

# CREATING A “CITY OF ART”: EVALUATING SINGAPORE’S VISION OF BECOMING A RENAISSANCE CITY

by

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## ABSTRACT

The arts have been used by many cities as a way to regenerate their urban environments and rejuvenate their economies. In this thesis, I examine an approach in which city-wide efforts are undertaken to create a “city of art”. Such attempts endeavor to infuse the entire city, not just specific districts, with arts and cultural activities and to develop a strong artistic inclination among its residents. Singapore’s recent plan to transform itself into a “Renaissance City” is an example of such an attempt to create a “city of art”.

I conceptualize urban cultural policies used to create “cities of art” as having two possible policy orientations. An *externally-oriented policy* is used to project a city’s cultural achievements into the international arena, often with the intention of generating economic growth and enhancing the city’s image. An *internally-oriented policy*, on the other hand, is focused on cultivating cultural growth within the city and is more directed at achieving local socio-cultural advancement.

While some cities may adopt urban cultural policies that are either strongly externally- or internally-oriented, other cities may have urban cultural policies that endeavor to balance both orientations. For Singapore, I will show that the urban cultural policy adopted to transform itself into a “Renaissance City” tries to be simultaneously externally- and internally-oriented. *Despite the attempt to address both policy orientations, I argue that the Singapore government has inappropriately placed undue emphasis on external at the cost of internal strategies for arts and cultural development.*

To evaluate Singapore’s vision of becoming a “Renaissance City”, I will compare its recently proposed strategies under the two policy orientations to those of two other cities, Glasgow and Chicago, which have implemented their urban cultural policies since the 1980s. While Glasgow’s urban cultural policy is strongly externally-oriented, Chicago’s policy is more internally-oriented. Through this comparative analysis, I propose recommendations that will help to enhance Singapore’s strategies to develop a “Renaissance City”.

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# CHAPTER 1

## INTRODUCTION – ARTS, CULTURE, CITY AND PLANNING

### 1.1 INTRODUCTION

The arts and the city have always had a strong and close bond. The earliest cities in the Middle East were temple cities that owed their existence to religious ceremonies in which songs, dances, music and theater were all part of the religious rituals. While the arts served to connect man with nature and the divine in these ancient cities, the profanation and professionalization of these religious rituals throughout the ages have led to the arts taking on a different role in the modern city. Increasingly, the arts have been used by many cities as a way to regenerate their urban environments and rejuvenate their economies. The approaches taken to incorporate the arts into urban development, however, vary from city to city. Some cities choose to develop downtown arts districts while others cities focus on the preservation of historical and cultural assets. In this thesis, I examine an approach in which city-wide efforts are undertaken to create a “city of art”. Such attempts endeavor to infuse the entire city, not just specific districts, with arts and cultural activities and to develop a strong artistic inclination among all its residents.

I am interested in studying this particular approach because more and more cities that used to be indifferent to the arts and cultural development are attempting to remake themselves in this way. Unlike places like Paris, London or New York, which have an established reputation in the arts, the cities I have decided to examine attempt to reconstruct themselves as vibrant cultural centers through various urban cultural strategies that are based on a weaker artistic foundation. Hence, the title of this thesis: *Creating a “City of Art”*.

In this way, Singapore, which has recently envisioned itself becoming a “Renaissance City”, is a case in point. Having come from Singapore and having been actively involved in the local arts scene myself, I am interested in studying

the urban cultural policy proposed by the Singapore authorities to accomplish this goal and in finding out how Singapore compares to other cities that have made similar attempts to remake themselves as “cities of art”. This thesis is an opportunity for me to take a critical look at arts and cultural development in my country, particularly with respect to the recently released *Renaissance City Report*. Through an examination of Singapore’s urban cultural policy and a comparison to urban cultural policies elsewhere, I hope to provide a critical yet constructive point of view on Singapore’s effort to remake itself as a “Renaissance City”. But before taking a detailed look at Singapore’s experience, I begin with a closer examination of the relationship between cities, culture and the arts.

## **1.2 CITIES, CULTURE & THE ARTS – A LITERATURE REVIEW**

Defining the concepts of “the arts” and “culture” is not an easy task as both terms are closely related and encompass an array of meanings. Mennell (1976) suggests that the close association between culture and the arts owes much to the emphasis placed on identifying culture with the process of artistic and intellectual cultivation during the Victorian era. Indeed, the association of culture with the arts is so strong that in common usage it is not unusual to find the two terms being used in substitution for one another, although this may vary slightly from place to place. While for some purposes a lengthy discussion on the distinctions between “the arts” and “culture” may be useful, I have chosen to adopt the commonly understood and interchangeable usage of these terms in this thesis. Following Bianchini (1993), I include a wide variety of elements in “arts and culture”. In this thesis, the arts and culture are taken to embrace an assortment of activities ranging from fine arts and high culture to architecture and design to informal arts and popular culture. I include not only the pre-electronic performing, visual and literary arts (theater, dance, music, painting, sculpture, poetry, etc.) but also the contemporary cultural industries (film, electronic music, design, architecture, fashion, etc.). With this understanding of the scope of my

study, let me explore what the accumulated literature has to say about the symbiotic relationship between the arts and the city.

### **1.2.1 Why the Arts Need the City**

The arts need the city for two main reasons. Wood (1999) suggests that the city is to the arts what a seam of coal is to coal mines: it provides raw materials for the arts. The city is saturated with people and their ideas, fantasies, experiences and relationships. It is also full of diversity, disparity and discordance. These very qualities are often inspirations for the arts. Concurring with Wood, Schuster (1988: 5) notes that “[t]he arts have long been associated with cities because cities were where artists congregated to exchange ideas and stimulate one another’s creativity.” Hence, the diverse qualities and experiences offered by the city often make it a source of artistic creativity.

The city is also important to the arts as a marketplace in which cultural experiences and products could be traded. Schuster (1988: 5) stresses this role of the city:

“[I]t was in cities that the economic surplus that could support the arts was centered; and it was in cities that the critical mass of audience was available... So, the city has long been the place where the arts, particularly the performing arts and the market for visual arts, have taken place. This is true even today, despite heroic decentralization efforts by government art agencies.”

Cities are therefore crucial nodes in which cultural producers and consumers interact. Indeed, “[i]t is in the very process of consuming sounds, images and symbols of the city that today’s creative producers are evolving the sounds, images and symbols which will be tomorrow’s creative products” (Wood, 1999: 5). The city hence can provide crucial creative and economic support for the arts.

