

BUILDING A CULTURAL DISTRICT IN HONG KONG:
FROM VISION TO REALITY

By

Vennesa Chi Wei YUNG

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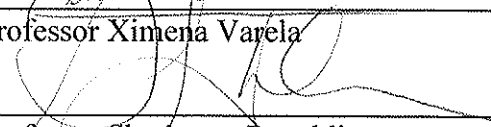
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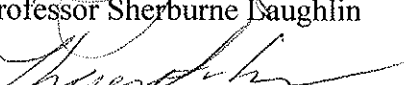
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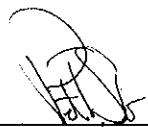
Professor Ximena Varela



Professor Sherburne Laughlin



Theresa Cameron



Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences

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Dedicated to Danny and Sita Yung,
who love me unconditionally everyday,
encourage and support me in every way,
teach me everything I know,
and a little more.

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ABSTRACT

The creation of a cultural district requires the synchronization of many moving parts and key players. This paper includes a literature review investigating published work on the incentives for cities to create cultural districts, the main elements that define a cultural district, as well as the key players and concepts its creation. Following the literature review is a research thesis on the West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong, covering the origin, objectives, progress and more of this development.

Cultural districts are on many cities' radars and development plans in recent years. The West Kowloon Cultural District is one of the biggest of its kind in recent history, and certainly in Asia. The Hong Kong case was chosen based on its unique combination of challenges, opportunities, and support from the government, and this is timely as it is currently gaining incredible momentum.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this paper is to investigate the concept and definition of cultural districts, why do cities build them, how they do so, and concepts that surround the creation and management of cultural districts. This paper begins with a literature review of published work on cultural districts and concepts surrounding the creation of cultural districts, including creative clustering, creative economy, goals and objectives, to name a few. A research study of the West Kowloon Cultural District of Hong Kong follows the literature review and its origins as well as current and future plans are discussed.

The author chose to focus on Hong Kong not only because that is her hometown but also because there is a severe lack of research on this case and the region in general, in relation to its counterparts in Europe and North America. It is also an interesting time to present this paper as the West Kowloon Cultural District is an ongoing development, with many moving pieces that are interesting to track now and well as when the project moves forward.

Significance

The significance of this paper to the field is in two folds. First, it aims to enrich the scholarly knowledge of creative cities from a perspective that is a combination of arts management, cultural policy and urban planning. There is academic work on this topic in all of these fields and more, for example, economics and talent management, but there is little written from the specific combination of these views and concepts.

Second, the author is writing for the field of arts and cultural management as well. Planned cultural districts are still relatively new in the field in terms of academic research. This

paper hopes to fill part of the void of this field, in terms of programming, management, funding, and more.

Methodology

In preparation of this paper, the author began with reviewing all public information the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority offers online, including press releases, audio files and transcripts from public engagement exercises, e-newsletters and other publications. The author then familiarized herself further on the arts and cultural environment of Hong Kong by extensive research on this topic, including online materials, newspaper archives, books and interviews.

In terms of the literature review, the author began with books by authors who are recognized leaders in the field, especially those who coined specific terms that are discussed in this paper. Research then expanded to include journal articles with themes and phrases of the subject matters as well as works on specific cultural districts for compare and contrast purposes.

Much of the research of this paper were focused in the fields of arts and cultural management, cultural policy, and urban planning because the author believes these are the most important components in the successful development of a cultural district. It is also because these fields are more advanced in their interpretations and evaluations of cultural districts.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

The creation of a cultural district requires the synchronization of many moving parts and key players. This literature review will investigate published work on the motivation, goals and incentives for cities to create cultural districts, main elements that define a cultural district, as well as the key players and concepts in the creation of a cultural district.

Competing Cities

Competition among cities for tax revenue, new or relocating businesses, residents, tourists, and other resources, is becoming more common, placed higher on cities' agendas, and fiercer than ever. Innovation is crucial in gaining an advantage in this competition. Policymakers as well as scholars have been studying the impacts and benefits of bringing arts and culture into the equation when it comes to urban planning and revitalization, in order to give them and their respective locales an edge in these competitions (Florida 2005). Florida writes extensively on global competitions for human capital, more specifically, creative capital, among cities, and how various tools can be applied to that end. These are among the numerous goals that a city hopes to achieve in building cultural districts.

Other goals include other reasons for using arts and culture as a tool for revitalization (Stern 2007), sustainable economic development (Development 2008), livability, social cohesion (Landry 2006), cultural identity and diversity, and human development (Development 2008). This pursuit of excellence in international competitiveness is often linked to widening access and lowering barriers to the arts, both on the production and audience sides (Garnham 2005). In some cases, this competition is also linked to immigration, talent attraction and talent

retention. For example, New Zealand's minister for research, science and technology, Pete Hodgson, was quoted saying that immigration is no longer thought of as a gatekeeping function, rather "a talent-attraction function necessary for economic growth" (Florida 2005).

In the current times of global economic fluctuations and instability, combined with fast-growing new economies and the decline of old economies and powers, policy makers must be creative in order to stay afloat. With rapid international transformation and information exchange, and the increasing demands of quality of life in modern societies, many urban planners and government agencies around the globe have turned to arts and culture when they are called to build sustainable living environments and economies while improving the quality of life.

The policies and strategies of a city often reflect their desire to be considered the best in certain ways. For example, the city of Barcelona strives "to be considered as a leading metropolis in Europe" (Baeker 2007). Many other cities and countries have similar aspirations as seen in various tourism authority and publicity campaigns and slogans. For example, Taiwan's most recent branding is "Taiwan – The Heart of Asia" (Bureau 2011), Hong Kong's "Asia's World City" (Board 2012), Philippines' "It's more fun in the Philippines" (Department of Tourism 2009). Not only do they aspire to become the best city and attract tourists and talents, some cities also compete to be 'the regional arts hub' – for example, Hong Kong and Singapore, long-time rivals in trade and finance, have been competing over that crown title of Asia's top city (Seno 2009).

Such aspirations are not limited to Asia, but are common in cities around the world, and often generate motivation and drive investment in urban planning strategies that involve creating cultural districts and attracting creative talents (Florida 2005). A city's cultural policy-making

agency often interacts with its tourism authority, immigration bureau and chamber of commerce, among other agencies, in order to promote a city to tourists as well as its own citizens, and also to utilize their cultural districts and related policies to attract foreign talent and investment.

The role of arts and culture varies from city to city. In some cities, arts and culture are limited to schools and museums; in some others, they are the center of urban planning policies, economic development, tourism and more. In the field of urban planning and governance, some believe that creative cities and cultural districts are the key to development and sustainability. Some scholars argue that urban economies have become so dependent on the production and consumption of culture that cultural planning and urban planning are closely linked and inseparable (Gibson 2005) (Landry 2000).

For the purpose of this thesis, cultural districts are limited to those located in urban areas. According to the United Nations, in 2010, 50% of the world's population lived in urban areas and this figure is forecast to rise to 75% by 2050. (Affairs 2008) This is relevant to understanding cultural districts because the escalating population in urban areas present city planners as well as government agencies with the new challenge of providing spaces for their citizens in the future.

Some states have concrete programs in cultural districts with definitions, applications and usage tailored to their needs. For example, the Texas Commission on the Arts has the authority to designate cultural districts in cities across Texas. According to the Texas Commission on the Arts, cultural districts are defined as “special zones that harness the power of cultural resources to stimulate economic development and community revitalization. These districts can become focal points for generating businesses, attracting tourists, stimulating cultural development and fostering civic pride.” (*Cultural Districts Program* 2012) The goals of cultural districts include:

“attracting artists and cultural enterprises to the community; encouraging business and job development; address specific needs of a community; establishing tourism destinations; preserving and reusing historic buildings; enhancing property values; and fostering local cultural development.”

When a city is rising in economic and political power, arts and culture are often abundant. Governing bodies, may they be religious or secular, the wealthy citizens and the well-educated citizens become patrons of the arts. Athens, Berlin, Florence, London, Paris, and Vienna are all examples of cities that went through periods of arts and culture patronage, and development, and economic, trade and diplomatic policies have historically encouraged such patronage and cultural exchange (Hall 2000). The connections between economic wealth, political power, and arts and culture have been recorded and written about in various settings. The economic, diplomatic and other intercultural exchanges among Asian countries, especially those along the Silk Road, are further examples of these connections among creative industries and economic development.

In the age of urbanization and globalization, connections are made between culture and economics, and more so in the last two to three decades. The arts are now, more than ever, considered to be capable of being a key generator of economic development for communities and cities. In the history of human civilization, arts and culture have often been considered for their aesthetic and intrinsic values, and only relatively recently for their economic values. This brings vocabulary such as “creative cities” (Landry 2006) “cultural districts” and “creative clusters” (Scott 2004), “creative economy” (Howkins 2001), “creative class” (Florida 2002), and “creative placemaking” (Markusen 2010) into our lexicon. In addition to scholarly researchers’ and independent authors’ works, organizations are increasingly interested in creative placemaking

and cultural economy. Some examples include Partners for Livable Communities, Americans for the Arts, and National Endowment for the Arts in the United States; and the Arts Council of Great Britain, Arts Council of England, and the Department for Culture, Media and Sport in Britain.

In the psychological and personal argument, it is believed that participation in the arts can enhance other skills. Various foundations fund researches on this subject, for example, the Dana Foundation has supported projects and reports in neuroscience and neuroeducation including *Neuroeducation: Learning, Arts, and the Brain* (Gazzaniga 2008), *Acts of Achievement: The Role of Performing Art Centers in Education* (Rich 2003), and have proven the benefits of arts education in psychological and personal growth and development.

Creative Economy and Cultural Districts

The concept of creative economy is constantly evolving, and there is no unique definition that is shared by all authors and scholars. John Howkins wrote in his 2001 book “creativity is not new and neither is economics, but what is new is the nature and the extent of the relationship between them and how they combine to create extraordinary value and wealth” (Howkins 2001). In Howkins’ definition of creative economy, he covers 15 creative industries, from arts to science and technology.

The United Nations Conference on Trade and Development defines creative economy as “an evolving concept based on creative assets potentially generating economic growth and development” which can “foster income generation, job creation and export earnings while promoting social inclusion, cultural diversity and human development” and is “a set of knowledge-based economic activities with a development dimension and cross-cutting linkages at macro and micro levels to the overall economy” (Development 2010).

Creative economy and cultural districts have become increasingly popular in the United States, often with programs and plans in specific cities and states, such as New York, Massachusetts and Colorado, and sometimes fostering partnerships across state lines. In some cases, these partnerships bridge international borders in the establishment of and ongoing relationships of sister cities or in the form of international cultural exchange. Another focus of the United States' cultural industry is the development of cultural tourism. Not only it has thrived in cities, the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities has also recognized the tremendous potential of the cultural tourism industry and the opportunities it can bring in terms of private-public partnerships, sustainable business models, and more (Craine 2005).

Cultural districts are typically divided into two groups: "natural" cultural districts, and "planned" cultural districts. A "natural" cultural district identifies a neighborhood that is set apart from other neighborhoods by their cultural assets, including organizations, artists, businesses, audiences etc., and was formed "naturally," without the planning and implementation by government agencies or other large institutions. These "natural" cultural districts often share similar beginnings of artists being priced out of previous locations, for example, Old City in Philadelphia, SoHo in New York City. "Natural" cultural districts are not planned from scratch but they do require the encouragement, care and cultivation of policy-makers. (Stern 2007)

For the purpose of this thesis, only cultural districts that are wholly or partially planned and funded by one or more government agencies (including local, state and federal levels), cultural institutions, corporations, or some combination of the above, since their infancy will be investigated. This excludes the "natural" cultural districts described above. The purpose of this is to limit the scope of literature and to focus research on governance, organization, and more, on

the specific cultural districts that are planned from scratch, with a particular focus on the main case study of the West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong.

