be so clear cut when it comes to forging global links. Religions and religious organisations carry a heavy cargo of cultural heritage which is relevant for many in the contemporary world.

But cultural policy is also part of creating that dialogue within the city and the region about identity and aspiration, about what Yorkshire might be. Manchester’s recent success in presenting a national and international profile comes from a lengthy interrogation of its history and identity and a reworking of this to produce a forward looking vision that does not appear to have landed from a marketing company in London.

Yorkshire cities have a full range of global linkages and much potential to expand these. But its profile has dipped in recent years and in many cases this is related to its low cultural profile. The local cultural offer as well as the broad quality of life is high in many places, and the region has some of the more successful region economies outside of London. Cultural policy can help raise this profile; but it must also be seen as a way of helping develop global connections, internal partnerships, and the circulation and manipulation of knowledge.

Finally it is that shift in self-understanding that is crucial if the cities of the region are to survive and grow in a global economy.

## Section Four            City-regions and Culture

### 4.1    *The City-region Debate*

The Yorkshire Cities policy initiative is part of a wider realisation in the UK that social, economic and cultural flows expand beyond the administrative borders of municipalities and therefore there needs to be some sort of supra-municipal planning that co-ordinates activities.

Recently, these discussions have taken place around the notion of ‘city-regions’. Renewed interest in English city-regions has been fuelled by a plethora of think tank reports as well as the interest of Ministers in ‘what next’ after the failure of the North East regional assembly referendum in November 2004. Regions have emerged as important policy arenas in many European countries and in many cases like in Germany or Spain have enjoyed substantial financial devolution.

In the UK, however, the regional governance landscape remains obfuscated, complicated and largely unaccountable, and the government is keen to find new forms of local devolution to fix the existing democratic deficit at the local level. The strategic importance of city-regions has been advocated by the Core Cities, a group which unites the biggest English local authorities outside London in a call to central government to pay more attention to big cities. Various policy reviews are currently looking at the issues from various perspectives.

In ‘the North’, this agenda has been more clearly defined through the DCLG (then ODPM) initiative of the Northern Way, which has already identified three city-regions within Yorkshire and the Humber: Leeds, Sheffield, and Hull and Humberside – as well as another five across the North West and the North East.

There seems to be at least three different agendas currently trying to attach themselves to the city-region scale. There is an economic agenda, which suggests that the UK is lagging behind European competitors because of its economic over-dependence on London. A political agenda suggests that, following London’s successful devolution, other big English city-regions should also be able to acquire similar political autonomy, including the appointment of city-region mayors. City-regions would be the appropriate level at which to make decisions.

Finally, there is a spatial planning agenda which emphasises the advantages of ‘relational planning’, the added value of planning beyond strict municipal boundaries, building shared territorial visions, and promoting balanced polycentric city-regions where commuter trips are reduced.

In principle, the city-region agenda could mean one of two things – more emphasis on the ‘region’ or more emphasis on the ‘city’. The first option would mean more investment in making the city-region a coherent and sustainable area – a polycentric city-region where there would be not only one centre.

The second option is likely to mean more emphasis on the city centre – a monocentric view. The risk in this option is that regions collapse into city regions, city regions into cities, cities into city centres with, for example, Leeds city centre ‘becoming’ Yorkshire and the Humber (or even Manchester becoming the North).

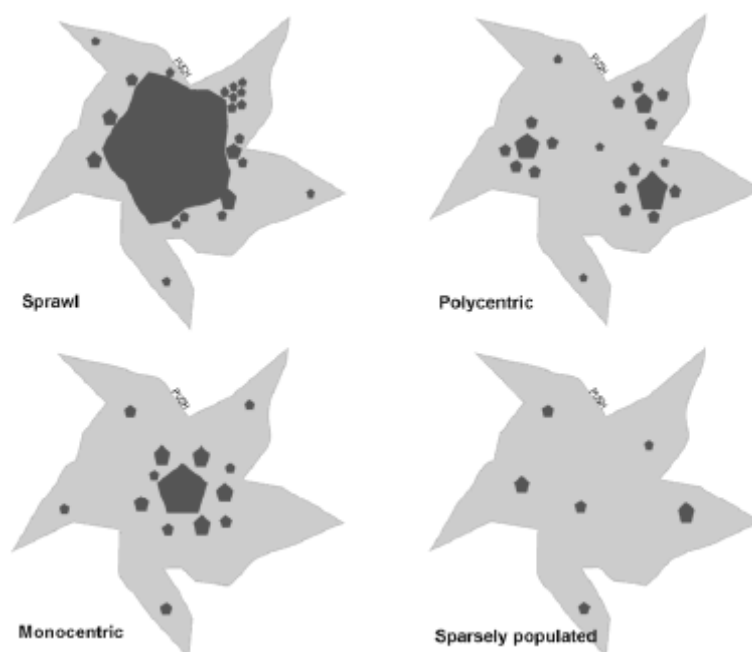
This second option can exacerbate disparities. In order to enrich the city-regions debate more emphasis should be given to the first option. Yorkshire Cities have an ideal structure to pursue a more balanced and territorially cohesive version of the city-region agenda.