### **1.2.2 Why the City Needs the Arts**

Just as the arts have much to gain from the city, the city stands to reap many benefits from the arts. Zukin (1995: 271) thus observes that “[r]ightly or

wrongly, cultural strategies have become keys to cities' survival." Such strategies include building cultural facilities; programming cultural activities (including both large scale international events and local cultural celebrations); supporting cultural development (through initiatives like arts housing, scholarships, grants, etc.); providing arts education; and undertaking social outreach programs. Through a variety of approaches, cities hope to benefit economically, physically and socially from the promotion and development of the arts.

### ***Economic Motivations***

Arguably, one of the strongest reasons why cities need the arts is for economic gains. The argument that the shift from a "fordist" to "post-fordist" mode of production<sup>1</sup> has heralded the arrival of the cultural economy has been well-rehearsed (Crane, 1992; Lash and Urry, 1994; Scott, 1997). Scott (1997: 335) posits that "in contemporary capitalism, the culture-generating capabilities of cities are being harnessed to productive purposes, creating new kinds of localized competitive advantages with major employment and income-enhancing effects". Williams (1997) reinforces this argument stressing that cultural industries generate external income, prevent revenue leakage, and attract foreign investment. Whitt (1987: 27) shows that the arts can alleviate unemployment problems and generate new employment opportunities in the city as they "pump money into the local economy through wages for artists and administrative personnel, [and] purchases of theatrical and artistic supplies and services". Although the empirical evidence used for backing these claims has been widely debated, the arts are still touted by many to be an important engine of economic growth.

Economic gains from the arts are believed to accrue partly in the form of jobs and revenue from tourism. With the rising popularity of arts and cultural

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<sup>1</sup> Harvey (1989a) characterizes this transition by a decline of the manufacturing sector and the expansion of producer and consumer services. Such changes arise because corporations were able to globalize their production processes, shifting skilled and semi-skilled large scale production jobs to countries that offer lower cost labor.

tourism, it is argued that the arts “will bring in attendees and consumers from beyond the inner city or even the suburbs, resulting in an infusion of money from outside the metropolitan area” (Whitt, 1987: 27). This position is also supported by Cameron (1991) who argues that arts tourism helps to inject “new money” into the economy, which magnifies its importance via the multiplier effect. Cultural strategies thus often supplement tourism strategies by “encouraging overnight stays and conference bookings” (Bassett, 1993: 1783).

The economic contribution of the arts has been documented in numerous studies<sup>2</sup> to provide evidence to support the growth of the arts in the city. However, such economic impact studies, mostly highlighting the benefits of the arts, do not go unquestioned. Hughes (1989, 1997, 1998), for instance, maintains that the positive impact of arts tourism is often over-rated. He notes that measures of economic benefits of the arts are sensitive to the multipliers used, which are at best estimates of reality. Frey (1997) similarly points out that economic impact studies of the arts may fail to take into account non-market values (such as the educational value of arts activities). Seaman (1987) likewise highlights the flaw that impact studies frequently ignore multiple costs and benefits during the survey process and proposes to end further similar impact studies. In addition to these methodological concerns, Martorella (2002) fears that the dependence on economic justification for the arts may lead to its commercialization while Bianchini (1991) notes that the arts may generate only low-skill employment.

Despite such criticism, the appeal of the economic argument remains strong. The latest interest in attracting the arts to the city has been stimulated by Richard Florida’s study on the “creative class” (Florida, 2002a, 2002b). Florida argues that economic growth will increasingly be spearheaded by creativity and society will be dominated by a rising “creative class”<sup>3</sup>. Generally, there is a

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<sup>2</sup> See Cultural Assistance Center, 1983; McNulty, 1985; Myerscough, 1988a; 1988b; Perloff, 1979; Tighe, 1985; Violette and Taqqu, 1982.

<sup>3</sup> Florida’s definition of the “creative class” includes anyone who is involved in the process of creation, ranging from artists to software designers.

tendency for this class of creative people to move to cities that score highly on what he calls the “bohemian index”<sup>4</sup>. He believes that creative individuals are most attracted to places that not only offer diversity in society but that are exciting and stimulating to live in. As the arrival of the “creative class” is believed to stimulate further innovation that will drive the economy, cities are eager to attract such creative individuals. Regardless of whether one agrees with the arguments that Florida makes, it is undeniable that the significance he places on the “creative class” has renewed many cities’ interests in engaging the arts for economic reasons.

### ***Physical & Image Enhancements***

Beyond economics, the arts also help to generate physical improvements in the city. As Bianchini (1991: 234) notes, the arts bring about “both physical renewal and the economic regeneration of inner cities.” Often as a result of introducing the arts into the city (for instance, through public art), the physical environment of the city is improved. Furthermore, arts and cultural activities help to attract people into the city to engage in various cultural experiences and events. This is particularly important to downtowns because the arts can help to enliven the spaces in city centers which would otherwise be dead after office hours. Both Lim (1993) and Wood (1999) therefore believe that the arts will help to reanimate and bring security back to the streets of the city.

In a less direct manner, the arts have stimulated urban gentrification when old and disused buildings are converted into residential and work spaces for artists. Zukin’s 1982 analysis of the role that artists played in the process of urban restructuring is one of the first studies that analyzed how the arts stimulated physical improvements in New York’s Soho industrial district. She documented how artists in the 1970s led the way for conversion of formerly derelict manufacturing spaces into residential units which ultimately resulted in

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<sup>4</sup> The “bohemian index” measures the potential for cities to attract creative and talented individuals. It is based on what Florida calls the three Ts – Technology, Talent and Tolerance.

the rise in market value for these properties (Zukin, 1982). Artists thus become the pioneers of urban gentrification. In many cities, to meet the space demands of the arts, it is common for old buildings to be refurbished and adaptively reused as arts facilities. In this way, the arts can help to bring about physical renewal to rundown areas of the city.

With physical enhancement, a city often experiences a concomitant improvement in its image. Zukin (1995: 118), examining the symbolic importance of the arts in the cultural economy, illustrates that the “nexus of auction houses, art galleries, art museums, [and] art producers... contributed to New York’s renewed reputation as a culture capital.” The arts thus generate a “symbolic economy” that re-images the city as an attractive place in which to live and work. Similar improvements in image were also observed in cities like Bilbao, Boston, Dallas and Glasgow, all of which have employed the arts as part of their urban regeneration process (Law, 1992; 2002).

