

Response to Cardiff Economy and Culture Scrutiny Committee Enquiry into Culture in Cardiff

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I welcome this enquiry by Cardiff, a city which has a demonstrably strong cultural offer and reputation, from which the city has clearly benefitted. The Leader of Cardiff, Cllr Huw Thomas, is a member of the Core Cities UK Cabinet, and has led on the culture portfolio for the group, for example sitting on the Board of the Cultural Cities Enquiry, chaired by Dame Jayne Anne Ghadia, previously CEO of Virgin Money.

Many of the points raised by the enquiry questions are answered within the pages of the Cultural Cities Enquiry final report (CCE), the UK's most in depth and extensive investigation into the future funding of cultural activity, including UK case studies, and which can be found at:

<https://www.corecities.com/sites/default/files/field/attachment/Cultural%20Cities%20Enquiry%20%5Bweb%5D.pdf>

I have provided some additional information below in response to the specific questions and would be happy to discuss these issues further. The issues of urban psychology mentioned below are discussed in an article I wrote recently and attach, and issues regarding culture and economic growth, particularly from the perspective of the creative industries and economic rebalancing are described in a further article also attached.

1. Which UK cities do you feel exemplify good practice re Culture, and why?

The CCE has set out a number of case studies which identify good practice which will be useful to Cardiff. Many if not most cities throughout the UK and indeed globally will have examples of good practice, from community-led projects in informal urban locations like the Favelas of Rio or Sao Paulo, to programmes which have helped turned around the economic fortunes of western European cities like Barcelona or Glasgow. Each of the Core Cities has examples which are listed in the CCE work. 70 examples are given across the EU in the following set of studies:

<https://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/article/culture-for-cities-and-regions-case-studies-of-practices> and UNESCO carries similar studies, for example on heritage and cities

<https://whc.unesco.org/en/activities/634> .

In terms of your own enquiry, it may be useful to further define the specific elements of good practice that you are trying to capture or which are most important to you (e.g. culture in relation to economy, regeneration, community engagement, reputation and profile, financing of, etc), in order to reduce down the number of potential case studies that are appropriate, or to look at cities with a comparable history and profile to Cardiff, for example port cities that have experienced some deindustrialisation, set within a distinctive cultural context, like Bilbao, Rotterdam, Hamburg, or some of the Baltic cities.

2. Do you think there are any lessons we could learn from approaches taken in Europe and, if so, what are they?

The case studies above will provide useful examples from across the EU. There are many high-profile projects, including for example the Bilbao Guggenheim, which are often cited. A frequent mistake however is to see these major projects, often architectural or celebratory in nature (i.e. big festival events), as a starting point rather than what they generally are, which is in reality the culmination of years if not decades of regeneration activity, from which they have organically emerged. The mistake of cities appropriating these kinds of projects has occasionally been to, in effect, bolt them on to a wider programme of reshaping a city's prospects, in which case they feel

inauthentic and have limited impact. The question for Cardiff in looking at other projects should more rightly be; what are the principles or dynamics at work in successful examples that could inform a programme that is 'authentically Cardiff's'?

One major difference between UK and EU cities, outlined in detail in the CCE, is the ability of EU cities to fund culture from a much more devolved and flexible local tax base, generally including a Tourism Levy of some kind. This does not exist in the UK, although it is now being legislated for in Scotland, and if available to a city like Cardiff, could add a very significant amount to local cultural investment, reaping the benefits that flow from this. Core Cities UK are arguing for a Tourism Levy, and as a first step toward this, that a UK-wide consultation, based on the one happening in Scotland, is undertaken. Consultation in Scotland has revealed widespread business support for a Levy, including amongst parts of the hospitality sector, dependant upon which model is adopted (specifically that the sector should be involved in spending decisions in some manner).

