WORKING PAPER NO. 20
CULTURE AND ARTS DEVELOPMENT

Purpose

1. The purpose of this paper is to examine the current culture and arts development in Hong Kong and to identify some emerging issues.

Background

2. Culture is about life. It is the comprehensive expression of a society's aesthetic standards, and the values, moral standards and quality of its people, a reflection of the cognition of the individuals in the community about their identity. Culture and arts are an important symbol of full social development. Together with sport and recreation, they are an important part of the social fabric of a community. It is necessary to provide for an environment in which the pursuit of artistic and cultural enrichment is a part of the everyday lifestyle of the people of Hong Kong. It is also necessary to foster professionalism and expertise in these fields, and to nurture creativity and excellence in the arts and sport.

3. Heritage preservation and promotion is an important part of cultural activities. This subject has been covered in a separate paper.

The Administrative Framework

4. Policy objectives and arts policy for development of the arts emerged in 1981. At present, the cultural and arts policies are administered by the Home Affairs Bureau (HAB) and being carried out by different organizations including the Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD) and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC).

5. The Chief Executive announced in his 1998 Policy Address the conclusion of the Review on District Organizations that it would be better to have dedicated agencies play the leading role in the development of the arts and sport. A new administrative framework for the delivery of arts and sport services would be developed with the Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC), the Hong Kong Sports Development Board (HKSDB) and other concerned parties in the arts and sports communities. The new structure aims to:

   a. strengthen both professional and community input and ensure a proper balance between them;
   b. ensure effective use of resources and avoid undue interference of sectoral interests;
   c. facilitate the formulation and implementation of overall arts and sports policies.

6. The Policy Objectives delivered in October 2000 are to support and promote the development of the arts, culture, sport and recreation as well as heritage preservation. They aim to maintain an environment in which freedom of expression, diversity, artistic creativity and sporting excellence can flourish. Resources will be made available for implementing policies and delivering services related to the arts, heritage preservation, sport and recreation, and for the training of professional artists and elite athletes. A wide choice of the arts, heritage, culture, sports and recreational facilities will also be made available to the community.

The Leisure and Cultural Services Department (LCSD)

7. A new structure for the administration of the arts, culture, sport and recreation was set up in 2000. On 1 January 2000 the LCSD was established under the HAB to take up the Provisional Municipal Council's duties in these fields. It assumes the overall responsibility for the provision of quality leisure, recreational and cultural facilities, activities and services to the public, aiming to enhance arts appreciation and enrich the quality of life.

8. The LCSD manages 15 civic centers, 69 public libraries (including 8 mobile libraries), 13 museums and an Art Promotion Office and organizes a wide range of cultural programs all the year round. It is not directly involved in organizing district activities in arts creation in performing, visual and literary arts. However, it is making contribution through offer of free use of LCSD venues, as well as provision of opportunities to work with professional artists. It is hoped that such arrangement can increase the quantity and variety of district activities, and help to achieve a higher artistic and production standard. Activities eligible to receive support including but not limited to cultural and entertainment performances, exhibitions, talks, forums, lectures, demonstrations, competitions and training classes. Priority will be given to grassroots and non-professional district arts organizations promoting activities with wide participation of the local community. In late 2000, the LCSD and the Housing Department jointly launched the Public Art Project: Installation of Public Artworks at Yat Tung Estate, Tung Chung. The Project
aims at enhancing the residents’ quality of life, promoting local art and encouraging artistic creation through the display of public artworks. The LCSD also promotes local visual arts in the community setting through the display of artworks in various local town halls, civic centers and public libraries under Artists in the Neighborhood Scheme.

The Culture and Heritage Commission (CHC)

9. On 1 April 2000 the Chief Executive appointed the CHC to advise the Government on how best to support Hong Kong's cultural development and heritage preservation. It advises the Government on the overall cultural policy and on funding priorities for culture and the arts. The CHC will also formulate a set of principles and strategies to promote the long-term development of culture in Hong Kong. It aims to enhance the quality of life of Hong Kong people, foster a sense of belonging and cultural identity among the public, and develop Hong Kong into a centre of international cultural exchange. Its terms of reference are:

a. It advises the Government on the setting of policy objectives and the application of resources, in support of cultural development and preservation of heritage in Hong Kong;

b. It will coordinate, but not seek to direct, the work of statutory or sub-vented bodies in support of cultural development and preservation of heritage in Hong Kong;

c. It may initiate research and receive reports on topics relevant to (a) and (b) above.

The CHC’s Consultation Paper

10. The CHC will consult the public in the course of its deliberations. It has sought comments and views from the public on its consultation paper concerning the future cultural development in Hong Kong. In the consultation paper, the Commission has laid down Hong Kong’s long-term goal which is to expand our global cultural vision on the foundation of Chinese culture, drawing on the essence of other cultures to develop Hong Kong into an international cultural metropolis known for its openness and pluralism. In order to achieve this vision and taking into account Hong Kong’s favorable positioning in integrating Chinese and foreign cultures, as well as refined and popular cultures, the Commission has put forward the following six principles and strategies:

a. the development of culture should be people-oriented and we need a social environment that pays due respect to culture and the arts;

b. assimilate the best of Chinese and other cultures and build a cultural environment that is grounded in Chinese culture but pluralistic and open to the world;

c. respect freedom of expression and protection of intellectual property;

d. promote cultural development with a holistic approach and take cultural development as an important consideration in formulating policies and enacting legislation in these areas;

e. allocate adequate resources, encourage community participation, establish partnership among the Government, the business community and the cultural sector; and

f. let cultural activities be community-driven and let non-government organizations take the lead in cultural development in the long run.

