Towards an architecture of governance for participatory cultural policy making

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Let me start with a very useful passage from Jude Bloomfield and Franco Bianchini’s *Planning for the Intercultural City*, which positions some of the key issues with which I am concerned in this paper – the mobilisation of new forms of citizenship through cultural mapping and planning at the local level - in the specific but increasingly important context of cultural diversity and interculturalism:

…citizenship is the connective tissue of intercultural planning. By this we mean not only equality of opportunity, but also critical respect for other cultures, reflecting the cultural diversity of the city fully in public policy, public space and institutions…Interculturalism goes beyond equal opportunities and respect for existing cultural differences, to the pluralist transformation of public space, institutions and civic culture….Cities need to develop policies which prioritise funding for projects where different cultures intersect, ‘contaminate’ each other and hybridise…city governments should promote cross-fertilisation across all cultural boundaries, between ‘majority’ and ‘minorities’, ‘dominant’ and ‘sub’ cultures, localities, classes, faiths, disciplines and genres, as the source of cultural, social, civic and economic innovation. ¹

How can Local Government, especially, and communities, and citizens, persuasively and effectively engage this agenda and create the *enabling policy conditions* for these objectives and policy outcomes to be realised in a participatory context which enables the development of new forms of citizenship and, at the same time, proactively mobilises the forms of human, social and cultural capital which is the resource base to which cultural policy crucially contributes?

This is a matter of developing a coherent policy and planning architecture – *an architecture of participatory governance* we might say - for cultural policy. This is a ‘stakeholder’ architecture involving citizens, the community, government, NGOs and the private sector. It is also a matter

of setting in train processes of cultural mapping and cultural planning in which the community – the citizenry – is not just the passive ‘object’ of planning but also the active ‘subject’.

One such generic policy and planning architecture in which participatory cultural mapping and planning can find their proper place is that of Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP) as developed in the 1990s by the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA).

The discussion paper which launched ILAP in Australia - Making the Connections: Towards Integrated Local Area Planning - published by the ALGA in late 1992, effectively summarises the issues, the objectives, the stakes, and the stakeholders involved in this approach. Integrated Local Area Planning (ILAP), the paper demonstrates, combines the following approaches:

- strategic planning which considers in broad terms the full range of physical, environmental, economic, social and cultural conditions, issues and needs in the local area concerned. (emphasis added)
- co-ordination between agencies and spheres of government to ensure that related programs, capital expenditures and regulatory processes are effectively linked, and focused on the key issues and priority needs identified by strategic planning.
- effective corporate planning and management on the part of the responsible local Council to drive both the planning process and the implementation measures.

CULTURAL MAPPING AS A TOOL OF CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT

For planning you need mapping: ‘survey before plan’ as Patrick Geddes, the founder of Town and Regional Planning in the UK, advocated 100 years ago. This is crucial to participatory policy making and to getting the community and citizenry actively involved as both subjects and objects of the planning process. In this context we are talking about cultural mapping which involves citizens in discovering or rediscovering values and resources for cultural policy and development.

Cultural mapping has been best described by the prominent Australian Aboriginal academic and activist, Marcia Langton, in the following terms:

Cultural mapping involves the identification and recording of an area's indigenous cultural resources for the purposes of social, economic and cultural development. Through cultural
mapping, communities and their constituent interest groups can record their cultural practices and resources, as well as other intangibles such as their sense of place and social value. Subjective experiences, varied social values and multiple readings and interpretations can be accommodated in cultural maps, as can more utilitarian 'cultural inventories'. The identified values of place and culture can provide the foundation for cultural tourism planning and eco-tourism strategies, thematic architectural planning and cultural industries development.²

What might this mean in the context of participatory cultural policy development? One answer to this lies in the key tool of ‘cultural capital assessment’ or ‘community cultural assessment’. This is a research and consultation tool which is aimed not simply at objectively evaluating the culture of a community or region but also at involving citizens.