In understanding the positive impacts of building cultural districts, it is beneficial to acknowledge the power of the arts and the key role it plays in enhancing the “unique characteristics of communities and increase our economic competitiveness through supporting creativity and innovation” (Schupbach 2010). Not only do arts and culture enhance characteristics and competitiveness, they also often lead to economic spillovers such as audience consumption in tertiary industries, such as dining and hospitality.

The creative economy and its benefits as a remedy for ailing cities are often included in discussion of cultural districts. According to Davis, the creative economy is defined as “the sum of economic activity arising from a highly educated segment of the workforce encompassing a wide variety of creative individuals—like artists, architects, computer programmers, university professors and writers from a diverse range of industries such as technology, entertainment, journalism, finance, high-end manufacturing and the arts” (Davis 2006). Another reason the “creative class” is a desirable population for cities is that they are twice as likely as workers overall to have completed college degrees. Therefore, they form a highly educated and innovation-producing segment of the American workforce (Arts 2008).

The idea of creative economy is key to building a successful cultural district because the logic is that, with a healthy creative economy, the “creative class” (a term coined by Richard Florida (Florida 2002)) would be attracted to the cities where the cultural district is located, thus generating employment, tax revenue, and revenue in other industries (Stern 2008). Florida’s theory suggests that the presence of a creative class in a city can define a city’s economic success. Since the creative class is often geographically mobile and well educated, they are

attractive to city planners and cultural planners alike. Urban economic development in the last two decades has shifted its focus “from industrial recruitment to talent and human capital, including art and culture” (Currid 2007). This trend aligns with Florida’s aforementioned Creative Class theory.

Cultural consumption is, again, intertwined with creative placemaking as well as the development of a creative economy because it generates economic returns in multiple ways. For instance, arts and cultural investments, both public and private, help a locality “capture a higher share of local expenditures from income” because residents would spend more on local artists, talents, and venues instead of going to non-local, chain-businesses or even travelling to and spending in other locales. This way, their income is re-circulated at a higher rate in the local economy (Markusen 2010). When there is vibrant cultural consumption, local governments also receive more sales, income and property tax revenue and that, in turn, improves a city’s infrastructure as well as public safety. The economic spillover theory also includes job creation in industries, especially in services, surrounding the arts and culture clusters as they draw investment and economic development (Breznitz 2012).

Creative Clustering

Creative clustering is another key component of cultural districts because the variety and quality of work produced and presented can be expanded by the geographic proximity of the creative entrepreneurs, artists, business owners, etc. The presence of the arts and cultural signify a higher quality of life while providing amenities as well as activities for those who live in or frequent the area (Markusen 2006).

Researchers have written about the positive impacts of creative clustering to cultural production. Scott and Rigby, in a study of creative industries in Los Angeles wrote that

clustering is a “critical feature for cultural producers to improve the quality of work produced and benefit economically from the work” (Scott 1996). According to Currid, cultural producers “rely heavily on their social lives to advance their careers, obtain jobs, and generate value for their goods, so that the local arts social milieu is critical to the cultural economy. Cultural producers also tend to cross-fertilize, collaborating to create goods and services, review each other's products, and establish new careers, meaning the ability to live and work in close proximity to one another is important” (Currid 2007). It is worth noting that in 2005 an estimated 2 million Americans reported artwork as their major occupation. Therefore, we must not underestimate the arts and culture as an economic sector (Markusen 2010).

Cultural production is not the only industry that can benefit from the employment opportunities that cultural districts provide. Significant growth in employment in other fields, especially in businesses adjacent to cultural outlets, such as restaurants and accommodations, is common in cultural districts. Findings have shown that such impact is sometimes more prominent in small towns than big cities and the impact of cultural districts to other fields of work in a locale and its economic health and growth is not to be underestimated. (Denis-Jacob 2012)

Access is an important goal in building a cultural district. Governing bodies do not only aim to make arts and culture accessible physically, for example, for visitors with disabilities, but also in terms of financial accessibility. In the green paper, “Culture and Creativity: The Next Ten Years” (DCMS 2001), the British government strives to provide free admission to national museums and galleries. This may seem simple, or even come as commonsense, to a Washingtonian who has access to the Smithsonian museums with free admissions, but in Britain,

in order to fulfil this promise, they have announced that they will “change the VAT position of national museums and galleries so that these major resources can be free to everybody” (Ibid).

There are a number of other goals to achieve by creating a cultural district, and they are connected to, and in some ways, borrowed from the arguments regarding investing in culture. These goals and arguments include: Economic, Social, Psychological and Personal, and Civic (Ellis 2003).

With regards to the Economic argument, it has been argued that “investment in certain arts has a high ‘multiplier effect’,” which means investment in these arts would generate expenditure in various stages – from construction to tourism to job creation – and thus money is retained and earned by the locale. The Social benefits include eased social divisions, encouraged social participation, and the creation of ‘social capital’ – popularized by Robert Putnam. This overlaps with the civic engagement argument. Social capital refers to “the collective value of all ‘social networks’ and the inclinations that arise from these networks to do things for each other” (Putnam 2000). It is essentially the benefit or resource generated by and interaction between individuals and groups, often linked to civic engagement and political involvement, and in turn, facilitate cooperation and mutually supportive relationships among individuals, communities, and nations.

These goals and arguments are relevant in the arts and culture discussion because these are challenges, benefits and opportunities urban planners and arts and cultural managers ought to consider in the creation of cultural districts and creative cities alike.

In the last few decades, cultural districts are discussed in a variety of disciplines including economics, anthropology, sociology, cultural geography, development, urban planning, public administration, arts management, cultural policy and more, as literature related to, but

often not directly about, cultural districts is found in journals in these fields. These publications include the *Journal of Planning Education and Research*, the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, *Urban Studies*, *Media, Culture & Society*, *Cultural Studies*, and United Nations Development Programme reports, to name a few.

Definitions vary from discipline to discipline, and researchers may have different perspectives in studying cultural districts. Common ground is often found in the main elements of a cultural district, which are summarized in this definition by Frost-Kumpf, “A cultural district is a well-recognized, labeled, mixed-use area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities serves as an anchor of attraction. Cultural districts can be found in communities as small as Riverhead, New York (population 8,814) to New York City (7.3 million). Cultural districts boost urban revitalization in many ways: beautify and animate cities; provide employment; attract residents and tourists to the city; complement adjacent businesses; enhance property values; expand the tax base; attract well-educated employees; contribute to a creative, innovative environment” (Frost-Kumpf 1998).

According to Frost-Kumpf, no two cultural districts are exactly alike – “each reflects its city's unique environment, history of land use, urban growth and cultural development,” and they can be divided into the following five categories: 1. Cultural Compounds; 2. Major Arts Institution Focus; 3. Arts and Entertainment Focus; 4. Downtown Focus; and 5. Cultural Production Focus.

As the concepts of cultural districts and creative placemaking are intertwined, it is important to understand creative placemaking and its influence on communities, in order to better understand the value of cultural districts as well as plan and manage them more effectively and efficiently. “(Creative placemaking) is how arts, culture and the creative sector make a

community a great place to live, work and play. When you strategically involve arts, culture and creative industries in the process of the community's economic development and the community development, that's creative placemaking" (Schupbach 2010). This is an important, transferrable concept in planning and managing cultural districts. It is not about building a cluster of businesses, residences and arts institutions in order to provide venues for and creating a community where people can live, work and play, but to create communities where people will *want* to live, work, and play.

Cultural consumption and cultural production are two distinctive, and not mutually exclusive, elements in cultural planning. A city that is planned for cultural consumption, with art museums and other cultural institutions in place, is not a culture capital if it "simply functions as an 'entrepot of the arts'," "buying and selling without producing the arts itself" (Zukin 1995). Authors have discussed the cultural dynamics of cities, from different perspectives of cultural consumption and cultural production, but not much has been written about the interaction of these two aspects (Comunian 2011). Cities may choose to focus on one aspect or the other but trends have indicated that more cities lean towards having some level of both consumption and production of the arts when they are planning cultural districts.

Support from the government, cultural ministries or other authorities as well as public and private investments are crucial in organizing and building a creative district. Such support includes, but is not limited to, financial, human capital, infrastructural, and strategic. As the former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said, "A country like Britain today survives and prospers by the talent and ability of its people. Human capital is key." (Blair 2007) Such beliefs and prioritization is not uncommon among the more developed countries. Extensive strategic

planning and stable financial and infrastructural support are crucial, sturdy pillars upon which cultural districts are built.

In some cases, it is crucial to bring in national or international experts, especially in the early stages of planning, as consultants, advisors, contractors, or employees. This is a good way to learn from each other's experiences and avoid pitfalls.

Funding Sources

Funding structures vary with each cultural district, and the funding sources and administrators often differ with each local, state, and national government. The Scientific and Cultural Facilities District (SCFD) in Denver, Colorado, established in 1988, is the largest cultural tax district in the United States and its proceeds support over 300 organizations annually (Schmitz 2012). The SCFD governing body receive funding from various sources, and their main stream of income is a sales tax and a funding distribution that was established in consultation with local arts organizations and other stakeholders (Moon 2001).

The Massachusetts Cultural Council administers the John and Abigail Adams Arts Grant Program, established in 2004, which provides grant funding to communities with arts and culture projects that spur local economic development (Maloney 2012). In some other cities, significant funding may come from the National Endowment for the Arts, and large foundations and companies such as the Pew Charitable Trust, Ford Foundation, MetLife, Bank of America, to name a few.

In terms of building such creative cities, Baeker states that there are three specific types of capacity building: “cultural mapping – to build a system in identifying and building a shared base of knowledge of (a city's) rich creative and cultural resources;” “cultural governance – to create a shared planning and decision-making (governance) mechanism connecting government,

business, community and university interests;” and “networking and engagement – to strengthen communication and collaboration across the community in support of creativity and culture” (Baeker 2007).

As these concepts and practices continue to grow, professionalize and diversify, there are varying elements in each definition by different scholars, authors, city planners, and authorities. For some planning processes, the first step to create a new cultural district is to study the current environment – economic feasibility, engineering, development, and design, etc. Governing bodies often commission consultants to carry out such research. The names of some global arts and culture consultancies can be found linked to multiple world-class cultural district projects, for example, AEA Consulting and ConsultEcon in the United States, Arts Architecture in the United Kingdom, and Positive Solutions in Australia.

On another hand, for some, cultural asset mapping is the first step to understanding the area, its people, history and culture (Gibson 2012). Often times, an unexpected side-effect that comes from cultural asset mapping as a public project is to publicize the project, and also to get public opinion on it without conducting a separate research project, and in some cases, conveniently, to get the public’s buy in. This fits well with the growing crowd-sourcing behavior in creative industries around the world.

In some cases, an area has organically grown to be known for their arts, culture, and entertainment, and the government or other agencies arrive at the scene later to organize, designate, and maintain. For example, the Hong-dae area in Seoul has a “reputation as a vibrant place of urban amenities, emerging cultural forms, and neighborhoods of cultural workers and artists” (Cho 2010) before the city government attempted to create a cultural district within the area (Ibid).

Although many urban planners may agree that building cultural districts and having a healthy creative economy is the answer to their prayers, it is not an easy task because some cities can fail miserably with the same exact strategy another city could thrive with. This is why, as Holden suggests, in defeating these difficulties, authenticity and experience are crucial in building a successful cultural district (Holden 2007).

There are different governance models in cases from different cities, states and countries. For example, in the United States, there are advocacy groups as well as commissions and state arts councils that work with cities directly in establishing cultural districts and the like. In some cases, there are industry-specific groups or coalitions, and new partnerships of varying levels. Some of these organizations include Creative London, Design London, Creative Sheffield, Creative New York, Creative Baltimore, Create Berlin, Creative Amsterdam, Design Singapore, and Creative Toronto (Evans 2009).