### ***Social Benefits***

Another claim has been gaining wider support more recently: the arts are important to the city because they are thought to play a key role in social and community development. While this assertion awaits more empirical support and theoretical conceptualization, it may be worthwhile highlighting some of the arguments here to foreground later discussions in which social benefits are cited by some cities as one of the reasons to promote the arts.

Observing how carnivals and community theaters in Bradford, Nottingham, Leicester and Belfast have attracted varied audiences in celebrating different cultures, Landry *et al.* (1996) suggested that cultural festivals, community plays and other arts events have brought people closer together. The arts are therefore touted as a tool for strengthening social cohesion. Kay (2000: 423) adds that the arts are particularly effective in “the regeneration of areas whose residents are disadvantaged economically, socially, culturally and environmentally” because

the arts have the ability to encourage people into training and employment; promote volunteerism; foster social cohesion and active citizen participation; and improve the quality of people's lives through individual and collective creativity. It is thus believed that the arts can be used as an innovative tool to address social issues and bring about social improvements and development (Duxbury, 2002).

Landry *et al.* (1996: 31) made another claim regarding the social benefits of the arts – that of “reducing offending behavior”. They note that “[a]rts programs with young people in British cities have shown possible alternatives to addressing criminal behavior in the community.” As incredulous as this may seem, the arts are touted increasingly to generate such social benefits by helping to alter behavior and inculcating the desired social values among communities. It therefore comes as no surprise that some writers have observed that in Singapore, cultural development has been used as a way of cultivating the social graces of its people (Nathan, 1999; Kong, 2000). The effectiveness of such attempts, nevertheless, remains to be seen.

### **1.3 DEFINING THE “CITY OF ART”**

Having offered a range of views on the interdependence between the arts and the city, let me elaborate on what is meant by a “city of art”. Just as a “global city” (Sassen, 2001) is a node of power and strategic control in sectors such as trade, finance, services, transportation and communication, a “city of art” could become an urban center that has power and strategic control over all matters related to the arts and culture. It would be characterized by a culturally vibrant environment in which all forms of arts and culture are embraced, nurtured and supported. In such a place, indigenous arts would interact freely and comfortably with global culture to stimulate new creation. It would also be a place that constantly generates new artistic innovations that set a global trend and the quality of its creation would be recognized by arts practitioner worldwide. It would possess a critical mass of artistic individuals who would not only participate in the consumption of cultural experiences but would also actively engage in creative



production. There would be immense local interest in participation and in sponsorship of the arts. A “city of art” would thus be steeped in cultural and artistic traditions but yet forward-looking and influential in shaping arts and cultural development in the international arena.

This concept which I have characterized as a “city of art” is similar to various other descriptions such as “arts city”, “city of culture”, “cultural capital” and “global city for the arts”. One of the recent expressions used to describe this concept is what the Singapore authorities have called the “Renaissance City”.

In Singapore, the vision of a “Renaissance City” is imagined at multiple levels. At the individual level, the Renaissance Singaporean would have an inquiring and creative mind as well as a passion for life. He would be a civic-minded active citizen and would appreciate his culture and heritage. His graciousness would also be underpinned by a fine sense of aesthetics. At the societal level, a Renaissance Society would be one that would encourage and reward experimentation and innovation. Creativity would be hailed as a virtue and culture and the arts would be mobilized to animate and add character to the city. Artistic sensibilities would also be invoked in every aspect of life. At the international level, the Renaissance Singapore would be seen as an active international citizen with a reputation for being dynamic and vibrant. It would become a global hub for arts-related activities and would be famed for aesthetically designed and creatively packaged products and services. Its arts and cultural scene would help to project a positive and energetic image for the city (MITA, 2000a).

Based on what I have described as a “city of art”, places like Paris, London and New York, which have already earned an established international cultural reputation, may spring to mind. Looking at Singapore’s intent to develop a “Renaissance City” thus begs the question of whether a “city of art” can be created through government policy and action. Cultural planning and urban

cultural policies will no doubt be important tools that the Singapore government would employ in achieving this goal.