As Amareswa Galla has put the case, this is with the aim of:

...more sustainable and vibrant communities, more cohesive community networks, greater community confidence and direction founded in a sense of self and place, and an increased community capacity for holistically addressing its own needs....It requires an inclusive framework that recognises the cultural aspirations of different sections of the community, including groups that may otherwise be marginalised culturally, socially and economically.³

Positioning culture – and cultural policy - in this way is crucial, according to Galla, in order to:

- **Strengthen and protect the cultural resource base for creative expression and practice**
- **Engage the whole community in valuing and participating in cultural expression and appreciation**
- **Provide relevant community infrastructure for the support of cultural activities**


• Develop the economic framework for cultural production and promotion

Crucially this is with the aim of developing 'community grounded creative industries [which] could enable expression of culture that acts to affirm and celebrate community cultural development.' This is an architecture for cultural policy in action where there is a simultaneous discovery/re-discovery of the community cultural resource base and a framework for making decisions on how to mobilise those resources – participatory cultural policy in other words.

Cultural mapping and cultural capital assessment in combination with related forms of social capital assessment are ways of evaluating this resource base and identifying the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for sustainable development and the policy settings which support it. It should proceed in the direction of the questions posed by Helen Gould, Director of the UK based cultural development NGO Creative Exchange. This is a framework which, crucially, links the cultural resource base – cultural capital – to the wider framework of social and human capital.

WHAT ARE THE COMMUNITY'S CULTURAL RESOURCES AND ASSETS?

• What are its key products, events, organisations, individuals, buildings and special sites, indigenous skills, cuisine and forms of expression (music, dance or visual arts)?

• Who uses or creates cultural resources and how do they benefit the community?

• Which local cultural resource people or organisations help deliver social capital?

WHAT CULTURAL VALUES UNDERPIN THAT COMMUNITY AND ITS WAY OF LIFE?

• What are the traditional power structures, hierarchies and decision-making channels?

• How does the community see time, nutrition, spirituality, environment, symbols and images?

• How does the community communicate and what values are communicated?
• How widely are cultural values shared? Are there several sets of values at work?

**HOW CAN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL WORK WITH CULTURAL VALUES AND RESOURCES?**

• What are the cultural values which benefit or hinder the development of social capital?

• How can cultural processes promote equitable relationships and foster inclusive approaches which enable all sectors of the community to participate and benefit?

• How can culture build confidence, skills, capacities, self-esteem and local pride?

• How can culture promote cross-community dialogue and build new relationships?

**HOW CAN CULTURAL CAPITAL AND ITS IMPACT ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF SOCIAL CAPITAL BE EVALUATED?**

• How does investment in cultural capital impact on other forms of social capital - economic and social benefits and drawbacks?

• How do attitudes towards the community and other sectors of the community change?

• What additional skills and capacities have been achieved and what impact did these have on community sustainability?

• How has cultural capital enhanced relationships, built trust and created new networks?4
Answers to these questions will certainly provide important 'indicators' for sustainable cultural development but they also provide a sound basis for moving forward in a context of community based and participatory cultural planning.\textsuperscript{5}

**CULTURAL PLANNING**

Cultural planning does not mean 'the planning of culture' but, rather, ensuring that ‘the cultural element’, cultural considerations, cultural resources, are there at every stage of the planning and policy development process. It is a crucial mechanism for citizen involvement in real and tangible cultural policy development.

If culture is about identities, lifestyles, conduct, ethics, governance and the ways in which we go about our daily lives, this should not be too difficult to countenance. If we agree to have policies about culture or link culture to development objectives then we are also consenting, explicitly or implicitly, to a logic of planning. Planning, that is to say, is not just about 'hard infrastructure' but also about soft and creative infrastructure: people and what they can and cannot do.

Cultural planning is, as Franco Bianchini has put it, a 'difficult art'. It can be glib and superficial, producing a mask of leisure and entertainment to conceal the most profound social and economic inequities. Cultural Planning at its worst can produce the best so-called cultural centre in the world surrounded by decaying neighbourhoods, deserted streets, minimal public transport, homeless families and bankrupt businesses. This is not cultural planning.