There is no short list of elements all cultural districts around the world share, however, it is important to have all elements considered and from this process, pick and choose the right elements for each district. As Ellis suggested, “culture cannot revitalize downtown alone,” (Ellis 2006) and it is important to have other aspects considered, other key players and other strategies in position, in order for culture to be a successful tool to revitalize a city. Ellis includes cultural infrastructure, public and private investment in other civic amenities, transport systems, and housing in the pieces that need to be in place.

In recent decades, creative people in Britain have often felt that their success was “despite, not because of, Government and local authority structures.”(DCMS 2001) This sentiment is not unique in Britain and it is partially due to the under investment of creative organizations on the government’s part, and there might be misunderstanding or misalignment in

goals and objectives of creative organizations and government agencies. In Britain's case, artists and cultural organizations felt that they are "marginal to the thinking of the government" (Ibid), similar feelings arose in Hong Kong in the early days of the West Kowloon Cultural District, when multiple questions were raised during public forums regarding the involvement of local arts and cultural administrators and organizations (WKCDA 2009).

Getting the support from the artistic production side is important, as is, in a way, content management and building a steady stream of creative input. On another hand, it is important to get the buy in from the public. Community engagement not only translates into cultural consumption, but also goes hand in hand with private funding, audience development, and sustained success of a cultural project.

There is no universal plan for building a successful creative city, a cultural district, or a healthy cultural economy. Every city is different in its social, economic, political, artistic and cultural fabric, which is precisely why no two cultural districts are alike and why there is a need to promote, encourage, and in some cases, preserve culture. There are always lessons to be learnt from various countries and development projects, whether they succeed or fail. However, there is no way one city can recreate the same exact project, even if the exact same management. It is therefore crucial for cultural managers to embrace the challenge and the differences, and create a one-of-a-kind project if they are tasked, with a clear vision, mission, goal and the right people, plans and tools to take charge.

CHAPTER 3

A FRAGRANT HARBOUR PERSPECTIVE

This paper will take a close look at the West Kowloon Cultural District in Hong Kong, which is currently being built and is projected to partially open in 2015, with the entire district fully operational piece by piece in the next twenty years (maps of Hong Kong can be found in appendix A, figures 1 and 2). It will investigate the birth and growth of the West Kowloon Cultural District, its significance and implications, its planning process from securing financial resources to having concrete, architectural plans, from human resources to seeking public opinion and more.

There are many reasons for Hong Kong as a city to take on a cultural district in order to stay on top of its competition against other global cities. Known to the world as a top center for finance and trade, Hong Kong has been considered a successful city in many ways – it grew tremendously under British rule as a colony, and recovered from the blow of the economic crisis of Asia in the late 1990's through early 2000's. After China and Hong Kong reunified at midnight on 30 June 1997, the city continued to grow, to the delight and surprise to some economists and historians. Over the years, this successful, international city has occupied top spots on many charts – the best place to work, ranked first in economic freedom (Foundation 2012), and other top rankings in business competitiveness, human development, quality of life, etc. Most recently, in July 2012, Hong Kong was named the world's most livable city by The Economist's Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU 2012).

However, on the flip side of the “best of” coin, Hong Kong has also been deemed the a “cultural wasteland” (Bullen 2012) and “cultural desert” at times. These titles provide some

motivation for the arts and culture industry and the government to make a change and invest in the creation of a high profile cultural district.

A cultural arts hub is on every major city's priority list of key interested nowadays, as many city mayors and governments share the belief that creative industries, including everything from design, architecture and theatre, are essential for urban growth (Seno 2011). Hong Kong is not immune to this belief; therefore the government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) embarked on the journey of the creation of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD). This development acts as an asset, a "strategic investment" to meet the long-term infrastructure needs of the arts and cultural sector, which they have identified as "a vital part of any world-class city's economic and social fabric" (WKCD 2008-2009).

The government has clear objectives, as displayed in various government documents, review reports, and ordinances. Hong Kong thrives to uphold and encourage freedom of artistic expression and creativity that the people are proud of, while enhancing and promoting excellence, innovation, creativity and diversity in arts and culture as well as the appreciation of a diverse range of arts and culture. From a development perspective, the West Kowloon Cultural District is a tool to facilitate the long-term development of Hong Kong as an international arts and cultural metropolis, to develop new and experimental works, and to cultivate and nurture local talents in arts and culture, especially on the creative and management fields.

The Hong Kong government understands the connections of arts education, audience building, and content building, by way of supporting local creative talents, are key encourage participation and established them as the "three pillars" (WKCD 2008-2009). On a global political and business level, the government aims to facilitate the development of cultural and creative industries with the new cultural district, while enhancing cultural exchange and

cooperation between Hong Kong, Mainland China, and other cities and their governments, reinforce and build new relationships with locally- and foreign-based non-government organizations and providers of the arts, and strengthen Hong Kong's cultural tourism and its position as a tourist destination (HKSAR 2008).

CHAPTER 4

CULTURAL POLICY AND ARTS EDUCATION IN HONG KONG

The arts are a stable component of education in Hong Kong, commonly from kindergarten to at least the first three, in some cases, five, years of secondary school, and it is incredibly common for students, especially those in higher ranking schools or have good grades, to learn at least one form of the arts, may it be a musical instrument, some sort of visual arts, or be in a choir or a drama club. Despite the wide spread culture of arts education, there is a disconnection between that and the production and consumption of arts.

In various open forums and discussions during the three stages of public engagement exercise, audience development was deemed crucial for the success of the West Kowloon Cultural District, which cannot be cultivated without proper arts education. The Education Bureau has taken initiatives to not only recruit talents to review and reconstruct arts education policies, but also boost arts education in schools. Since the 2009-2010 school year, the arts have taken up at least 135 hours of total curriculum time for students at the senior secondary level, and music and visual arts has been, and continues to be, offered as elective subjects (Crawford 2009).

Many argue that arts and culture have always taken a backseat in policy conversations in Hong Kong, during both British and Chinese rule, and it was never in the forefront of education and other policies, as if the arts and culture were a favorite side dish that no one wishes to order as an entrée. The idea of having a cultural bureau was suggested by Peter Brinson, a British cultural administrator, writer, and lecturer on dance, in a research report commissioned by the Hong Kong Government in 1989, when Hong Kong was still a British colony (Brinson 1990). However, due to various reasons, a cultural bureau was never created before the handover. The Hong Kong government recently began reconsidering the creation of a cultural bureau in 2012.

Although there is no single government agency that administers all arts and cultural affairs in Hong Kong, there are multiple bureaus and departments that have some level of involvement in such matters. These bureaus and departments include, but are not limited to, Education Bureau, Home Affairs Bureau, Leisure and Cultural Services Department, Commerce and Economic Development Bureau, Innovation and Technology Commission, Intellectual Property Department, Radio Television Hong Kong, Trade and Industry Department, Development Bureau, and Planning Department (GovHK 2012). This reflects that arts and culture are on the agenda, just not in one unified, strategic agenda. The current cross-agency model contributes to the discussion of the creation of a cultural bureau, as well as the slow realization of the West Kowloon Cultural District project, which has been ongoing for over two decades.

This is unusual among Hong Kong's global competitors. Many European and Asian Pacific countries have dedicated appointed officials and government agencies that are responsible for cultural affairs. The French Minister of Cultural and Communications, Germany's State Minister for Cultural and Media, the UK's Minister for Cultural, Communications and Creative Industries, the Netherlands' State Secretary for Education, Culture and Science, Denmark's Culture Minister, the Italian Minister for Cultural Heritage and Activities and the Swedish Minister for Culture and Sports are all key players in shaping European cultural industries. Similarly, New Zealand's Minister for Arts, Cultural and Heritage, Australia's Minister for the Arts, the People's Republic of China's Head of the Ministry of Culture, the Japanese Minister of Education, Culture, Sports, Sciences and Technology, the Taiwanese Minister of Council for Cultural Affairs, and the Singaporean Minister for Information, Communications and the Arts, all have in common their responsibilities and obligations as

cultural ministers of their respective governments. The officials on the list, along with others who are not listed above, together show the role no one in Hong Kong currently holds.

In addition to the governmental bureaus and departments listed above, several organizations play key roles in the arts and culture industries in Hong Kong. The Hong Kong Arts Development Council is a key player in arts policies, advocacy, programming and funding allocation since its establishment in 1995 (HKADC 2010). Another key player, the Hong Kong Arts Centre, established in 1977, is the largest local independent arts programming institution (Clarke 2002). It strives to be the creative hubs for arts and community in Hong Kong, and is a “self-funding organization whose mission is to promote contemporary arts and culture within Hong Kong and beyond” (HKAC 2012). Among other arts organizations, Asia Art Archive (AAA 2012), established in 2000, and the Hong Kong Art Fair (ArtHK 2012), founded in 2007, are two of the key players as well.

Cities often compete with one another for resources, talents, in tourism, trade, and in other fields. Hong Kong’s main competitors are also cities that are compared with Hong Kong frequently; these include Singapore, Seoul, Tokyo, Shanghai, and Beijing. These cities have all grew their arts and culture industries and in a way, Hong Kong has been lagging in this race. For example, Shanghai has held events such as the International Art Festival, International Art Fair, the World Expo, and Annual Art salons (Scott 2006). Shanghai is not the only city in Mainland China in the race, other competitors include Shenzhen’s Baoan, Guangzhou’s Zhujiang (Seno 2011), and of course, the nation’s capital, Beijing’s 798 art district and Caochangdi art village are not to be overlooked. Singapore mounted its inaugural Art Stage Singapore art fair in 2011, and presented 123 galleries and served 32,00 visitors (ArtStage 2012). More on this subject will be developed later in this paper.

CHAPTER 5

A LOOK INTO THE PAST

When analyzing Hong Kong's current arts and culture development and its future, one ought to look back and learn about this city's colorful past. Hong Kong literally means "Fragrant Harbor" in Chinese. It gained its name from incense trade and being an important seaport for import and export trade for hundreds of years. Hong Kong has been the main port for any goods to go in and out of China and the countries west of China (through the Silk Road), to reach South and Southeast Asia. This is the main reason, in addition to Hong Kong being a colony, why Hong Kong was a major international city, incredibly popular with foreign investments and the expatriate workforce, before the globalization phenomenon in recent decades.

As a result of the First Opium War, China signed the Treaty of Nanking in 1842, and Hong Kong became a British colony. In the terms of the Treaty of Nanking, Hong Kong Island was to be under British rule permanently as a crown colony, and in 1860, the Kowloon Peninsula became a part of the colony, and in 1898, the colony further expanded to include the New Territories with a 99 year lease. Long negotiations between the Chinese and British governments in the 1980s led to Margaret Thatcher and Deng Xiaoping signing the Sino-British Joint Declaration in December 1984, which set the clock ticking towards the 1997 handover of Hong Kong from British to Chinese sovereignty (Clarke 2002). The Joint Declaration is important not only because it set a timeline for the handover, but it was also a detailed treaty that "sought to guarantee" that the way of life enjoyed by Hong Kong would survive for fifty years after the 1997 handover, with the "one country, two systems" model (Patten 1998).

The colonial years of Hong Kong created a unique East meets West culture that cannot be found anywhere else in the world. A world-renowned western opera performance on a world tour

would be scheduled in the City Hall, where top Cantonese opera performances would be scheduled for the same venue the next evening. In recent years, the former British colony has paid more attention to the preservation of the unique cultural heritage as well as the arts scene, partially as a result of the city's search for a local identity through the arts, as the handover in 1997 approached, and also partially as a reaction to the limitations on democracy in post-colonial Hong Kong (Clarke 2002).