#### **1.4 CULTURAL PLANS & POLICIES FOR CREATING A “CITY OF ART”**

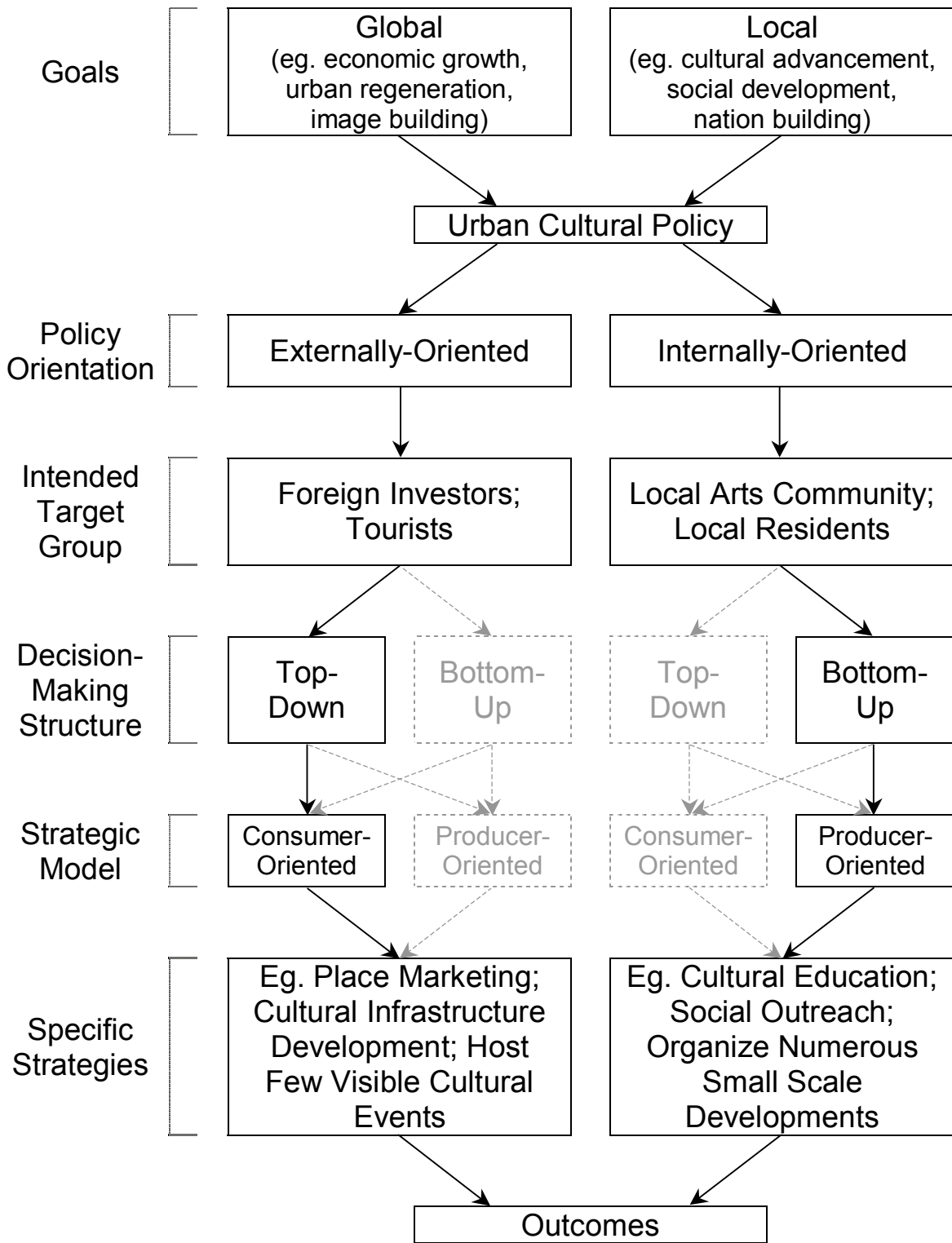
What is cultural planning? Different writers and institutions have suggested various answers to this question. An Australian guide for cultural planning and local development has offered a rather straightforward and bureaucratic view of the process (somewhat similar to the way the Singapore government has viewed it). It sees cultural planning as “a purposeful, strategic approach to cultural development... approached like any other form of planning; by a thorough assessment of the existing situation; by setting clear goals and objectives; by identifying clear issues and priorities and by formulating and implementing practical courses of action” (Guppy, 1997: 8). Landry, on the other hand, offers a more sophisticated in depth definition. He acknowledges that “[c]ultural planning is the process of identifying projects, devising plans and managing implementation strategies” but stresses that “[i]t is not intended as the planning of culture... but rather as a cultural approach to any type of public policy” (Landry, 2000: 273). Even so, these definitions hide the complexities and tensions of cultural planning within the process of community and cultural development itself (Evans, 2001). Cultural planning is seldom a straightforward activity. Therefore, Guppy (1997: 54) offers a more realistic view of cultural planning that finds a middle ground between the two earlier definitions but injects the complexities involved when communities are included in the process:

“Cultural plans and policies articulate an ongoing role for cultural appraisal and action in a competitive planning environment. They also provide a formal discourse with the statutory planning framework along with an informal and an energetic entry point for local communities eager to conserve and develop the cultural identity of their area.”

Given this understanding of cultural plans and policies, what approaches can be employed to create a “city of art”? I propose to conceptualize urban cultural policies used to create a “city of art” as having two possible policy

orientations: externally- and internally-oriented (Figure 1.1). These orientations are closely linked to the goals and objectives of developing the arts in the city. An *externally-oriented policy* is used to project a city's cultural achievements into the international arena, often with global goals of enhancing the city's image and attracting foreign investment to generate economic growth. The intended target groups for externally-oriented urban cultural policies are mainly foreign investors and tourists. An *internally-oriented policy*, on the other hand, is focused on cultivating cultural growth within the city and is more interested in advancing local social and cultural objectives. Here, the target groups are the city residents and the local arts community.

These two sets of policy orientations and goals not only determine the strategies that are adopted to help the city achieve its aims but also shape the way in which decisions are made in the cultural planning and development process. As policies with an external orientation involve a foreign party, specific strategies are often developed and spearheaded by local government authorities. Typically, a predominantly top-down decision-making structure is adopted whereby the government takes the lead to devise urban cultural plans and implement strategies with minimal or no input from the ground. In contrast, urban cultural policies with an internal orientation are mainly directed at city residents and local artists. Hence, the process of cultural development is often more participatory and inclusive in nature. Local communities typically have a stronger influence on the proposals and initiatives for cultural development. In this way, a top-down structure sees the government as the chief decision-maker and implementer of cultural development whereas in a bottom-up framework, community participation in the decision-making process is more prominent and the community may be an important element during the implementation stage.



**Figure 1.1** Conceptual framework for urban cultural policy

In terms of strategic models, Williams (1997) has suggested that contemporary urban cultural policies can be seen as adopting either a consumer-oriented or producer-oriented strategic model<sup>5</sup>. The former model is concerned with enticing foreign investment by projecting a high quality of life for professionals and executives as well as attracting cultural consumers (particularly cultural tourists) into the city in order to benefit from their spending. Specific strategies are thus directed at making the city an attractive place for the consumption of arts and cultural experiences. This approach is more commonly used in externally-oriented urban cultural policies. The producer-oriented model, on the other hand, focuses on developing the cultural production capabilities of the city. This is often done by providing the necessary support to nurture and develop cultural producers. In this case, cultural strategies are developed to foster an accommodating environment within the city for the growth and development of the arts, making the city conducive to cultural production. This approach is more frequently employed in urban cultural policies that are internally-oriented. Due to the different specific strategies that are adopted under the two different policy orientations, they may generate different outcomes for the city.

While my conceptualization imagines a clear dichotomy between the two different policy orientations, in reality most cities attempting to create a “city of art” would adopt cultural strategies that include at least some elements of each of the policy orientations. Some cities may develop urban cultural policies that are either heavily externally- or internally-oriented while other cities may have urban cultural policies that attempt to balance the two. Each of the three approaches has its respective merits and problems, and it is indeed hard to pinpoint any one approach as being better than the other two. The approach to be taken is often set in the context of the particular city and aligned with the larger objectives that the city hopes to achieve in developing the arts.

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<sup>5</sup> This is slightly different from a related distinction that is often made in cultural planning between supply-side and demand-side policies.

In Singapore's case, I will show that the urban cultural policy adopted by the authorities to transform Singapore into a "Renaissance City" tries to be simultaneously externally- and internally-oriented. *Despite this attempt to address both policy orientations, I argue that the Singapore government has inappropriately placed undue emphasis on the external at the cost of internal strategies for arts and cultural development.* To evaluate Singapore's cultural plan, I will examine the strategies proposed under the two policy orientations. In order to facilitate this, I have chosen to compare its two different sets of strategies to those of two other cities, Glasgow and Chicago. While Glasgow has an urban cultural policy that is strongly externally-oriented, Chicago's urban cultural policy is more internally-oriented. I hope that through this comparison with Glasgow and Chicago, I will be able to make recommendations that will help to enhance Singapore's strategies to develop a "Renaissance City".