A slightly better but far from satisfactory version of cultural planning designates what goes on after the physical planners have done their work: cultural planning, that is, as beautification and aesthetic enhancement. This is not cultural planning. Neither of these will do. Neither are cultural planning in any real sense of the term.

So what is an effective definition of cultural planning? Let me offer this as the bottom line: cultural planning is the strategic and integral use of cultural resources in community development.

Now let me take the key terms one by one and unpack this definition.

- **Strategic**: Cultural planning has to be part of a larger strategy for community development. It has to make connections with physical planning, with economic and industry development objectives, with social justice initiatives, with recreational planning, with housing and public works. Cultural planners must make connections between their own interests and activities and the other agencies responsible for planning and development. They must make the connections, establish a voice and a presence in the development of strategies and action plans to reach long-term goals. They must act as brokers, matching the resources for innovation with those who need them - and there are a lot of these.

- **Integrated**: Cultural planning cannot come ‘after the fact’. It cannot be added on. Cultural planners must persuade other types of planners that what is being planned in cultural planning are the lifestyles, the texture and quality of life, the resources of identity and belonging, the fundamental daily routines and structures of living, shopping, working, playing - *folk, work, place*. Not just streets and buildings but conjunctions of habit, desire, accident and necessity - *folk, work, place*. Cultural planners must be there and make themselves heard from the very beginning: at the first whiff of a plan, at the first sign of a new residential or commercial development, at the first signal of a new local industry development strategy, at the first mooting of a new dam or agricultural improvement project. And they must be there not as outsiders shouting from the wings but as vital components of a 'development coalition'. They must persuade public and private sector authorities, on behalf of communities - and with their support and sanction - that these are the structures and the rituals and the sites of our local life that you are planning. This is why cultural planning must be integral to other planning processes and not appended as an afterthought.

- **Cultural resources**: this is the final key term for cultural planning and, in many ways the most important since it is the 'stuff' that's being planned. Cultural planning must take as its basis the pragmatic principle that *culture is what counts as culture for those who participate in it*. This can mean contemplating an art object and it can mean strolling down the street, sitting in a park, eating at a restaurant, performing religious devotions, watching people at work and so on. This is much closer to an anthropological definition of culture as a 'way of life' than it is to an aesthetic definition of culture as art. To speak of cultural resources, then,
rather than remaining hostage to a definition of culture as art, is intrinsically more
democratic, more conscious of the realities of cultural diversity and pluralism, more aware of
the sometimes intangible features of cultural heritage and patrimony, more respectful of the
simple fact of difference. Cultural resources are ordinary, everyday and diverse and also
sometimes exceptional. When you look upon culture in this way it becomes clear how, by
definition, cultural planning must be strategic, integral, responsive and comprehensive in its
scope.

Cultural planning must be able to address the role of traditional arts and heritage resources but
must also be able to address a developmental logic in the form of, for example, cultural tourism
strategies, in cultural industry development, in leisure and recreation planning, and it must make
the connections between all of these.

It must address the issues of identity, autonomy and sense of place but it must also be outward
looking and part of a more general program for community and citizen development.

It must be able to establish and maintain a real and effective policy equilibrium between 'internal'
quality and texture of life and 'external' factors relating to tourism, attractiveness to potential
residents and visitors (including large and small businesses). It must recognise and frequently
rediscover the wealth of cultural resources which are already there in communities but which
haven't formed part of a community's cultural, social or economic profile.

Cultural Planning must be based upon the principle of a fully consultative and rigorous process of
community cultural assessment, or cultural mapping. Whatever you call it, the simple principle is
that you cannot plan cultural resources unless you know what is there and what their potential is.
You cannot guess at this and you cannot base your evaluation simply on arts resources (which is
worse than guessing because it carries so many points of discrimination).