From political satire stage performances to sculptural pieces that depict the 'one country, two systems' formula, which is the supposed relationship between post-handover Hong Kong and the rest of the People's Republic of China, defining Hong Kong culture is a common theme in locally produced arts performances and visual artworks in recent years, as artists operate in this unique hybrid and, in some ways, undefined and ungrounded cultural space. As Hong Kong approaches the fifteenth anniversary of the handover, the local arts and cultural scene is growing and becoming the center of many discussions in the news. The West Kowloon Cultural District, the potential creation of a cultural bureau, the welfare of artists and the state of artist colonies, and the thriving auction and art fair businesses are often written about in newspapers and magazines.

CHAPTER 6

ARTS, CULTURE, AND ECONOMY IN HONG KONG

Developing the Field of Arts and Cultural Management

Despite the increase in coverage of the arts scene in the news, there is still very limited scholarly literature in the field of arts management, or on cultural districts, in Hong Kong. Finding comprehensive literature on arts management and cultural districts in Asia is also challenging as there is very little work written on arts management in Asia.

In fact, though Asia is mentioned every now and then in the international journals in the field such as the *International Journal of Arts Management* and the *International Journal of Cultural Policy*, there is only one widely-known scholarly journal in the field that focuses on the Asia Pacific region – the *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management*. Moreover, there is a severe lack of literature on arts and cultural policy and management in Hong Kong as there was only one essay out of all the volumes of the *Asia Pacific Journal of Arts and Cultural Management* that had Hong Kong as the subject matter.

Although academic research on arts management, cultural policy and cultural districts in Hong Kong is limited, there has been significant growth in interest in the professionalization of and nurturing future leaders in these fields. Hong Kong has been criticized for not having enough formal education programs to nurture and support cultural management professionals. This was a common finding threading through various consultation reports the government contracted, as well as the feedback the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority from their Public Engagement Exercises in 2009, 2010 and 2011, thus bringing the issue of lack of formal cultural management education to the table.

There are currently only a handful of relatively new post-graduate programs in Hong Kong in arts and cultural management. The Masters of Arts program in Cultural Management at Chinese University of Hong Kong was established in 2001 and has been the only MA program in cultural management in Hong Kong (CUHK 2009). The Hong Kong Academy for Performing Arts offers a Master of Fine Arts in Theatre and Entertainment Arts (specializing in arts and event management), while the Hong Kong Baptist University offers a Master of Visual Arts with a concentration of art administration available.

There are three postgraduate diplomas and certificates offered, including the HKU School of Professional and Continuing Education's postgraduate diploma in creative industries management, with a focus in arts and culture (HKUSpace 2010). Hong Kong Baptist University offers a professional diploma in arts administration, and the Open University of Hong Kong offers a professional certificate in performance arts administration and marketing.

Some programs other than those focusing on arts and cultural management can be influential in shaping the future of the arts and in nurturing future arts leaders in Hong Kong. The master of public administration program at the University of Hong Kong, launched in 1978, does not have a specific concentration in arts and cultural management but there have been a handful of dissertations on the subject of cultural policy, cultural heritage tourism and cultural development over the years (HKUTO 2012).

The Savannah College of Arts and Design (SCAD) opened its first campus in Asia in Hong Kong in 2009 and offers degree programs in eight subjects areas in art and design. Ada Wong Ying-kay, former chairwoman of Wan Chai District Council, founded the Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity in 2008 (Crawford 2009). It is a senior secondary school with a focus on the arts, which is a refreshingly new establishment in the city of Hong Kong.

A number of initiatives are underway in the city, outside of the realm of higher education, towards the direction of becoming the arts hub of Asia and to prepare for the further growth of the cultural sector when the opening of the West Kowloon Cultural District approaches. Some of these programs include cultural exchanges and increased involvement and recognition in The Venice Biennale through the Hong Kong Arts Development Council; the annual three-day Cultural Leadership Summit since 2010, co-presented by the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority and the Hong Kong Arts Administrators Association; the Overseas Research Program for leaders from local arts groups on future arts development in Hong Kong, co-organized by the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority and the Hong Kong Arts Development Council; the curatorial internship program offered by the Museum Committee of WKCDA and M+; and the fellowships for the University of Hong Kong's Advanced Cultural Leadership Programme, in collaboration with the Clore Leadership Programme in the United Kingdom, that the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority awards annually since 2011.

Creative Economy

In 2009, the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region Government, recognizing the need to promote and boost the creative sector, set up Create Hong Kong (CreateHK), a dedicated office “to lead, champion and drive the development of the creative economy in Hong Kong” (HKDY 2012). CreateHK co-ordinates government policy and resources for creative industries in Hong Kong, works to speed up the development of creative industries in the city, and administers various initiatives, including the HK\$ 300 million CreateSmart Initiative, which provides “funding support for projects conducive to the development of Hong Kong's creative industries” (HKDY 2012) with a focus on creative industries outside film and design, which already receive funding separately (SCMP 2009).

One of CreateHK's main projects for 2012 was to implement the Hong Kong Design Year with various events and programs around Hong Kong from nurturing talent and creating business value and more. CreateHK collaborates with the Hong Kong Design Centre, the Hong Kong Trade Development Council, Hong Kong Tourism Board, and the Ambassadors of Design of Hong Kong to present Hong Kong Design Year, making it another city-wide arts and cultural collaboration, one that focuses on design and the creative economy in the city.

Funding

The Government of Hong Kong has always been a major funding source for arts and cultural organizations in the city, from its colonial days to the present Hong Kong Special Administrative Region days. As discussed above, there are multiple government agencies that are involved in cultural policy, and they are also involved in financial support of arts and culture. The Home Affairs Bureau is responsible for all the government-run leisure facilities, public libraries, URBTIX, the major events ticketing system. Moreover, most public museums in Hong Kong are managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, a branch of the Home Affairs Bureau. These museums include all fourteen government-administered art, cultural, science, historical and heritage museums in the city as well as four other cultural venues. All of these institutions receive funding directly from the government and occasionally seek private funding from sponsors and partners for specific projects and exhibitions.

Government funding covers a large range of arts and cultural activities in Hong Kong, including funds for specific exhibitions, events and festivals; renovation, preservation and architectural projects; conservation; education; and more. Among these, some funds are assigned to specific projects within the WKCD, for instance, the city has granted M+ HK\$ 128 million to

acquire artwork and HK\$ 600 million to build the anchoring museum's 7,200-square-meter space (Seno 2011).

Hong Kong Jockey Club has consistently made significant contributions over the years in the arts and cultural sector, such as those made to the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre, Jockey Club Atrium in the Hong Kong Arts Centre, Jockey Club Point to Point Specific Art Project, Hong Kong Arts Festival, Hulu Culture Limited, Hong Kong 2011 International A Cappella Festival etc. In 2010-2011, the Hong Kong Jockey Club donated over HK\$ 250,800,000 (US\$ 32,153,846, at the rate of 7.8 HKD to 1 USD) to efforts in cultivating arts and culture in the city (HKJC 2012). A number of other non-governmental charitable organizations including Po Leung Kuk, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, and The Community Chest of Hong Kong also play key roles in funding arts and culture in Hong Kong.

In recent years, the business sector has also invested more into the arts and culture. A former chairman of the Hong Kong Arts Development Council, Ma Fung-kwok, currently serves on the board as well as several committees of WKCDA. He observes that the West Kowloon Cultural District, though a long and ongoing process, has been positively impacting the cultural environment in the city (Ma 2012). For instance, some of the wealthiest companies in Hong Kong, including the property developers and banks, have begun to allocate more resources on arts and cultural development, ranging from donations to arts organizations, to showcasing and including more arts in their real estate properties.

Some of these initiatives include Sun Hung Kai Properties' collaboration with the government's Leisure and Cultural Services Department "City Art Square" – a beautification and revitalization project of the Sha Tin Town Hall Plaza, and other similar development projects; Swire Properties' Swire Organisation for Youth Arts, their ongoing art exhibits in their

properties around the city, artwork commissions, art walk tours; Hang Lung Properties' Hong Kong Gallery at The Peak Galleria for visual and performing arts presentations, and their Art and Cultural Street at Amoy Plaza for exhibitions, arts and cultural events, and creative entrepreneurship; and Wharf Holdings' annual winter art extravaganza at Harbour City and exhibitions and performances at Times Square.

While the government and some arts organizations are leading the efforts to professionalize, revitalize, and grow the cultural sector, the existing arts and cultural sector is striving to reach the top as well. While Hong Kong has always been better known as a global financial center and heaven for food lovers and shoppers, the city's artistic and cultural offerings have been climbing into global spotlight. Longstanding festivals such as the annual month-long Hong Kong Arts Festival, launched in 1973, draw local and foreign audience and artists, in commissions, presentations, and tours, and also in the productions of original works (HKAF). The Asia Society Hong Kong Center, established in 1990, recently opened a new center in the historic site of a heritage military compound (ASHK 2012) and has gained incredible media coverage internationally, again, bringing Hong Kong to the forefront of international cultural news.

Also bringing Hong Kong to the spotlight on the world arts stage is the relatively new Hong Kong Art Fair, an annual international art fair established in 2007, which grew rapidly over the last five years. ART HK, the Hong Kong Art Fair, gained tremendous momentum and media coverage especially when MCH Swiss Exhibition (Basel) Ltd, the organizer of the world-renowned Art Basel and Art Basel Miami Beach, took a majority ownership stake of 60% in Asia Art Fairs Ltd, the organizer of ART HK, in May 2011 (Basel 2011). ART HK will become the first edition of Art Basel in Hong Kong in May 2013. This is not only a highly anticipated

event, but also one that acts as “a catalyst for the recent development of the cultural landscape” and confirms the “potential of Hong Kong as an international art hub” (ArthK 2012). True to the East meets West culture of Hong Kong, the five years of ART HK has “remained the only art fair in the world to showcase a 50/50 balance between Eastern and Western galleries” (ArthK 2012) and this unique characteristic is not lost in the city’s cultural sector, nor in the future of Art Basel in Hong Kong. ARTHK has presented from over 100 to 266 galleries in the past five years since its first edition (HKAF), with attendance numbers comparable to international top art fairs such as Switzerland’s Art Basel and London’s Frieze Art Fair (Wee 2012). Art Basel | Hong Kong is anticipated to present more than 250 galleries from around the world in 2013 (Basel 2012) and the attention and attendance is expected to intensify.

Another reason the Art Fair is important to the development of the arts industry in Hong Kong is the wide array of arts events all around town during the art fair, transforming the city with an Art Week (Seno 2010). These Art Week events vary in subject, media and venue, including art happenings in and out of gallery spaces, auctions scheduled to coincide with the fair, and art and sound tours around the city. These events also often forge new partnerships or strengthen old ones. For example, during a few of the ART HK fairs and most recently during Art Week 12, as ART HK’s official education partner for the fifth year in a row, Asia Art Archive hosted the AAA Backroom Conversations, in collaboration with the Home Affairs Bureau, Burger Collection, Time Out Magazine, and other partners and sponsors. There are other similar events both on and off site, including the Para/Site Art Walks, ArtAsiaPacific Guerrilla Talks, New to Buying Art Tour, and more. Galleries, museums, boutiques, flagship stores, and shopping centers around the city also host special art exhibitions and arts events during the week

of the art fair, thus creating an artistic atmosphere throughout the city more than any other week in the entire year.

In recent years, auctions houses also tend to schedule their sales during the week of ART HK, taking advantage of the sophisticated art lovers and buyers who are in Hong Kong during then, the heightened media coverage of the arts, and to contribute to the overall arts and cultural environment in the city during the Art Weeks. Auction houses are an important component to the for-profit art sector in Hong Kong. With semi-annual (or more frequent) auctions in Hong Kong by the world's top auction houses, including Sotheby's, Christies, and Bonhams, among others, Hong Kong has become the most important auction location for the Asian art market.