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Glasgow is a city with an urban cultural policy that has had a predominantly external orientation. Its urban cultural policy was adopted in the 1980s to help transform it from a declining industrial city to a post-industrial city. It was designated as the European City of Culture in 1990, an important step in this process of transformation. Chicago offers the contrasting example of a city that has a more internally-oriented policy focus. Like Glasgow, deliberate cultural planning in Chicago started in the 1980s. Through systematic implementation of various cultural strategies, the city was able to reinforce its status as one of America's premiere arts capitals. By comparing Singapore's recently proposed plan and strategies to those of Glasgow and Chicago, which have been implemented for many years, I hope to learn from the experiences of these two cities, picking out the good elements and highlighting some of the pitfalls to avoid. To facilitate this comparative analysis, I have developed a matrix (Table 1.1) that will be filled in as the analysis for each case study is completed.

**Table 1.1** Matrix for comparative analysis

Characteristics	Glasgow	Singapore	Chicago
Policy Orientation	▪ Predominantly externally-oriented	▪ Attempts to be both externally- and internally-oriented	▪ Predominantly internally-oriented
Goals and Objectives	▪	▪	▪
Desired Outcome	▪	▪	▪
Intended Target Group	▪	▪	▪
Decision-Making Structure	▪	▪	▪
Lead Agencies / Key Actors	▪	▪	▪
Funding Sources	▪	▪	▪
Pre-existing Cultural Condition	▪	▪	▪
Cultural Planning History	▪	▪	▪
Cultural Plan	▪	▪	▪
Process	▪	▪	▪
Strategic Model	▪	▪	▪
Specific Strategy	▪	▪	▪
Outcomes	▪	▪	▪

In order to gain an in-depth understanding of the cultural development processes in each of the three cities, I adopted a multi-pronged research approach. The primary form of research was based on documents and archival information. These included the academic literature on the arts and cultural development, official publications produced by local authorities, and newspaper or magazine articles in all three cities. The information obtained from these materials helped me to understand both the historical developments and the current issues related to the cultural planning process in the three cities.

The case of Glasgow is very well documented in numerous academic works and archival information was easily accessible. I was thus able to piece together the information required for this case solely based on secondary data sources.

For Chicago, documents and archival information are less readily available. I thus supplemented the information gathered from secondary data sources with personal interviews. Five interviews were conducted with city officials as well as the local community in March 2003 (Appendix A).

As Singapore's urban cultural plan has been released for only a few years, there is a lack of documents and archival information on the case. Interviews with local arts practitioners and government art administrators were thus used to supply additional information. The fieldwork in Singapore was dovetailed with a study conducted by the National University of Singapore on arts and lifestyle development in the country. Ten interviews were conducted over the period of November 2002 and January 2003 (Appendix B). These interviews with arts practitioners provided an interesting contrast to the more propaganda-like official publications.

Together, the study of these three cities offers a comparison of cultural planning approaches in America, Europe and Asia. While none of the three cases is meant to typify cultural planning in its respective region, such a comparative analysis is always helpful as it offers an international perspective on cultural development. I would, however, like to acknowledge certain potential limitations of these three cases. In terms of physical size and population, although Chicago and Singapore are somewhat similar, Glasgow is much smaller than the other two cities. One may thus question the suitability of choosing Glasgow as one of the case studies. To this, I would like to stress that my interest is more on comparing the different cultural strategies under each policy orientation. Comparability in terms of physical size and population may thus be less important.

Another potentially problematic area is the comparability of research methods. In this respect, Glasgow stands out because no interviews were conducted for that case. However, unlike the other two cases, Glasgow's cultural



development has been well researched and documented by numerous writers, making interviews less necessary.

A third possible critique could be that in evaluating Singapore's cultural planning approach, which I have stated earlier to be both externally- and internally-oriented, I have compared it to cases that are either predominantly externally- or internally-orientated. It would perhaps be more suitable to use a city that has a mixed policy orientation similar to that of Singapore. However, I feel that by deliberately choosing to compare Singapore's middle ground approach to two extreme cases, one in either direction, I have been able to better highlight the differences among the three approaches and allow for more discussion. The decision to use Glasgow and Chicago as cases that marked the two extreme approaches is therefore not necessarily ill-advised.

## **1.6 THESIS ORGANIZATION**

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Following this introductory chapter, Chapter 2 will examine Singapore's urban cultural plan in more detail. With close reference to the *Renaissance City Report*, I will show that this policy document attempts to be simultaneously externally- and internally-oriented, trying to help the country achieve both global and local objectives. I will also elaborate on the institutional structure set up to implement this urban cultural policy as well as the specific strategies that have been proposed to guide the attainment of both the global and local goals. In this chapter, I will be mainly presenting the various official arguments for developing the arts in Singapore while postponing most of my personal comments on the proposed strategies to the later chapters when I compare Singapore's strategies with those of Glasgow and Chicago.

In Chapter 3, I will analyze the case of Glasgow. I will look at (1) how Glasgow used the arts to enhance its international image and attract external investment and tourists; (2) what kind of institutional structure was put in place to facilitate the implementation of its urban cultural policy; (3) what specific

strategies were adopted; and (4) what the advantages and criticisms of this approach were. From the analysis of this predominantly externally-oriented urban cultural policy, I then extract relevant learning points for Singapore and evaluate the strategies proposed by the Singapore authorities to help the city attain its global objectives.

A similar structure is used to analyze Chicago in Chapter 4. I will examine what Chicago has done to foster the growth of its local arts community and what benefits and problems it encountered in the process. Again, relevant lessons for Singapore are drawn from Chicago's stronger internal policy orientation and evaluations of Singapore's internally-oriented strategies are made.

In the concluding chapter, I will summarize the findings of the comparative analysis. Informed by the experiences of the two case studies, I will evaluate Singapore's proposed urban cultural strategies, reinforcing my argument that the Singapore authorities have inappropriately placed more emphasis on developing cultural strategies under an external rather than an internal policy orientation, despite having both global and local objectives in mind. I conclude by proposing recommendations that are intended to both strengthen the internal aspects of Singapore's urban cultural plan and enhance its externally-oriented strategies. I believe that with a better balance of externally- and internally-oriented strategies, Singapore's arts scene has the potential to flourish and the city will be better poised to achieve its vision of becoming a "Renaissance City".