## 4.2 *An Alternative Model: Polycentricity*

An alternative discourse to that of monocentricity exists, which can be more useful to the case of Yorkshire cities. At the European Union level and in some other European countries, a very different language has been used to talk about these issues. The emphasis is on networks, co-operation, cohesion and synergy – polycentricity.

Polycentric urban regions are often defined as collections of historically distinct and administratively and politically independent cities located in close proximity and well connected through infrastructure. Here the emphasis is on the ‘network’ metaphor. The objective of polycentric development is to achieve ‘balanced regional development’

Two kinds of synergy are suggested in this model: co-operation (where cities co-operate to organize delivery of services, etc and share costs and create economies of scales) or complementarity (where each city specializes on something and redistributes activities according to their function). These synergies are relevant to city-region wide cultural planning.



Polycentricity is primarily about the creation of synergies from local assets through cooperation between cities and city regions. The idea of polycentricity relates to other political ideas such as balanced regional development (cohesion), taking local assets and endowments as the point of departure for regional development and economic growth (competitiveness) and widening the ownership of political decisions (governance).

Polycentric networks or partnerships have developed across Europe, such as the National Centre Mid-Vest in Denmark, the Association of Municipalities of Lima Valley in Portugal and Patto Territoriale del Sangone in Italy. Their objectives can be divided into four categories: strategic development, project implementation, networking, and advocacy.

Their strengths are in the co-ordination of resources, goals and objectives; building access to knowledge and expertise, and the promotion of mutual dependence and shared understandings of common challenges. Their main weaknesses are often their lack of resources and political commitment.

Research from ESPON has investigated cultural heritage from the perspective of polycentric networks, mapping the cultural ‘orientation’ of regions in terms of their cultural assets and priorities. More broadly, polycentric policies have been deployed in attempts to diminish urban disparities and enhance cohesion.

### ***4.3 A Cultural Policy Approach to City-regions***

The geography of city-regions varies depending on different functions. Cultural flows might have a different geography to travel-to-work. So far, the city-region debate has engaged very little with cultural issues.

UK research has looked at the catchments areas of these cities’ cultural offer, concluding that indeed they stretch beyond the local authority boundaries and expand a large geographical area. However this research has focussed on the cultural offer of largest cities only; there is no analysis of the attraction of the cultural offer of other cities and/or towns in city-regions, or indeed of city-region cultural cohesion.

Analysis has also tended to focus on particular ‘high’ cultural offer such as a theatre, and also on football. Other more ordinary and everyday life cultural events (such as festivals, markets, music concerts) are not analysed. This approach skews perception of cultural flows, and masks important counterflows specific to cultural formations.

Viewing the cultural offer of a city-region means moving away from inter-urban competitiveness and towards intra-regional complementarity. It may mean making difficult decisions about which city in the region develops which aspect of the overall cultural offer, rather than each replicating what the others already have.

Better knowledge of the complex flows of cultural production and consumption within (and indeed beyond) the city-region would enable region-wide cultural planning while enabling component cities and towns in the region to develop distinctive cultural profiles.

While there is a risk in such specialization – especially in terms of the concentration of different cultural resources and activities in larger cities leading to cultural ‘deserts’ elsewhere – strategic city-region cultural planning has the potential to produce a new, distinctive regional cultural landscape.

Learning lessons from similar attempts at cultural planning within cities – most notably debates about cultural quarters – should enable city-region plans to avoid the pitfalls of uneven cultural development, over-concentration and cultural desertification. Mapping regional ‘cultural commuting’ is an important agenda for city-region cultural planning.

## Section Five                      Key Challenges for Yorkshire Cities

### 5.1 Current Issues

Our consultation across the region identified a number of challenges and opportunities for Yorkshire cities and culture.