11. The CHC will give priority to topics including cultural and arts education, comprehensive review of existing cultural facilities, the development of an integrated arts and entertainment district in the West Kowloon Reclamation (WKR), transforming libraries into information centres, re-positioning the role and development of public museums, the need for a mechanism to promote cultural exchange, preservation of heritage to enhance our sense of belonging and advice on deployment of resources.

The Hong Kong Arts Development Council (HKADC)

12. In 1992 the Government conducted an arts policy review on the arts and to explore ways for further development. Due to the overwhelming support from the public during the public consultation for the establishment of an independent statutory body with executive powers and staff to plan and promote the development of the arts in future, the HKADC was established in 1995. It commenced operation initially as a non-statutory body in April 1994 and subsequently as an independent statutory body from 1 June 1995 with executive powers, public and private funding and serviced by its own directly recruited staff.

13. The HKADC plans, promotes and supports the broad development of all fields of arts in Hong Kong. It aims to raise the level of participation and appreciation of arts of the general public. It formulates policies, disburses funds and initiates development programs in the arts to improve the quality of life of the people of Hong Kong.

14. Arts organizations in Hong Kong are free to organize and participate in cultural exchange activities. Participation of artists and arts organizations in these activities is encouraged through the HKADC. It is necessary to enhance the artistic standards of Hong Kong artists, promote appreciation of Hong Kong arts and uplift its profile in the international art scene.
15. The HKADC has launched its "Three Year Plan for 2001-2004" under the theme of "New Era of Creative Environment and Sustainable Development through Strategic Partnership" on 12 June 2001. It presented its proposal on "Partnership with Planning and Lands Bureau" to the PLB on 19 June 2001 aiming at promoting arts development through strategic co-operation with the Bureau.

16. The major suggestions of the HKADC having planning implications are as follows:

   a. Incorporate arts as an essential element in planning;
   b. Introduce plot ratio concession for provision of arts facilities;
   c. Review the policy on provision of public space so as to increase the number of public space and introduce the concept of arts piazza;
   d. Relax the regulation to allow more arts performance in public area and on streets;
   e. Set up arts exhibits at prominent locations in the Airport;
   f. Set up a sculpture corridor at the access road to the Airport; and
   g. Develop arts village.

Some Emerging Issues

17. One of the key objectives of HK2030 Study is to formulate a broad land-use framework for promoting cultural and arts development in Hong Kong. CHC's long-term vision and its cultural development strategy will form an important part of the HK2030 Study. It is worth noting that the CHC has been established for addressing the issues in relation to the long-term cultural policy. Based on the principles and strategies devised by the CHC, six working groups of the CHC have already started work on their respective areas of concern. Nevertheless, in the process of drawing up the HK2030 strategy, the following issues, some of which are identified and are being deliberated by the CHC, will need be addressed:

Relying on Hong Kong's Cultural Uniqueness

18. World cities have world-class cultural activities that can improve the quality of life of their residents. Hong Kong is a place where Chinese and Western cultures interact, and a place where people of different talents and different cultures gather. It can turn into an international cultural metropolis to maintain its competitive edge. It can make the best of its creativity in cultural development by uplifting its profile to commensurate with its position as a world city, and by building on the foundation of an integration of the best of Chinese and foreign cultures.

International Cultural Metropolis

19. The current cultural development strategy of Hong Kong is based on the principles of respect for the freedom of creativity and pluralistic development of the arts. Some members of the public expressed that if Hong Kong is to become an international cultural metropolis, it has to be able to attract more world-class performers. They suggested that arts venues have to be made available for such performances, and that the Government needs to take a more pro-active role and subsidize more on the using of cultural venues and on the running and organizing of cultural events.

Government-led or Non-government-led

20. Management and allocation of funding of cultural activities are currently run by dedicated agencies like the LCSD and HKADC. As suggested in the CHC's Consultation Paper, non-government organizations should take the lead in cultural development in the long run. It may be worthwhile to consider whether, apart from the non-government organizations taking the lead, the organizations could become private corporations and these private corporations could then take the lead in cultural development.

Better and More Arts Venues

21. Arts venues refer to the physical accommodation for the undertaking of arts activities of different types, nature and forms. They include venues for dance, drama, film and media arts, music, performance and visual arts but exclude commercial-oriented and profit-making entertainment venues such as cinema and disco. Planning of arts venues is based on territory-wide needs and community needs as assessed and advised by the Secretary for Home Affairs. The former relates essentially to the arts needs of all Hong Kong residents, visitors, elite professional and other artists and performing companies serving the territory as a whole. These venues should preferably be at prominent locations easily accessible by public transport and in reasonable commuting distance of the urban residents and visitor population. Venues catering for high proportions of overseas patrons should be located in close proximity to major hotels, tourist attractions and main shopping areas. The provision of high quality venues is normally required to encourage the development of Hong Kong's professional arts community. Examples of these facilities are the Hong Kong Cultural Centre, City Hall, and the Hong Kong Academy for the Performing Arts. On the other hand, arts venues serving community needs are essentially those at the community level of residents, schools, community groups, local performing groups, voluntary associations and other special interest groups and societies. These facilities require proximity to workplaces and residential districts to encourage community participation. Facilities for arts education should be located
within walking distance from schools and community facilities. Examples of these facilities are town halls and civic centers. The choice of location for arts venues should be based on accessibility and agglomeration of arts facilities.

Advice Sought

22. Members are invited to note that the emerging issues identified in paragraphs 18 to 21 above.

References

a. "2000 Policy Address, Policy Objectives for Home Affairs Bureau, Community and Youth Development"

b. The Culture and Heritage Commission's Consultation Paper, March 2001

Planning Department
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