## CHAPTER 2

### SINGAPORE – ENVISIONING A “RENAISSANCE CITY”

#### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

Singapore is a city-state with a population of slightly more than 3 million sitting on an island of approximately 263 square miles. The city-state, having gained independence only in 1965, has a very short history of less than four decades. Nevertheless, its economic development has been phenomenal. In less than 40 years, the country has been transformed from a developing country focused on the production of labor-intensive textiles and electronic goods to a newly industrialized economy engaged in high value-added manufacturing and financial services to its present status as an advanced industrializing nation involved in high-tech research and development as well as a multitude of business services (Perry *et al.*, 1997). In the initial post-independence years, the need to provide employment through economic growth was of top priority. Furthermore, the 1960s were a tumultuous period of social unrest, plagued by several racial conflicts. It therefore comes as no surprise that other than for the purpose of nation building, the arts did not feature prominently on the government’s agenda. Over the past few years, however, the situation has changed. In 2000, an urban cultural policy document called the *Renaissance City Report* was released with the view of transforming Singapore into a “Renaissance City”.

This chapter provides an overview of cultural development in Singapore for evaluation through comparison with the two case studies of Glasgow and Chicago in subsequent chapters. Various official claims and positions will be presented first; I will reserve most of my own comments on the proposed strategies for later discussions in subsequent chapters. I begin by tracing the history of cultural policy in the country. Then, I elaborate on the *Renaissance City Report*, analyzing the motivations behind the government’s recent vigor in promoting and developing the arts. I also discuss the strategic proposals of the

plan as well as the financial resources that were committed to help the city realize its vision. I argue that while Singapore hopes to achieve both global and local objectives by positioning itself as a “Renaissance City”, it has placed more emphasis on and directed more financial resources at externally-oriented initiatives. Before concluding, I highlight the roles that different key agencies play in promoting and developing the arts in Singapore.

## **2.2 SINGAPORE’S ROAD TO RENAISSANCE**

At the dawn of a new millennium, the government has envisioned Singapore as a “Renaissance City” (MITA, 2000a). This vision aims to transform Singapore into an artistic, creative and vibrant city, imbued with a keen sense of aesthetics at the levels of the individual, the society and the nation. The ambition to create an arts hub is in addition to establishing Singapore as a hub for high-tech companies, education, tourism and medical services to meet the country’s economic objectives (EDB, 1995). One thus suspects that the current fervor for cultural development was stimulated by more than purely cultural reasons. But before analyzing the government’s intents, I begin by elaborating on the history of urban cultural policy and arts development in Singapore. The major milestones of arts development in Singapore are summarized in Table 2.1, but this can generally be divided into three main periods.

### **2.2.1 Before 1980s: Period of Economic Development & Nation Building**

In the 1960s and 1970s, Singapore, as a newly established nation-state, was mainly focused on deploying limited national resources to meet basic needs such as employment, housing and education. The country was plugged into the global economy when the government took on an industrialization process fuelled by massive foreign direct investment coupled with an export-oriented strategy to develop Singapore’s economy. By engaging in labor-intensive, low-end manufacturing industries, the nation was able to provide jobs for unskilled, underemployed and unemployed labor, alleviating the potentially socially destabilizing unemployment conditions of the initial years of self-government.

**Table 2.1** Major milestones of arts and cultural development in Singapore

Year	Event
1978	A Cultural Affairs Division was established to promote the arts of different ethnic groups in the Ministry of Culture which was primarily involved in managing inter-racial and inter-cultural relations in multi-ethnic Singapore.
1985	A time-limited special economic review committee, set up to propose economic strategies to bring Singapore out of recession in the mid 1980s, identified the arts as a potential growth area within the service sector. Specific recommendations were made to tap onto the growth potential of the arts although limited follow-up actions were taken to implement the recommendations.
1988	Another time-limited special independent council, the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA), was set up to review the state of arts and cultural development in Singapore and to propose recommendations to make Singapore a culturally vibrant society.
1989	ACCA submitted its special report, identifying three main areas that needed improvement: cultural facilities provision; cultural outreach and arts education; and institutions in charge of spearheading arts and cultural development. Many of the recommendations were implemented after 1990 when Goh Chok Tong took over from Lee Kuan Yew as Prime Minister.
1990	The Ministry of Culture was dissolved and its duties were divided between two Ministries. The Ministry of Community Development took charge of managing inter-racial and inter-cultural relations in Singapore while the newly established Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) became responsible for overseeing arts development among other things. The transfer of responsibility from the former Cultural Affairs Division (a division within a ministry) to a stand-alone ministry was indicative of the government's serious intent to promote the arts more aggressively. This change also allowed for more human and financial resources to be allocated for arts development.
1991	The National Arts Council (NAC) was established as a statutory board under MITA with the mission to nurture the arts and to develop Singapore into a vibrant and creative city. As a statutory board, NAC has greater autonomy and flexibility in their operations and financial management.
1993	The National Heritage Board (NHB) was established as a statutory board under MITA to promote Singapore's cultural and historical heritage. It enjoys financial autonomy and flexibility similar to other statutory boards like NAC.
1993	NAC initiated the Arts Education Program for primary school, secondary school and junior college students as an effort to stimulate interest in the arts among school students.
1996	A time-limited independent Committee on National Arts Education was set up to review national arts education policies and to make recommendations for developing creative competencies in Singapore.
1998	A report was jointly produced by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information and the Arts to revamp arts education at the tertiary level.
2000	MITA released the <i>Renaissance City Report</i> which proposed strategies intended to transform Singapore into a "Renaissance City".

Another major concern during this period was that of social stability. Prior to its independence in 1965, Singapore was plagued by several race riots between the different ethnic groups living in the city. Upon independence, encouraging inter-racial harmony became one of the key steps towards nation building. The Ministry of Culture was thus primarily responsible for managing inter-racial and inter-cultural relations between the various ethnic groups in the country. Arts development in the form of constructing cultural facilities, developing cultural talent or programming international arts events was rarely seen during this period. In fact, it was not until 1978 that a Cultural Affairs Division was established within the Ministry of Culture (MITA and MOE, 1998). Even then, the division's main task was to promote the arts of various ethnic groups as a way of deepening inter-cultural understanding and encouraging inter-racial harmony.