- Illuminate, the year-long festival of culture, was judged to have been successful, and to have evidenced a will to collaboration across the region. It was seen to show what could be achieved with joint working, and had brought additional benefits to partners. Lessons had also been learnt, meaning that future joint initiatives now have a useable template to draw on. The process was certainly ‘painful’, indicating just how difficult it is for the regional institutions and agencies to move out of their comfort zones. But that it was delivered successfully shows a recognition of its potential. The danger is that the will to engage in such regional activities might not re-appear and the emergent links and trust dissipate into isolated local activities.
- The International Indian Film Academy Awards was a great success, raising the profile of Yorkshire. The link to its long-established ethnic cultures as well as to global creative industries is an excellent example of what regional cultural policy can be. But there are problems. Connections and synergies between these awards and other areas of the cultural world have not been made or are last minute and ad hoc. The lack of hotel, transportation and logistical capacity is very worrying and should signal an urgent need to invest in this infrastructure. The reluctance of Yorkshire companies to provide the high level of sponsorship required suggests a lack of confidence in slightly off-centre and/ or regional cultural products. It is crucial not just to deliver this, but to make sure that the experience generated by this event is not lost from the region but used to build the next step.
- The 2012 Olympics were acknowledged as a vital opportunity for the region, an occasion to showcase sports infrastructure and regional image – the Cultural Olympiad as much as the sporting events themselves. The investment in the attempt to make the Olympics work for Yorkshire by attracting national team location and by promoting Yorkshire as a tourist destination shows a new level of ambition. As with the other two examples, this needs to be wrapped up in an overarching cultural vision for the region.

One key issue was the role of the regional agencies in promoting this agenda. Some respondents felt that there was a limited investment in culture stemming from a lack of appreciation of its potential role. Others also felt that there was a lack of strong cultural leadership in trying to broker connections across the region. On the other hand, some in the agencies felt that the cultural institutions were too focused on delivering their product without thinking about wider marketing implications or the preferences of their audiences. Dialogue and better understanding are called for.

These are common complaints across the UK – and beyond. But it certainly alerts us to the requirement that this conversation needs a public airing. The regional agencies are concerned with economic development and marketing the region for tourism and inward investment and expect the cultural organisations to deliver. The latter argue that this is to misunderstand the nature of their product and to restrict the full range of its possibilities. In short, rather than deliver to a regional ‘cultural offer’, they want an input into the conception and development of such a cultural offer.

We suggest that this conversation needs to be set against a generally shared opinion that in terms of culture, Yorkshire is under-performing – or at least is *perceived* to be underperforming – and losing ground to its neighbours. There were a number of reasons as to why this might be, according to our consultees. Some suggested the economic success of parts of the region – especially the city-region of Leeds – meant culture was not a priority, or that areas like Bradford, which had a strong cultural tradition hampered by economic difficulties. Others suggested that Yorkshire identity prevented the sort of brazen boosterism of Manchester and Liverpool, that it was an ‘understated’ region. Still others thought that cities might do best to lose their strong Yorkshire profile and present a distinct city profile, as maybe Sheffield has attempted in part.

What is clear is that this is not something to be solved by a simple marketing solution.

## ***5.2 Yorkshire Identity***

The issue of cultural identity was seen to be of vital importance, internally and externally. ‘Yorkshire’ was acknowledged as a strong yet oddly amorphous ‘brand’. Differences of cultural identity across the region, for example in rural as opposed to urban areas, were highlighted. Regional identity is ‘stretched’ over the terrain of the region, and can mask some of its diversity rather than capitalizing on it.

Yorkshire identity was argued by some to be over-determined by a rural and conservative tourism offer, for example. This was seen to lead to attracting low spending tourists; to lack of international profile; overshadowing of city cultures in the overall offer; and the view that city cultures are servicing suburban/ rural elites. Joint working at the regional level needs to address the ‘identity’ issue carefully.

The role and value of popular culture within regional identity was also seen to be in need of revisiting. While some areas are strong in some places – local music scenes, for example – Yorkshire has yet to achieve the right balance of old and new, urban and rural, ‘high’ and ‘popular’ culture.

‘Yorkshire’ is clearly a global brand, a brand carried on global media and cultural flows, a brand attracting global flows of new residents, visitors and capital. Yet regional identity is also a difficult brand to build and sell. It is difficult to build without stifling difference; difficult to sell in a package that reflects different expectations and experiences.

There are important issues to address for the cultural sector, in terms of the 'Yorkshireness' of cultural identity and of the cultural offer, and in terms of the relationship between regional identity and the identities of the key cities. Joint working in a city-region model prevents one city becoming dominant, and potentially enhances a diverse profile. The risk is that it homogenizes identity in a way lessens the legibility of urban cultures.

## **Consultees**

David Andrews, Yorkshire Tourism

Matt Brunt, Yorkshire & Humber Key Cities

Dinah Clarke, Leeds Initiative

Charlie Croft, York City Council

John Davies, Leeds City Council

Jane Fear, Yorkshire Cultural Observatory

Jane Glaister, Bradford City Council

Ann Gosse, Sheffield City Council

Brian Hayton, Hull City Council

Kim Ryley, Hull City Council

Neil Stevenson, Yorkshire Forward

Ian Tempest, York City Council

Gary Topp, Yorkshire Culture

John Wright, Yorkshire Culture

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