In May 2012, Christie's evening sale of 20th Century and Contemporary Asian Art brought the auction house HK\$ 629,478,750 (US\$ 80,702,404, at the rate of 7.8 HKD to 1 USD), while their Chinese ceramics and works of art sale brought HK\$ 225,425,250 (US\$ 28,900,673) and Christie's Hong Kong's spring sales week 2012 totaled more than HK\$ 2.7 billion (US\$ 346 million). According to Christie's official sales results statement, this auction "consolidates Hong Kong's position as one of the three major art centres in the world alongside London and New York," and attracted "energetic bidding from Greater China and the rest of the world" (Christie's 2012). Since their first sale in Hong Kong in 1986, Christie's have been expanding their business in Hong Kong, with more aggressive publicity campaigns in recent years.

Sotheby's has held auctions in Hong Kong since 1973. In 2011, Sotheby's sales exceeded US\$ 1 billion. Their five-day Spring Sale 2012 in Hong Kong brought a total of HK\$ 2,465,520,000 (US\$ 316,092,308). In May 2012, they opened a newly constructed gallery space of over 15,000 square feet for exhibitions, auctions, lectures, and cultural events. This new gallery space boasts an upcoming exhibitions list that includes a selling exhibition of works by

Yayoi Kusama in May 2012, followed by the auction previews of auctions that will occur in London and New York (Sotheby's 2012). Other auction houses and galleries have been doing well in their business as well. Bonhams Hong Kong took in some HK\$ 313 million (US\$ 40.1 million) from their Hong Kong sales in May 2012 (O'Dea 2012).

The art auction business does not only energize the city's economy, solidify its status as the arts center of Asia, and gain a spot on the top three ladder in the art world globally, but it also benefits also Hong Kong's cultural tourism industry. Numerous travel writers, tourist guidebooks, websites and more have identified pre-auction exhibitions as an attraction, and highlights the possibility of actually touching and holding invaluable works of art and antiques (Frazier 2012).

The Sundaram Tagore Gallery opened in Hong Kong in 1997. Owner Sundaram Tagore says Hong Kong's "Asia's world city" status, "great infrastructure, low taxation, and a vital geographic location" (Shah 2011) are among the reasons he believe it is a "natural center for the dissemination and consumption of art" and also the reason he chose to open his third gallery in Hong Kong, following his galleries in New York and Los Angeles.

In the last few years, New York's Gagosian Gallery (Hong Kong gallery opened in 2009), London's White Cube (its first location outside of the UK), London's Ben Brown Fine Arts, and Paris' Galerie Emmanuel Perrotin, among other top international galleries have opened exhibition spaces in Hong Kong. With many other international galleries announcing plans to open galleries or expand their business in the city, Hong Kong is not necessarily a city barren of arts and creativity as some claim (Uttam 2011). The constant opening of locally- and regionally-based galleries in Hong Kong, especially in the Star Street, SoHo and Sheung Wan neighborhoods, is also a clear indicator of a growing business sector. Some local gallery owners

are setting up shop to ride the wave of growth, and some, such as Pearl Lam of the Pearl Lam Gallery and the Contrasts Gallery, are “elated by and proud of these changes and want to contribute to this continuing transformation” (Asia 2012).

As Hong Kong experiences an art boom and fast-growing sales that places the city in the top three art markets in the world, local artists’ involvement and benefits, or lack thereof, have been a concern. Auctions, art fairs, arts festivals, and international galleries often present works by world-renowned artists, historic antiquities, and world-touring performance troupes and productions, and not emphasize as much on local talent.

Despite the thriving art boom, homegrown artists in Hong Kong worry that they are getting left behind because the city lacks a significant non-commercial arts and culture sector in order to keep the artists and other creative talents (Yan 2010). This may result in an imbalance in arts production and consumption, leaving Hong Kong an arts scene with a high profile, high-sales international marketplace without a vibrant art scene of its own. Arts professionals argue that a benchmark is needed in order to support the local arts scene. John Batten, a curator, art critic, and the organizer of the annual Hong Kong Art Walk suggests that a “good contemporary arts center with government money backing it” is necessary, quoting London’s Serpentine Gallery and New York’s PS1 Museum as successful examples (Yan 2010). One of the anchor pieces of the West Kowloon Cultural District is the M+ museum, which plans to fill the void of a non-profit 20th and 21st century international art, and energize the local arts scene.

Though the Hong Kong arts scene is becoming more involved in prominent nonprofit events, some artists argue that the shows are marred by “lack of professionalism, limited time for planning and little funds” and in some cases, artists feel that some projects and organizations loop art into “art light” and the more commercial idea of design (Yan 2010). There are limited

galleries and organizations that support local artists, the more successful ones include the Osage Gallery, Videotage in Cattle Depot, an artist village and a former slaughterhouse and Grotto Fine Arts (Uttam 2011).

The creative sector in Hong Kong has been growing in recent years, with the fields of design and architecture gaining incredible momentum and drawing international talents. Artists are receiving relatively less attention and resources, compared to the more commercial creative industries. Similar to their counterparts in many cities around the world, artists tend to congregate in areas where they can find studio spaces with low rent, and low rent is hard to come by in Hong Kong, a city that is consistently ranked among the most expensive cities to live in the world. In fact, home prices in Hong Kong continue to soar at the fastest pace globally, gaining 20 percent in the fourth quarter of 2011 from a year earlier (Wong 2011).

Artists in Hong Kong have found unusual spaces in recent years to create artist villages, and, in time, organic cultural areas. For example, the Fo Tan neighborhood of New Territories in Hong Kong is an artists' haven with over 150 artists working in industrial lofts side-by-side manufacturers (Yan 2010). Each year this artistic community hosts the Fotanian Open Studio event during which they open their studios to the public, and they celebrated their 12th anniversary of this open house event in 2012. The Cattle Depot artist village is another organic arts district created by local artists, gallerists, and cultural organizers. Housed in former slaughterhouses, these studios and galleries often have art happenings that drew the young and hip crowd that are usually not seen in high profile galleries and auctions in Central.

Some of the artists and arts managers from these artist communities are involved in the planning of the West Kowloon Cultural District, but mostly as outsiders – as consultants to the West Kowloon Cultural District Authority, as representatives at the Public Engagement exercises

and town hall meetings, and as advocates to the Legislative Council and the government when cultural policy discussions happen. Grassroots cultural advocacy is alive in Hong Kong, it is, however, the inclusion of these talents and insiders into the important resource and planning discussions that seems to be lacking in the implementation of the new cultural district.

It has been suggested that performing artists have it better in Hong Kong, as there are many government-run and non-profit administered cultural venues they can rent to put on their performances. Cultural venues (including concert halls, theatres, exhibition halls, arenas, lecture halls, and ceramic studios etc.) scattered all around Hong Kong, managed by the Leisure and Cultural Services Department, have consistently have an average of 95%-100% usage rate each year (LCSD 2008-2011). Smaller, niche spaces such as the Hong Kong Arts Center, the Agnes B Theatre and the Jockey Club Creative Arts Centre (with studio, exhibition, performance, and multi-purpose spaces) are also in great demand. Live performances in restaurants, cafes, and on the streets are increasingly common and well-attended in recent years (Cheng 2012). On any given day, there are almost always live performances along the waterfront promenade in Tsim Sha Tsui, with the backdrop of the beautiful Victoria Harbour and Hong Kong Island skyline.

The cultural industry is very important to Hong Kong, and some say the 1980s and 1990s were the “golden days” for the creative entertainment and design industries in Hong Kong, when they “thrived with abundance of talents and market demand under little government intervention” (Ma 2012). Although performances and other art happenings are more frequently found in Hong Kong in recent years, the laws are not the most updated or arts-friendly when it comes to free space performances. For example, there were times when performers were ushered off the streets based on “begging” and “illegal soliciting” concerns (Cheng 2012). In the plan for the West Kowloon Cultural District, there will be free space for such performers – however,

some are concerned about the overall cultural atmosphere in the city, worrying that there may not be enough interest in such performances every day and night.

Hong Kong artists have traveled abroad to Europe and other continents in search of street performance opportunities, as many other countries in Europe have performance cultures that are more artist-friendly than their homeland (Cheng 2012). Some others went as far as worrying that, with the widening wage gap issue in Hong Kong, the free spaces in the West Kowloon Cultural District, while developed with good intentions, might turn into a large homeless shelter at night (Cheng 2012). These are unresolved questions and certainly concerns that the planners of the district must keep in mind.

The city's demand for arts and culture is evident in the enthusiastic responses whenever there is a blockbuster exhibition, such as the "Picasso – Masterpieces from Musée National Picasso, Paris" exhibition at the Hong Kong Heritage Museum in Shatin in 2012, the highlight of the annual Le French May festival in Hong Kong, with tickets completely sold out for most of the exhibition's run. Long queues wrapped around the building, drawing 12,000 people a day, when the Hong Kong Museum of Art presented the "Impressionism – Treasures from the National Collection of France" Exhibition, which was also on a world tour in 2005 (WKCD 2009). Various performances ranging from ballet to opera to theatre during the annual Hong Kong Art Festival were sold out. In fact, there is an average audience of above 90% at the Hong Kong Arts Festival shows in the last few years, and Hong Kong contemporary art, especially in film and photography, have gained international status in recent years (HKGolden50 2011).

There is obviously a supply of artistic products and demand for arts and culture in the city, but the question is: how can the two be connected in a meaningful and sustainable manner? This question is not unique to Hong Kong. In fact, similar questions have been posed over and

over in various cultural districts in different countries. Some cities face a lack of enthusiasm from governing agencies, its citizens, the cultural production sector, or a combination of above. Sometimes the missing link is in demand, and others in supply. In the case of Hong Kong, there is a strong demand and a steady supply. Experts have observed that an arts institution is no more than a nice building if there is not quality content (CNTV 2012).

Learning from the experiences from different countries that have built cultural districts previously, the WKCDA has realized the importance of a meaningful and sustainable connection. Therefore, it has been striving to achieve this since the beginning of the WKCD development. So far the WKCDA has tried to connect the two sides with its public engagement and stakeholder engagement exercises and has certainly generated goodwill for its attempt. Whether this attempt guarantees success and can translate into sustainable development is still an unknown.

The city with a population of over 7 million, with a high average income and literacy rate, and a long history of art and culture appreciation seems to be a formula for high participation rates and easy audience development. But the truth is quite the contrary and local arts groups struggle to find the missing piece. This is why audience development, getting buy-in of the public, and connect the audience with cultural events is a key component of the WKCD development.

CHAPTER 7

BUILDING THE WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT

The Beginning

Hong Kong, driven by the desire to remain ahead of long-time rival Singapore and other world-class cities, strives to answer this challenge by creating the West Kowloon Cultural District – with a world-class art museum M+, over 15 performing arts venues of various sizes and use, a 19-hectare green park, an exhibition center, and plenty of space for people on both the artists production and consumption sides to mingle and connect. International experts have commented on the size and ambition of the WKCD development, and that few projects of this scale exist in the world (WKCDA 2009).

As hospitality and tourism have been important business sectors in the city for decades, with immense pride of being the gateway to Asia, the potential draw of cultural tourism this cultural district brings is another key element in the positioning and planning process. The Hong Kong Tourism Board conducted an extensive survey of tourists who visited Hong Kong in 1996, and found that many thought Hong Kong was lacking in cultural opportunities, which led to their proposal to the Legislative Council for establishing new arts and cultural venues. In his 1998 Policy Address, Tung Chee Hwa, then Chief Executive of Hong Kong, proposed the establishment of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD) to “boost Hong Kong’s status as Asia’s entertainment and events capital” (Tung 1998). The 40-hectare (99-acre) site is in the highly valuable reclaimed waterfront land, with 2.2 kilometers of water’s edge, near thriving districts such as Tsim Sha Tsui, Jordan, and Yau Ma Tei, which aimed to catapult Hong Kong to a status of the arts and cultural hub of Asia (WKCDA 2009) (See appendix B, figure 1).