As Kong (2000: 412) notes, "Singapore's cultural policy in the 1960s and 1970s was focused primarily on how artistic and cultural activities could be used for nation building purposes and how the negative influences associated with 'yellow culture' of the 'decadent West' were to be avoided." Such "negative influences" included the keeping of long hair; turning to drugs; having a penchant for western rock music, foreign film and television programs; and leading a hippyish lifestyle, characterized by going to nightclubs and discos (Kong and Yeoh, 2003). The arts were thus touted by Jek Yuen Thong, then Minister for Culture, as a way to counter undesirable external social influences:

"Literature, music and the fine arts have a significant role to play from within the framework of nation building. A truly Singaporean art must reflect values that will serve Singapore in the long run. Faced with threats from the aggressive culture of the West, our own arts must reflect countervailing values that will be helpful to Singapore" (*Singapore Government Press Release*, June 28, 1974).

Other government officials echoed similar views. Tay Boon Too, Member of Parliament in the 1970s, argued that "the various orchestras, dance troupes

and choirs in the National Theater should be regarded as a *cultural army* representative of Singapore” (*Parliamentary Debates*, March 22, 1971, col 998, emphasis added). Inche Sha’ari Tadin, then Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Culture, also averred that

“[i]t is important to have a rich, established cultural tradition particularly at this time of Singapore’s development. This is because there is the danger of our Republic being inundated by undesirable influences from the outside world. Already many young people are mindlessly aping foreign mannerism. They think that the process of modernization simply means drug-taking, a-go-go dancing and pornography. Once our youths have adequate cultural anchorage, they will be less prone to these modern excesses” (*Singapore Government Press Release*, April 26, 1973).

He claimed that “the arts can play a vital role in nation building through *inculcation of correct values*” (*Singapore Government Press Release*, November 30, 1974, emphasis added).

As can be seen, the pre-occupation with economic growth saw little emphasis on arts and cultural development during the initial independence years. Where urban cultural policies were concerned, socio-political agendas took pre-eminence. The arts were thus promoted in the form of encouraging patriotic song compositions by Singaporeans to help foster national identity and to instill loyalty and pride among its citizens. A series of monthly “Art for Everyone” exhibitions was also introduced by the Ministry of Culture at community centers in the neighborhoods, showcasing art works with strong nationalistic influences. Such attempts to “brainwash” Singaporeans culturally bore a sinister resemblance to the Chinese Cultural Revolution in the 1960s<sup>6</sup>. Arts and cultural development beyond these limited attempts (for example in the form of promoting arts education or constructing cultural facilities) were hardly evident.

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<sup>6</sup> During the Chinese Cultural Revolution, the socialist regime led by Mao Zedong used the arts (among many other tools) to infuse socialist ideals among the Chinese. He was quoted as saying: “[Our purpose is] to ensure that literature and art fit well into the whole revolutionary machine as a component part, that they operate as powerful weapons for uniting and educating the people and for attacking and destroying the enemy, and that they help the people fight the enemy with one heart and one mind” (*Source*: <http://art-bin.com/art/omao32.html>).

### **2.2.2 The 1980s: Awakening to the Economic Potential of the Arts**

Throughout the late 1970s, the service sector in Singapore expanded steadily alongside the manufacturing sector so that by the early 1980s, the service sector had overtaken manufacturing in economic output – particularly in financial and business services as well as in the transportation and communication sectors. Although the arts were part of this emerging service sector, Singapore did “not feature prominently as a center of excellence in areas such as entertainment, the arts and culture” (MTI, 1998: 153). The arts were still considered relatively insignificant as they were not seen as contributing to the economic well-being of the country in the same way as financial and transport services.

However, this view started to change in the mid-1980s and the government began to awaken to the economic potential of the arts. This was largely the result of a re-examination of Singapore’s economy in face of the economic recession of 1985. A time-limited special economic review committee<sup>7</sup> tasked to propose future directions for Singapore’s economic growth suggested diversification strategies in the service sector. The arts were deemed as one of the 17 service categories in the service sector (cultural and entertainment services<sup>8</sup>) and were viewed as a potential growth area. It was believed that cultural and entertainment services were economic activities in their own right

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<sup>7</sup> In Singapore, it is common practice for the government to form time-limited special committees to review various aspects of public policy, especially during times of economic crisis. The responsibility of these committees is purely to propose ways to improve the public service. They do not have any authority to formulate public policies. These committees will submit their observations and proposals in the form of special reports to the government and will be dissolved once these special reports are submitted. The relevant ministries will then evaluate the proposals and those that are deemed feasible for implementation by the government are then formulated into public policies by the respective ministries. Recent examples of such special committees are the Economic Review Committee and the Remaking Singapore Committee set up to suggest ways to improve the public service in face of the recent economic downturn experience in the country since the 1997 Asian economic crisis.

<sup>8</sup> The other service categories included sea transport services; air transport services; land transport services; telecommunications, warehousing & distribution; computer services; laboratory & testing services; agrotechnology; publishing; legal services; accounting & auditing services; advertising & public relations; management & business consultancy; hotel management services; medical services; and educational services.



and that they would help to enhance Singapore's appeal as a tourism destination. The arts supposedly would improve the quality of life in the city, making it attractive to foreign professionals and the highly-skilled workers that Singapore was hoping to attract. Specific recommendations were thus made to develop arts festivals similar to the well-established Hong Kong Arts Festival; to harness the potential of television in promoting variety shows, music and singing competitions, and popular drama; to develop a wider range of museums and art galleries; and to develop high quality theme parks with local cultural flavor (Sub-Committee on Services, 1985). As Kong (2000: 413) observes, "[t]hese recommendations represented the first explicit, albeit somewhat ad-hoc, acknowledgement of the economic potential of artistic and cultural activities." However, she notes that "there were few clear signs that the recommendations were systematically taken up" (Kong, 2000: 413).

Indeed, arts development really started taking off only after a 1989 special report was submitted by the Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA)<sup>9</sup>, recommending specific measures on ways to develop the arts and culture in Singapore. ACCA was a time-limited special independent council set up in 1988 at the request of the current Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong. He felt that although Singapore's economic development had been impressive, the country's social and cultural development had failed to catch up with its economic progress. ACCA's task was therefore to review the state of arts and cultural development in Singapore and propose recommendations to make Singapore a culturally vibrant society by the turn of the century.