3. What are effective mechanisms to determine what to prioritise for future growth re Culture?

The answer to this question is largely dependent on the nature of the priorities for Cardiff as a whole, how these related to the role of the cultural sector, and where its strengths and weaknesses are. As an output of the CCE, the enquiry recommended the creation of City Cultural Compacts to fulfil exactly this role:

The City Compact for Culture will bring together local partners with a shared interest in maximising the civic role of culture. These partners will work together to create and deliver a plan to drive social and economic benefits from a thriving cultural ecosystem. Compact partners will include business, universities, local authorities, the cultural sector and LEPs, and will pledge to align focus around key goals, in order to unlock new resources for cultural projects.

A number of Compacts are now up and running, with a conference for early adopters held in Birmingham on 19th November 2019. A UK-wide network of Compacts is likely to emerge to take this work forward. Compacts are ways of stimulating a similar kind of strength of partnership as that experienced during a major cultural event, like Capital of Culture, but instead of just focusing on a special moment, focusing on the more day-to-day role of culture in the life of the city as well. The Compacts bring together senior figures across sectors from health, learning, local authority, business and culture, to define and shape the role of culture in driving forward some of the top shared priorities for a city.

Although a Compact may initially have to be led by the local authority to get it up and running, many are headed toward achieving some form of independence and having a chair that is not necessarily from the cultural sector. Some have developed priorities based on existing evidence, others on a more elaborate and new needs assessment of culture, and there is much to learn from all of these approaches.

4. How is it best to align resources and identify additional funding?

The Compact also offers a model for this, although it is not a prescriptive one, and if adopted, should be Cardiff's version of what it as a city feels it needs and will work. Resource alignment is best achieved by understanding what strategic objectives the city is trying to deliver through and with the cultural sector, and then aligning agencies within and beyond the sector to achieve these aims. If, for example, health linked to deprivation is a major focus, then establishing new kinds of partnerships between NHS, public health, cultural and other agencies could not only align existing

cultural resources, but find ways of bringing in additional resources from other public services to support culture where it has a demonstrable role for example in social prescribing. This may equally be the case for work that crosses over with regeneration, international business growth, destination marketing, education, and other areas.

An additional feature of such a strategic alliance may also be the increased ability to negotiate for resources with government and its agencies, as the locality is clearly making best uses of the resources available to it and is more likely to be able to demonstrate that some additional resource will deliver substantial additional gains. One way of achieving this would be to gain government recognition for a Compact as it is developed, establishing it as the go-to body for resource negotiation and allocation as a whole, beyond the existing arrangements of individual organisations. The UK Government did recognise the concept of Compacts initially, putting some resource into funding a number in England, along with Arts Council England. Arts Council Wales were a partner of the CCE and supported its recommendations.

5. Is there anything else that you would like to bring to our attention regarding Culture in Cardiff?

Cardiff is widely recognised as being a strong city in terms of its cultural offer and sense of local identity, and therefore this enquiry is about building on strengths rather than a wholesale correction of the current direction of travel. That can however be a more difficult thing to achieve in some ways, and the calculations that Cardiff will need to make are about projects and programmes that continue to define the city within a national and global context, but at the same time play strongly into a sense of local identity and connectedness to place, in a manner that people recognise and feel is authentic.

That is as much about the activity of cultural organisations operating in a connected manner as described above, as it is about understanding culture as 'ways of life' activity affected by - and important to - the city as a whole. For example the social-cultural networks that people establish in neighbourhoods and communities which, in reality, the lifeblood of local culture is built upon, and which can be enhanced, supported or fragmented by urban policy like regeneration and renewal, which on the face of it may appear to have little to do with culture but can actually have profound impacts.

It is important to recognise that culture, particularly this element of it, relates to very deep seated human psychological needs which if not met are likely to lead to negative consequences for individuals and communities. This is particularly the case in big cities, where mental and emotional health can be twice as bad on some measures than non-urban areas, and which is generally worsening, as also seen in rising prescribing rates for antidepressants.

For example, there is a growing body of evidence – an emerging urban psychology - that suggests positive attachment to a sense of locality, of 'place', is immensely important in people's development into adult life, and a negative or weak experience of attachment can have disastrous health and social consequences. Recognising the role of cultural networks and activity in sustaining these attachments is critical.