Various design competitions and requests for proposals were organized from 2001 to 2003, with the result of the world-famous architect Lord Norman Foster's design becoming the top choice. Sir Norman Foster and his architecture firm are no strangers to Hong Kong as they have built some of its most iconic structures, including the headquarters of the Hong Kong and Shanghai Banking Corporation in Central in 1985. Another iconic project by Foster is the Hong Kong International Airport in Chek Lap Kok, which consistently wins best airport worldwide awards since its operations began in 1998, having replaced the awe-inspiring Kai Tak International Airport (Clarke 2002).

The West Kowloon Cultural District Authority (WKCD) was formed in October 2008 when the Chief Executive, Donald Tsang, announced the appointment of its Chairman, Henry Tang Ying-yen, three public officer members, and fifteen non-public officer members for a term of two years (WKCD 2008-2009). WKCD has numerous functions, defined as both power and duty, such as to prepare and implement a development plan, and to provide (including plan, design and construct), operate, and manage all facilities in the WKCD. Towards the public, the WKCD has the duty to advocate, promote, organize, sponsor, encourage and provide for the appreciation of and participation in arts and culture, by promoting, exhibiting and displaying the arts publicly. The WKCD is also responsible for supporting creative production, and to enable them to thrive in the creative environment (HKSAR 2008).

The establishment of the WKCD also led to the Legislative Council Finance Committee approving a one-off upfront endowment of HK\$ 21.6 billion for the implementation of the WKCD project in July 2008 (WKCD 2008-2009). The WKCD then set out to carry out market, environmental, and organizational studies, other researches and hire consultants and advisors for the project. Non-governmental agencies were brought in starting from this point

forward, including KPMG as the external auditor, and AECOM, AEA Consulting, Arts and Architecture, Hewitt Associates LLC and other consultancy firms for various consultation reports. In 2009, the WKCD announced the firms of Sir Norman Foster, Rem Koolhaas, and Rocco Yim Sen-kee as conceptual plan consultants, and Mott MacDonald Hong Kong Ltd as project plan consultant (Chen 2009).

Leading up to the Public Engagement exercise, the WKCD opened parts of their meetings to the public through live webcast, and several committees within WKCD has collaborated with various government agencies, such as the Home Affairs Bureau, to organize numerous sharing sessions for provide a platform for various stakeholders to express their views, aspirations and concerns (WKCD 2008-2009). In October 2009, the WKCD launched the first three-month Public Engagement exercise, under the slogan “Stretch Your Imagination. Share Your Dream. Create a successful West Kowloon Cultural District for all!” (WKCD 2009-2010). The Public Engagement exercise included an opening forum, a youth forum, three public forums and over fifty stakeholder group sessions, aimed to listen to the views of both the general public as well as the various stakeholder groups, including students, youth, tax payers, artists, cultural institutions and more. The main objective was to “gauge the community’s aspirations for and expectations on the planning of the WKCD as a whole,” as well as their views on WKCD’s cultural facilities and cultural software development, including programming and education-related activities (WKCD 2009-2010).

Responding to overwhelming public opinion against some of key elements of the design, including Foster’s enormous canopy design, and the proposal and planning process, the WKCD scrapped the original plan and started from scratch, architecturally. Following this decision, the WKCD formed a consultative committee with international arts and cultural, urban planning,

and development experts. This committee held numerous meetings, many of them open to the public, with all of the materials online, to discuss the needs of the WKCD and strategized for a more cohesive and beneficial development of the WKCD.

In one of the open public forums in 2009, Sir David Tang and Lord Norman Foster agreed that the WKCD should be an artistic anchor, that is more than a development that encourages the arts, should inform the prospering of other industries in Hong Kong, and create a profound, positive, ripple economic effect throughout the city and the region. Moreover, Sir David Tang states that the WKCD should “improve, enhance, and enrich the artistic and cultural dispositions and sensitivities of the community at large” in Hong Kong, of which he believes the city needed more (WKCDA 2009).

The second stage of Public Engagement exercise launched in 2010, which not only gained public opinion on WKCD in general, but also specifically on the conceptual plans that were submitted, and unveiled during the opening ceremony of the exercise. The three conceptual plan options, “City Park” designed by Foster + Partners (see appendix B, figures 2, 3, and 4), “Cultural Connect: Key to Sustained Vitality” by Rocco Design Architects Limited, and “Project for a New Dimension” by Office for Metropolitan Architecture, were displayed at the 12th Venice Biennale International Architecture Exhibition over a two-month period, gaining critical acclaim and media coverage for the WKCD (WKCDA 2009-2010). Upon the completion of the exercise, a selection Panel was set up by the WKCDA and in November 2010, they selected Foster + Partners’ “City Park” as the new conceptual plan for WKCD (WKCDA 2009-2010). Foster + Partners’ then fine-tuned the conceptual plan into the official master plan, and the project consultant, along with WKCDA, prepared for the third stage of Public Engagement

exercise, and the subsequent submission of a WKCD development plan to the Town Planning Board of Hong Kong in 2011.

Themed as “A Place for Everyone,” the third Public Engagement exercise was held in September and October of 2011 (see appendix B, figure 5). It was a month-long exercise centered around an exhibition that displays the WKCD master plan and its proposed development plan (WKCD 2011), and it drew over 18,000 people and over 1,000 expressed their comments during their visits (WKCD 2011). The views collected from the Public Engagement exercises were collated and analyzed by the Public Policy Research Institute of the Hong Kong Polytechnic University (WKCD 2011).

It is worthwhile to note that in the various stages of Public Engagement exercise and consultation processes, the WKCD made an enormous effort to include as many people and listen to as many different opinions as possible. For example, various discussions, town hall meetings, and public forums were held in different parts of the city, including, but not limited to, the Lee Shau Kee School of Creativity in Kowloon City, the Science Museum in Tsim Sha Tsui, the Arts Centre in Wan Chai, and the Tai Po Civic Centre in the New Territories. An exhibition of the models of the conceptual plans roved in various parts of Hong Kong, along with guided tours in multiple languages at each location. For those who are not able to attend any of the meetings in person, the transcripts and audio recordings of the proceedings are all available to the public online (WKCD 2010). This is important because accessibility can translate into a more inclusive public consultation, getting the buy in from people of different geographic and demographic categories.

As others have involved the public in various ways, most commonly in cultural asset mapping activities, it is not unique that the WKCD attempts to engage the public, as suggested

above. It is, however, unique in its dedicated approach and on-going efforts in involving the public as well as stakeholders every step of the way, and their work on making sure the exercises were accessible to people in various areas, those with different working hours, and inclusive of people of different ages and backgrounds. Similar, but in most cases lesser, efforts are discussed in the literature review portion of this paper.

Another continuous effort by the WKCDA to connect with the public is to issue a monthly e-newsletter since 2009, alongside their website and social media outlets. WKCDA also publishes an annual report that is accessible to the public, and submits it to the Legislative Council within six months after the end of each financial year (HKSAR 2008).

While the WKCDA worked tirelessly to include the public, the public has also responded by forming groups to express opinions, and monitor designs and processes. For example, PPL@WK, abbreviated from People at West Kowloon, formed in 2009 to “create an additional channel to gather public views apart from the official exercise” by the WKCDA (Wong 2009). After numerous discussions and events, the group grew, while other small interest groups were also formed. This culture of forming pressure groups, or in direct translation from Chinese, monitoring groups, represents interest and concern from the public. The WKCDA has been open to their voices and this is one of the reasons why they have gotten buy-in from many local people successfully, especially in the post-colonial, limited democracy climate.

It is not unusual for budding cultural institutions to recruit foreign talent in the beginning, as cultural industries in different countries do learn from each other’s experiences. For example, Sir Nicholas Serota, the director of Britain’s Tate since 1988, pointed out in one of the public forums that when he and his team developed Tate Modern in London, they initially appointed a Swedish and then a Spanish national to be the director. In the international arts and culture

sector, it is not uncommon for top-level management and consultants to work in different countries, learning different lessons and bringing multi-national experiences to the table. Experts who were consulted in the recruitment process has noted that it is important to assemble a team with international experiences, but it is more important that the WKCD is something that “grows out of Hong Kong and is a Hong Kong vision” because it would not be the right answer if a lot of international experts create a vision for Hong Kong, and not with Hong Kong (WKCD 2009).

However, the WKCD walked a rocky road of top-level human resources in its first years since the establishment of WKCD. In 2009, Angus Cheng Siu-chuen, a designer who helped develop the Hong Kong and Paris Disneyland, was appointed as an executive director of the West Kowloon Cultural District (Ng 2009). After being in the position briefly for less than two weeks, Cheng resigned for personal reasons (RTHK 2009).

In March 2010, Mr Graham Sheffield, formerly the artistic director of the Barbican Centre in London for fifteen years, was appointed as WKCD’s Chief Executive Officer (WKCD 2009-2010), with his appointment effective in August 2010. After a brief five-month stay, Mr Sheffield resigned in January 2011, citing health reasons, and the WKCD lost its second chief executive (Wong 2011). His resignation sent the media and arts and cultural industries into shock. A wave of international skepticism emerged when, about one month later, in February 2011, Sheffield was announced as the British Council’s new director for arts and joined the team in May 2011 (Findlay 2011).

After a global search for a replacement, the WKCD appointed Michael Lynch, a former chief executive of the Sydney Opera House, to fill the post in July 2011 (WKCD 2009-2010). He has served the WKCD peripherally one way or another for almost a decade before this

appointment (WKCDA 2009), including participating as an expert consultant in open public forums hosted by the WKCDA. Lynch continues to be the chief executive officer in 2012, providing some much needed senior leadership stability in the WKCDA.

In May 2009, the WKCDA board endorsed the organizational setup recommendations of the hired consultant, Hewitt Associates LLC, upon which they built the backbone of the organizational structure, manpower needs and remuneration packages of WKCDA (WKCDA 2009-2010).

The WKCD is scheduled to be fully up and running in 2031, with portions of the cultural hub opening over the years leading up to it. By 2015, over 24,000 seats for various cultural programs will be offered (HKGolden50 2012). The WKCDA plans to open part of the Great Park in 2014-15, followed by “the phased completion” of arts and cultural facilities from 2015. From 2015 to 2017, the Xiqu Centre, Freespace, Outdoor Theatre and Centre for Contemporary Performance are scheduled to open, followed by M+, the Lyric Theatre, Medium Theatre and Music Centre to be opened between 2017 and 2020 (WKCDA 2011).

Making Progress

With serendipitous timing, well-coordinated circumstances, and careful planning, the government announced plans to open WKCD part-by-part beginning in 2014. Till then, several pieces of the WKCD have been presenting art before there are buildings.

In 2011, the Hong Kong International Jazz Association festival hosted a two-day concert at WKCD, as the highlight of its fourth annual festival (WKCDA 2011). This was the first outdoor music event at WKCD and the local public received it positively and it also attracted tourists and performers from other countries. During Chinese New Year in January 2012, the WKCDA debuted its first cultural program with a Cantonese opera program at the temporary

bamboo theatre at the future site of the Xiqu Centre (WKCD 2011). The purpose-built, open-air bamboo theatre was true to the architectural style of traditional Cantonese opera. The theater experience was enhanced with two free public programs, the M+ Bamboo Theatre Exhibition, which showcased five Hong Kong artists' works commissioned by M+; and the M+ Bamboo Cinema, which showcased an 8-hour Cantonese opera-themed film marathon. The program received overwhelming support from the public, with all tickets being sold out within one day when the box office opened (WKCD 2011).