A community cultural assessment involves both citizen consultation and a rigorous process of
detailed research - quantitative and qualitative - into diverse cultural resources and diverse
cultural needs. This can be quantitative and it can be qualitative as the following example from a
cultural plan for a new city in Australia indicates
Quantitative and Qualitative Cultural Mapping for the Joondalup Cultural Plan

We used both quantitative and qualitative approaches. On the quantitative side we commissioned the Australian Bureau of Statistics to produce figures on cultural consumption for the area based on the Household Expenditure Survey.

We discovered a couple of surprises.

Surprise number 1 was that the residents of this area had one of the highest annual levels of spending in the 'Culture, Entertainment and Recreation' category in Australia.

Surprise number 2 was that most of this money was being spent on cultural consumption inside the home (videos, computer games, sports equipment, etc).

Armed with this sort of information we were able to argue to the local authorities that they had a bit of a problem here. Their residents had an unusually high annual cultural expenditure rate but were much more than usually reliant on privatised and domestic forms of cultural consumption. Don't you think that sends a message about the quality of amenity in the area and wouldn't you rather see that money going more directly into the local economy rather than to international entertainment and media companies?

To this quantitative research we added a good deal of qualitative research in the form of citizen-based cultural mapping and planning with local stakeholders.

We provided young people with disposable cameras and asked them to go out and take pictures of their favourite places.

We persuaded urban design students from a local university to come with us to the local shopping centres and to sit down with groups of women, with young people, with older people, with the local ethnic communities, to sketch their ideas about what they wanted their streets and their environment to look like.
We sent out a team with a video camera to catch a sense of the patterns of movement and activity in the area.

We used, in other words, cultural resources and forms of expression to develop a more complex and composite framework for planning and we mounted an exhibition of images and expectations - from women, young people, the Vietnamese, the Aborigines, the elderly - with our ‘survey before plan’ which had very positive responses and outcomes in terms of defining the texture, quality and diversity of the new city.

You need to ask lots of questions in order to begin to identify key issues. And, in asking the questions you are setting in motion the first stages of community involvement and investment. You are also setting in motion - perhaps unwittingly - a process of discovery of resources which may have gone unrecognised or hidden beneath a public community profile.

Cultural assessment, as an integral and necessary component of cultural planning - and which establishes the objective presence of the community within the planning process rather than simply as an 'object' of planning - assesses a community's strengths and potential within a framework of cultural development. It establishes an inventory of local culture and takes a hard look at resources, gaps and needs enabling us to plan for better, liveable, socially just and responsive communities.

This is not just a social policy and community development agenda. It is an economic one too. In the economy of the 21st century, the cultural industries - those industries in the business of making meanings, signs, symbols, images, sounds - and the human infrastructure that supports them as both producers and consumers, will be paramount.

THE EMERGENT BASES OF PARTICIPATORY CULTURAL POLICY IN THE UK

The UK provides a model of the possible benefits of linking together elements of a local policy and governance architecture for participatory cultural policy. There is an emergent structure, building upon the encouragement of every local authority to develop a Local Cultural Strategy. This should have been achieved by 2002 and the great majority of Local Government authorities now have a cultural strategy. This is not a statutory requirement but local authorities without a
cultural strategy will not be in a strong position to apply, for example, for National Lottery funding for capital and other initiatives. The existence of a cultural strategy is also a ‘Best Value Performance Indicator’ which is used in auditing and inspection of the service delivery arrangements of Local Government by the national Audit Commission and can have significant implications for future funding of cultural services from central government. Best Value is a statutory duty of Local Government enshrined in the 1999 Local Government Act.

There is now a requirement that cultural strategies be linked to Sustainable Community Strategies for every local authority in England\(^6\). A Sustainable Community Strategy is developed by a Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) which is made up of Local Government representatives, community groups, business, police, health, education and other service providers and consumers. In many areas cultural interest groups and consortia have been formed to be represented on, or to lobby, the LSP. In addition to developing the Community Strategy (including incorporating the existing Cultural Strategy) the LSP is responsible for drawing up the Local Area Agreement (LAA).