Established in 2007 in response to the "public's hunger for a high-quality outdoor music and arts festival," Clockenflap will return to the West Kowloon Waterfront Promenade in December 2012. This 2-day festival will include five music stages, a film tent, a crafts market, a kids' area, bar and dining areas and more (Clockenflap 2012). This is part of the effort to create space for people to "spend their afternoon or their day" and not only to go to one particular event (WKCD 2009).

M+, the museum of visual culture in the WKCD, is scheduled for completion in the end of 2017. M+ aims to focus on a broadly defined 20th and 21st century visual culture, from a Hong Kong perspective with a global vision (CNTV 2012). The concept of building a contemporary art museum has been brewing for years. In 2000, the now dissolved Provisional Urban Council passed a proposal for a new contemporary art museum that would be over 8000 square meters (HKGolden50 2012). This proposal has since been absorbed into the overall plan of the WKCD and is intended to be M+ and the demand for such an institution has only grown since.

M+, like the entire WKCD, is still in its planning stages, with recruiting world-class arts professionals such as Dr. Lars Nittve, formerly museum director and curator of Tate Modern in London and Moderna Museet in Stockholm, as the executive director of M+ in 2011 (WKCD

2010) being one of the biggest achievements so far. Not having a physical space, however, does not stop M+ from beginning its work and making a mark on the cultural industry in the city. On the opening day of ARTHK 2011, M+ and Nittve hosted a Victoria Harbour cruise for over a hundred international arts experts, artists, gallerists, and collectors (WKCDA 2011). In May 2012, M+ built a temporary pavilion during the ARTHK fair, and hosted a number of top arts presenters and cultural managers in the world in their receptions, discussions and other events, such as the free public forum “Where We Are Now and Where We Are Going” (Asia 2012).

In May 2012, M+ collaborated with local contemporary artists and presented the “Mobile M+: Yau Ma Tei Exhibition” and was WKCDA’s “latest initiative to bring arts closer to the people of Hong Kong and to bring life to the WKCD” (WKCDA 2012). It was the WKCDA’s second program, after the 2012 West Kowloon Bamboo Theatre project. This collaboration drew a lot of attention from both the people of Hong Kong as well as from the media, and it proved to be a success, with both sustainable features as well as some ephemeral elements such as the installations. In June 2012, Lars Nittve was appointed by the Hong Kong Arts Development Council as the lead curator representing Hong Kong at the 2013 Venice Biennale, and will present works by Lee Kit, an esteemed local artist (WKCDA 2012).

So far, the public has positively received programs and plans by M+. Experts have noted that inside the great architecture that is to come, it is the program and the art collection that is crucial to sustainable success, in order to compare and compete with world-class museums and cultural institutions in Europe and North America (WKCDA 2009). As Nittve stated, the success of M+ depends on the quality of their pre-opening work in terms of branding, advocacy and building, among other key elements falling into place (WKCDA 2010).

As conversations of building a world-class collection begin to heat up, local artists and collectors have expressed concerns about the city not having a good representation of Chinese art in the 20th century (Crawford 2009). Relieving some people's concerns, Dr. Uli Sigg, art collector and former Swiss ambassador to China, announced a gift of 1463 objects from his over 30-year-old collection in 2012. This collection includes some of the world's best Chinese contemporary art works, including major works by Ai Weiwei and Yue Minjun.

Moving Forward

In 2008, the Legislative Council of Hong Kong approved a HK\$ 21.6 billion (US\$ 3 billion) cash endowment for the project (Seno 2009). The WKCD is exempted from taxation under the Inland Revenue Ordinance, and it is also exempt from stamp duty under the Stamp Duty Ordinance (HKSAR 2008). These exemptions are in place to alleviate financial burdens for the WKCD. In 2010, the WKCD's investment committee has placed HK\$ 6.5 billion with the Hong Kong Monetary Authority for a period of six years with an annual rate of return, which was 6.3% p.a. for 2010 (WKCD 2009-2010). The committee continues to advise the WKCD on investment objectives, guidelines and strategies. Moving forward, it is important that the WKCD continues to secure funding from various sources, governmental or otherwise, and make sound financial decisions in investments, in order to have a stable source of income for the continued development of the West Kowloon Cultural District.

Some have speculated that there might be less support from the new government as Leung Chun-ying becomes the new Chief Executive in July 2012. However, it has also been shown that Leung's team is prepared to support the endeavor and let this development remain on a high priority in the new government's list (CNTV 2012). The government, back when WKCD was established, outlined one of their objectives as "to encourage community,

commercial and corporate support and sponsorship of arts and culture” (HKSAR 2008) which shows that ensuring sustainability and economic feasibility were on the agenda early on in the process, fortunately, not as a hindsight.

Sir Nicholas Serota, director of Britain’s Tate galleries, among other international experts, have reminded the planners and administrators of the WKCD to distinguish between government funding and government control (Sin 2009). This circles back to the Hong Kong people’s fear of losing autonomy in the larger political sense, beyond the scope of the WKCD. In order to maintain autonomy, WKCD needs sufficient independence in their staff, board, and everyone involved from the government. The WKCD and its venues and programs should not become a mouthpiece of Mainland China, and setting the example early is crucial for future success (CNTV 2012).

The WKCD has the unique geographic and cultural advantages that provide opportunities to bring together the people of Hong Kong, the Pearl River Delta Region, South China, and beyond. It is important for the people of Hong Kong to feel involved and have ownership over the WKCD. It is not enough for them to feel that this is yet another real estate property development, but something to which they can connect. The need for ownership of a large-scale development is not unusual among cultural districts and creative cities around the world but the extra layer of cultural identity issue sets the WKCD apart from the rest.

Cultural identity has always been a topic of concern and debate in pre- and post-colonial Hong Kong. Some argue that Hong Kong’s design and cultural identity has been marginalized and discouraged under both British and Chinese rule, in different ways, and that Hong Kong is now experiencing an identity crisis more seriously than ever (Wong 2004). The people of Hong Kong have faced the dilemma of a defined identity for years. Are they Hongkongers or are they

Chinese? Can they be both? Can they be one or another? These are questions many artists have investigated over the years, since before the handover.

In fact, there is already an element of recognition of the cultural identity issue as many local artists are making art that reflect life in Hong Kong – a very local, particular kind of life and history that do not reflect traditional Chinese life (CNTV 2012). With the development of WKCD, some of these debates have been brought to light again. The WKCD is being constructed at this time and has the opportunity, and in some ways, also a duty, to attempt to better define the cultural identity of Hong Kong. If this is achieved, not only the people of Hong Kong would benefit, but also WKCD's branding and positioning.

As international cultural experts who were consulted on matters of WKCD have observed, audience development is crucial to the success of WKCD (WKCDA 2009). There are over 20,000 seats planned, a huge museum, on an enormous (in Hong Kong standards) piece of valuable land, for WKCD, and running such cultural institutions can be incredibly expensive. Therefore, audience development, education, and relevant programming are key elements for a sustainable future for the WKCD.

The WKCDA has done a tremendous job in the various stages of the Public Engagement exercise in ensuring inclusivity of a wide range of stakeholders and people from various walks of life, interests, as well as various social, ethnic, geographic, and demographic backgrounds. This sets WKCD apart from other cultural districts that may have less buy-in along the way, or have had invested less time and resources in engaging the public. In order to continue their success in public engagement, the WKCDA, though finished all three planned stages of Public Engagement exercises, must continue to seek public involvement in various ways.

In a few years, the arts hub will double as a transportation hub, joined by the terminal for an express railway to cities in China, which can potentially provide a population of tourist with enormous spending power (Wong 2011) (see appendix B, figure 6). This transportation hub is the West Kowloon Terminus of the Guangzhou-Shenzhen-Hong Kong Express Rail Link, and will link Hong Kong to the Pearl River Delta's domestic, regional and national railway networks (WKCDA 2009). It is therefore worthwhile to also develop audience specifically from Mainland China, in addition to the general tourist approach, to make WKCD a cultural gateway to the region.

As all the pieces of the WKCD puzzle fall into place, it will be a ongoing exercise to set the WKCD apart from all its counterparts overseas as an arts and cultural district. The overall programming, architecture and management need to be in order, maintaining high quality, distinguishable components is also crucial. As Louis Yu, the Performing Arts Policy and Management Services Executive Director of the WKCDA, said, the "Xiqu Centre" will become more than a Xiqu Theatre as a venue to enjoy the art form, but also an important base for China's future Xiqu development (WKCDA 2010).

Learning from the experiences from other cultural districts and creative cities, it is important to have affordable living and working space for artists, as some say having a healthy relationship with artistic production is what make it all work (WKCDA 2009). Also, where there are non-cultural components, such as shops and dining, WKCDA should have editorial control over who can come in. For example, the Southbank successfully avoided multi-national conglomerates from taking up space that they would later curate to be eccentric and fits well with the cultural facilities (WKCDA 2009).

There has been little discussion about the need to create studio facilities for creative professionals, subsidized rents for studio, exhibition and performance space, and other possible benefits for individual artists and local arts organizations. These ideas were raised in various stages of the Public Engagement exercises, primarily by local artists and arts groups. However, little has been shown to reflect such considerations. As Lars Nittve has noted previously, Hong Kong has fewer artists that are seen and recognized by the outside world, despite of the high quality of work, because there is a lack of platforms. He believes that there are plenty of good local artists but they simply do not get many chances to test themselves against fellow artists from other places (CNTV 2012). This is why the WKCDA ought to keep in mind the opportunities and benefits they can provide to local creative talents in order to make the WKCD a living, encouraging, sustainable, cultural environment. This could be a long-term tug-of-war among the WKCDA, the local arts and culture industries and the property moguls in the city.

In many countries, local and state governments may state their support for arts and culture, as they increasingly recognize the vital importance of a healthy and vibrant arts scene in positioning major cities in the premier league (Sheffield 2010). However, not many cities would invest as much financial and human resources into the industry as Hong Kong did and that support alone offers the WKCD an advantage.

However, that is not enough to ensure continued success. WKCD has the potential to become an integral part of Hong Kong people's lives and a destination for tourists and creative talent from other parts of the world (WKCDA 2009). It is the connection of arts, culture, business, property, tourism, and other industries, combined with supportive policy and financial health that will expand the potential and create a successful path for the WKCD in the long run.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

In investigating the WKCD and comparing it to other cities, it is clear that there is no other cultural district that has a similar combination of governmental policy and financial support, advantageous geographical location, resilience of the people and its economy, and the determination to invest in the development, that the WKCD possesses.

The birth of the cultural district and the concept of striving to become a global arts and cultural hub have roots in existing theories covered in the literature review of this paper, but the existing elements nor the future plans fit neatly into any existing theory or cultural district model. One of the most distinct features of the WKCD that is different from most of its counterparts is the fact that there is no hike in tax or new taxes imposed in any way as a result of this development. All the funding that the government has allocated to the WKCD is from previously allocated resources, surpluses, and regular tax income. In many other cases, there are specific, new taxes created to support their arts and culture investments.

Observers of the arts and cultural boom in Hong Kong in recent years have commented on the success being “next-to-impossible to replicate” as Hong Kong’s unique cultural, economic, political, and social mix, and its proximity to China and major cities in Asia, offer distinct advantages (Wee 2012). Hong Kong’s unique political history and governance model also contributes to a very specific combination of both opportunities and challenges in governance, expectations and identity.