The LAA is a 3 year funding agreement in which priorities have been identified and agreed by Local Government and community stakeholders (citizens) and the documentation has specific outcomes identified such as ‘Enrich individual lives, strengthen communities and improve places where people live through culture and sport including libraries and the historic environment’. These outcomes are evaluated by specific performance indicators relating to the take up of cultural opportunities, and participation in cultural activities and amenities by ethnic groups.

While it is too early to evaluate the success or otherwise of this mechanism which is still being rolled out to Local Government, it is clear that it is providing an important opportunity to get cultural policy onto mainstream public policy agendas and at the same time opening doors for more sustained citizen participation.

Arts Council England, for example, (the national funding body for the arts) has recognised the strategic importance of LAA’s in the following terms:

\(^6\) A very useful guidance document - Leading the Good Life - on how this can be achieved, with many concrete examples, has been published by the Department for Culture, Media and Sport and can be downloaded at [www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/lgf_guidance_ICCS.htm](http://www.culture.gov.uk/global/publications/archive_2004/lgf_guidance_ICCS.htm)
Arts Council England believes that, as they develop, Local Area Agreements (LAAs) will provide a real opportunity to respond to local needs and form strong partnerships in order to deliver what is best for our communities.

We also believe fundamentally that the arts have the power to transform people’s lives and provide opportunity, inclusivity, economic development and learning for all and therefore is well placed to be a valuable tool for delivery of LAA outcomes...s.

There are four shared priorities for LAAs which are:

- Safer and Stronger Communities
- Children and Young People
- Healthier Communities and Older People
- Economic Development and Enterprise

To take Arts Council England’s response to the first of these – Safer and Stronger Communities – we can see how, in partnership with Local Government, local cultural policies might be strengthened in terms which are directly relevant to participatory cultural policy development.

**Safer and Stronger Communities**

The arts can offer a range of activities and opportunities which can improve the environment both physically and socially. This can contribute effectively to the reduction of crime and the fear of crime.

Examples of arts contribution to Safer and Stronger Communities;

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7 See; www.culturesoutheast.org.uk/media/uploads/84/ACE%20contribution%20to%20LAAs.doc
o Provision of workshops or performances which provide diversionary and educative activities and provide opportunities to channel creative energy and enable self expression.

o Enhancement of the built environment through installation of art in public places.

o Involvement of artists to encourage community involvement in regeneration or enhancement of public spaces in order to manifest local distinctiveness and create a sense of place.

o The involvement of an artist in town and neighbourhood planning to work alongside architects and developers to introduce creative design solutions and spaces which relate meaningfully to their heritage and surrounding environments.

o Increase access and encourage volunteering to build audiences and encourage participation in artistic activity

Doors are opening, connections are being made. Thinking, government, and stakeholders are being joined up in a context where, as a publication of the Local Government Association puts it:

Culture is already 'joined-up'. It is joined up with our personal, community, regional and national identities. It is joined up with our diverse lifestyles and social environments. It is joined up with the way we live, work and play. It is increasingly joined up with our capacity for sustainable economic development and attracting inward investment in a knowledge-based and creative economy. It is joined up with the ways in which we can make communities and places physically attractive, socially and economically dynamic and diverse. It is joined up, ultimately, to our whole quality of life.8

The picture is not entirely clear yet but it is evident that a policy and planning momentum has been established and that this sort of framework and architecture is having three distinct and positive effects at the local level. These are, (i) generating a great deal of energy in cultural assessment, mapping, indicators and policy at local level (including defining what culture is, why it matters

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and how it connects to other agendas); (ii) placing 'culture' on the agenda of mainstream economic
development and other public policy agendas, and, (iii) providing the mechanisms of linkage to
those broader policy agendas in social exclusion and poverty, quality of the environment, 
education and training, job creation, and wellbeing.

This is the sort of ‘stakeholder architecture of governance’ which I believe to be crucial to
participatory cultural policy making in European cities and communities: the connective tissue of
citizenship.