Although many of the challenges and opportunities discussed above, including the divide between cultural production and consumption, and governmental and financial sustainability, are not unique to Hong Kong, it is the combination of these challenges and opportunities that are in

fact unique to the case of Hong Kong. No two cities or cultural districts are exactly the same but these are some common threads among various cases, large or small. What one city may learn from another are the way they avoid pitfalls, be proactive in involving stakeholders, recruit the right people and determine the right managerial structure that work for that specific city. As many arts and cultural managers before us have, and we will continue to, learn by trial and error. It is the expansion of dialogue and scholarly research, as well as conferences and symposia, that will help pollinate the field with lessons learnt.

The social history and energy of Hong Kong is not to be overlooked. Hong Kong has been named one of the most resilient cities, with a people that have a very particular identity and ability to come together and move through difficulties. From bouncing back from economic downturns and maintaining its Four Dragon status, to living through some of the most widespread, contagious diseases known to modern mankind such as the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS), this city has proved its success time after time. This resilience and determination will serve its developments and endeavors well. Hopefully, the WKCD will be one of the proud moments the city and its people will share in the near future.

APPENDIX A

MAPS OF HONG KONG

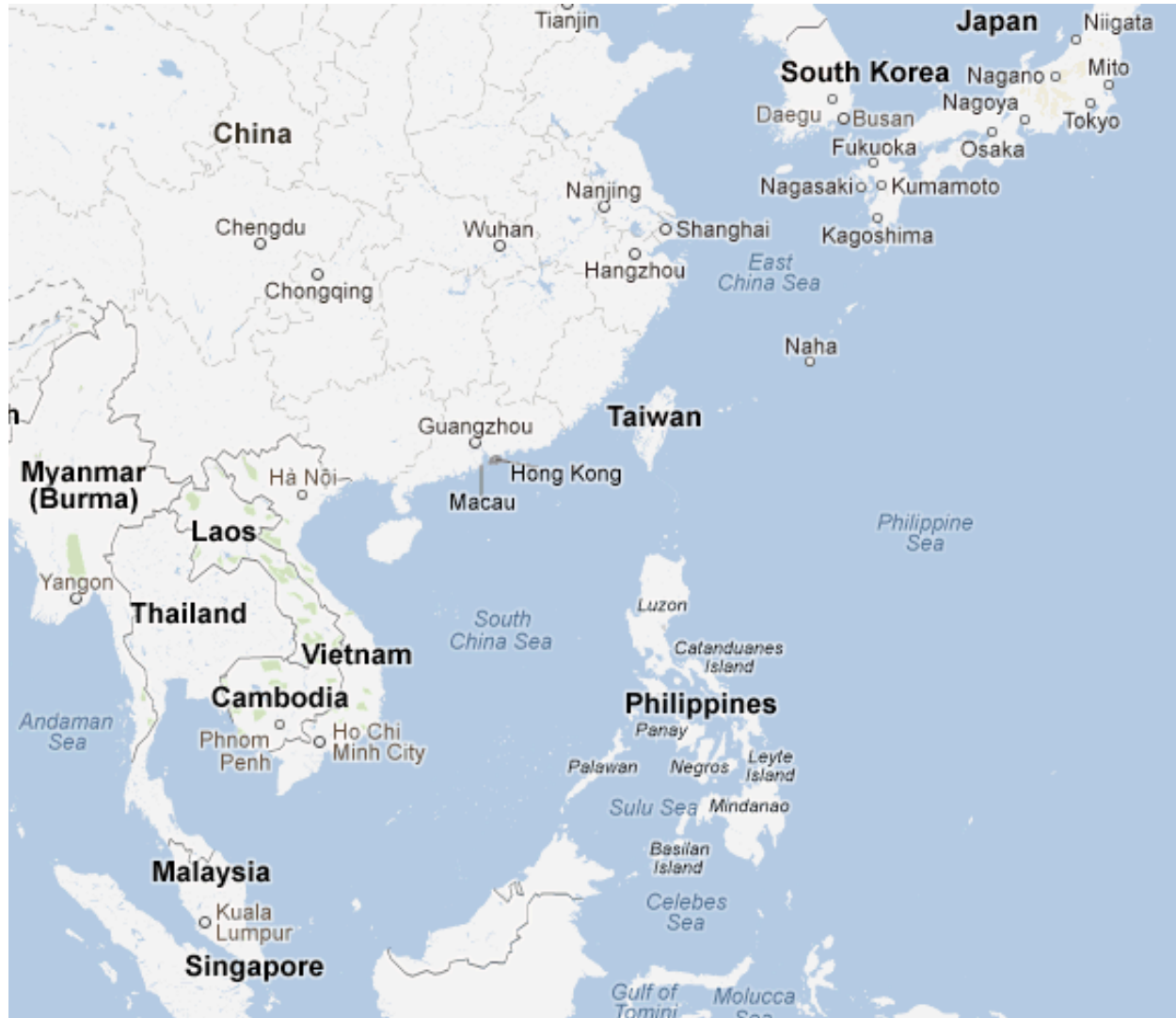


Figure 1: Hong Kong, in relation to the East Asia region

Image source: <http://maps.google.com>



Figure 2: Hong Kong

Image source: <http://maps.google.com>

APPENDIX B

“CITY PARK” CONCEPTUAL PLAN FOR THE WEST KOWLOON CULTURAL DISTRICT

PRESENTED BY FOSTER+PARTNERS

Image source: <http://www.wkcda.hk/pe2/en/conceptual/foster/en/physical-models.html>

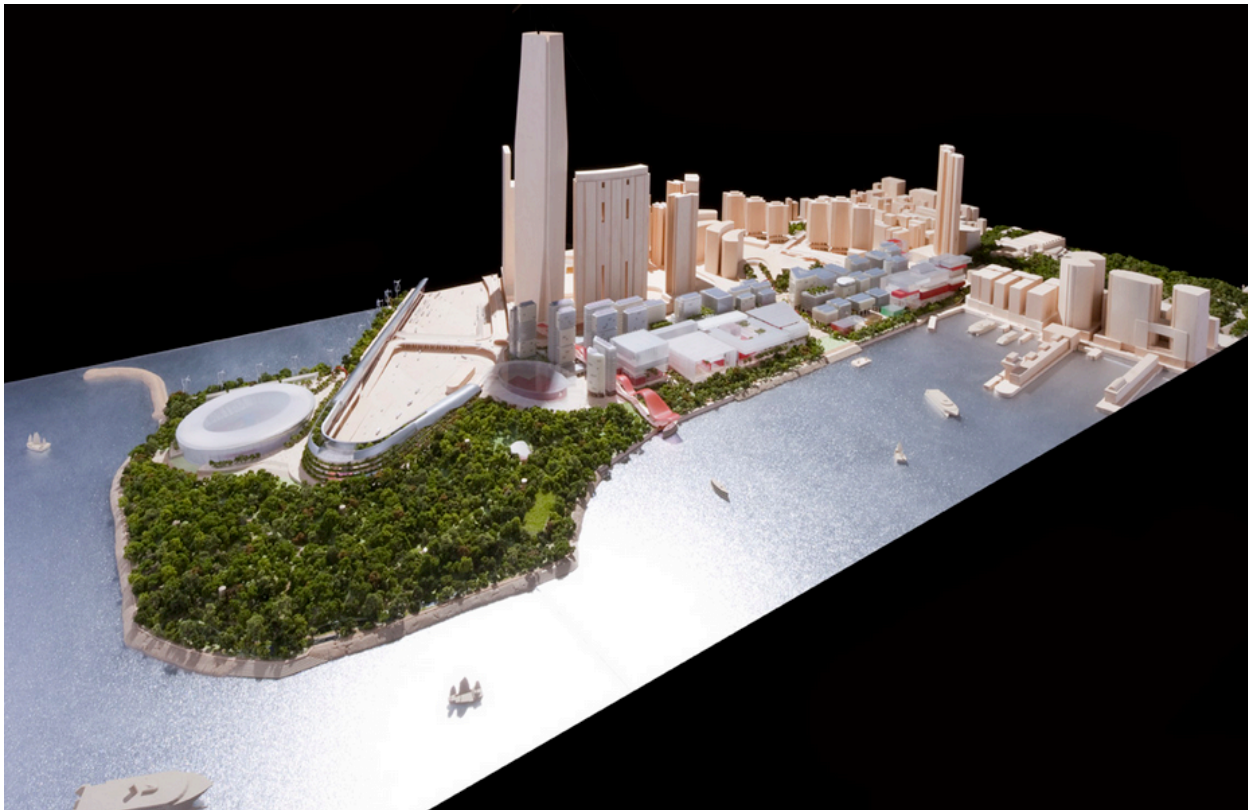


Figure 1: Aerial view of the site (1:500 model)



Figure 2: View of the Opera House, ferry pier, Medium Theatres and Concert Hall (1:500 model)



Figure 3: View of the urban area, including the Great Theatre and Xiqu Centre (1:500 model)



Figure 4: View of the Xiqu Centre and Plaza (1:500 model)

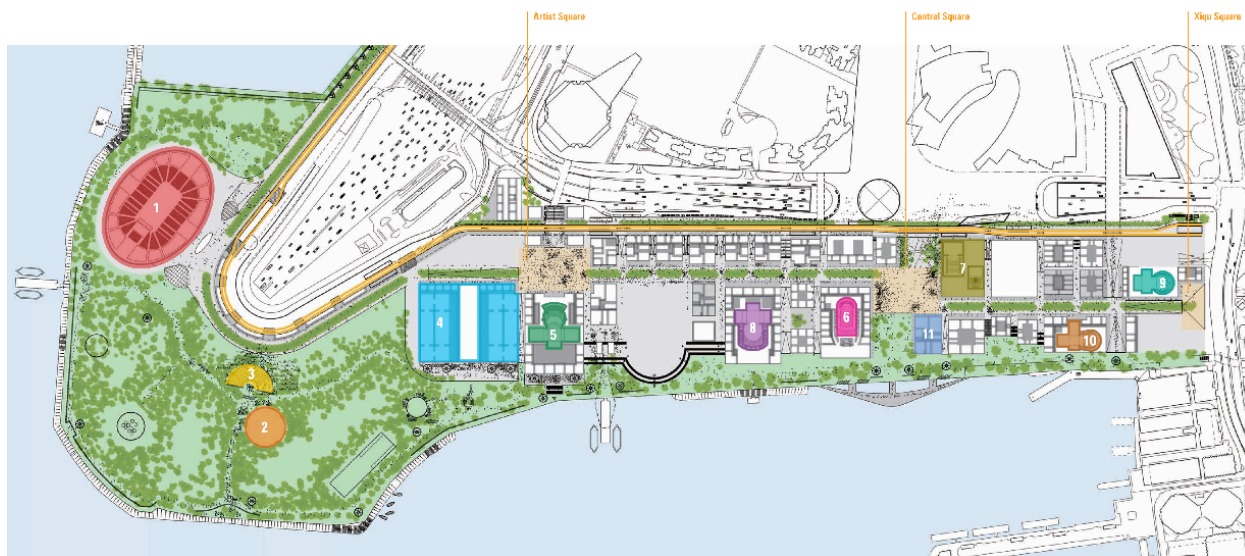


Figure 5: West Kowloon Cultural District Development Plan Phase One Facilities Presented
During Stage 3 Public Engagement Exercise

Image source: http://www.wkcda.hk/pe3/filemanager/content/digest_e.pdf

1. Mega Performance Venue and Exhibition Centre Complex
2. Freespace (with Music Box)
3. Outdoor Theatre
4. M+
5. Lyric Theatre
6. Music Centre (Concert Hall, Recital Hall with Arts Education Facility)
7. Centre for Contemporary Performance (3 Blackboxes with Arts Education Facility)
8. Musical Theatre

9. Xiqu Centre (Main Theatre, Teahouse with Arts Education Facility)

10. Medium Theatre I

11. Resident Company Centre



Figure 6: View of the gateway plaza and skyrail from West Kowloon Terminus (1:500 model)

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