Seen as a "blueprint for cultural policy" (Kong, 2000: 414), this special report claimed that the arts could help to "broaden our minds and deepen our

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<sup>9</sup> The Advisory Council on Culture and the Arts (ACCA) was headed by then 2<sup>nd</sup> Deputy Prime Minister, Ong Teng Cheong. Typical of such special committees, the council had no institutional power to formulate any urban cultural policies or implement any cultural strategies. Its role was purely to make recommendations which had to be approved by the government before implementation was to be taken up by the relevant government ministries. ACCA was dissolved in 1989 after the special report was submitted to the government.

sensitivities”; “improve the general quality of life”; “strengthen our social bond”; and “contribute to our tourist and entertainment sectors” (ACCA, 1989: 3). It thus made proposals in three main areas. In terms of cultural facilities provision, ACCA proposed to develop more modern purpose-built performing, working and exhibition facilities as well as libraries and specialized museums and galleries. With regard to cultural outreach and arts education, ACCA recommended developing more programs to engage Singaporeans in arts activities; to increase the profile of cultural events; and to locate more works of art in public places. It also proposed improvements in the education system to build up a pool of good artists, arts administrators, arts entrepreneurs and related professionals. In the third area, ACCA suggested establishing a few government agencies to champion arts development, namely a National Arts Council, a Literary Board and a National Heritage Board. These three organizations were to be non-profit organizations supported by both government funding and private sponsorship. It was felt that such an arrangement would give these organizations maximum flexibility in their operations. This report was significant in Singapore’s history of urban cultural policy because many of its recommendations were adopted and implemented after 1990 when Goh Chok Tong took over from Lee Kuan Yew as the Prime Minister.

### **2.2.3 The 1990s: Period of Institutional Changes & Infrastructure Development**

Following the proposals of ACCA, the 1990s was a period in which there were substantial institutional changes and infrastructure development. When Goh Chok Tong became Prime Minister in 1990, he reorganized the various ministries under his administration. One of the changes he made was to reconfigure the Ministry of Culture into two separate ministries. The responsibility of managing inter-racial and inter-cultural relations in the country was placed under the Ministry of Community Development. The Ministry of Information and the Arts was newly established to take charge of developing and promoting the arts.

Such changes were implemented because Prime Minister Goh felt that to realize the vision of making Singapore a culturally vibrant society, much more effort and resources would be required to evaluate and implement the proposals suggested by ACCA. The former Cultural Affairs Division, merely a division within the former Ministry of Culture, had to compete for resources to develop the arts with the other objective (managing inter-racial relations) of the ministry. The new Ministry of Information and the Arts was thus dedicated to oversee arts and cultural development among other things. The transfer of responsibility from a mere division within a ministry to a stand-alone ministry was indicative of the government's serious intent to develop and promote the arts more aggressively.

As recommended by ACCA, to develop the arts and promote Singapore's historical and cultural heritage, the National Arts Council (NAC) and the National Heritage Board (NHB) were established as statutory boards under the direction of MITA in 1991 and 1993 respectively<sup>10</sup>. In Singapore, it is common to have several statutory boards working under each government ministry. In a way, they function like the different departments in a Mayor's Office in the context of US cities but statutory boards are autonomous government agencies and are separate from the formal government structure. They are not staffed by civil servants and do not enjoy the legal privileges and immunities of government departments. As a result, they have much greater autonomy and flexibility in their operations than government departments. The activities of statutory boards are overseen by a parent ministry headed by a cabinet minister. In this case, NAC and NHB are under the care of MITA. They are responsible for making urban cultural policy recommendations to MITA and upon approval of these recommendations by the Minister of Information and the Arts, they undertake implementation.

Another interesting point to note about statutory boards is that they do not receive regular funding allocation from the public treasury. Instead, they are

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<sup>10</sup> The duties of the proposed Literary Board were subsumed under the ambit of NAC.

expected to generate funds from their own activities. They thus have greater flexibility to manage their own finances. Both NAC and NHB are paid by their parent ministry (MITA) for the services they provide. They can also seek out private funding sources to support any aspect of their operations. Surplus funds can be invested or used as development capital. When necessary, statutory boards can even borrow funds from the government or bodies such as the World Bank to support their operations, although this is generally not encouraged.

In addition to introducing new institutions to spearhead arts and cultural development, there were also changes to the arts education system. In 1993, NAC introduced the Arts Education Program as part of the school curriculum for primary school, secondary school and junior college students to expose them to various art forms. In 1996, another time-limited independent Committee on National Arts Education was set up to review national arts education policies and to make recommendations for developing the creative competencies of young Singaporeans (NAC, 1996). A special report was then jointly produced by the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Information and the Arts in 1998 to revamp arts education at the tertiary level (MITA and MOE, 1998). These initiatives will be discussed further in a later section.

With regard to infrastructure development, it was in the 1990s that plans for building a Singapore Arts Center<sup>11</sup> were finalized. This decade also saw the rapid expansion of the *Arts Housing Scheme* initiated to provide work spaces and cultural facilities for the arts community. While only two buildings were available under this scheme before 1990, 26 additional buildings were allocated for use by various arts organizations and artists in the 1990s (Table 2.2). More details of the scheme will be discussed later. During this period, plans were also made to expand the range of museums in Singapore. The result was the development of the National History Museum, the Singapore Art Museum and the Asian

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<sup>11</sup> The Singapore Arts Center has been renamed Esplanade – Theaters on the Bay and it opened in October 2002.

Civilization Museum, which together formed the Museum Precinct in the city center. The latter two museums were converted from former school buildings<sup>12</sup>. Extensive renovations thus had to be undertaken to make these buildings suitable for museum use. The 1990s was indeed a period of substantial institutional change and capital investment.

**Table 2.2** Buildings made available under the *Arts Housing Scheme*

Time Period	Number of Buildings Made Available
Before 1990	2
1990 – 1999	26
2000 – 2003	16

(Compiled from Kong and Yeoh, 2003: 172-173 and <http://www.nac.gov.sg/>)

### **2.3 MOTIVATIONS FOR DEVELOPING A “RENAISSANCE CITY”**

By the late 1990s, many of the recommendations made by ACCA had either been completed or were being implemented. Although there were a few emerging arts companies and a handful of established artists in various artistic fields, the cultural scene remained relatively undeveloped and raw. Thus, it was generally felt that more could be done to develop the arts further. In 2000, the government revealed a new urban cultural plan called the *Renaissance City Report* (RCR) to position Singapore as a “Renaissance City”. This report aimed to position Singapore with the top rung of cultural cities like New York and London in the long-term. However, its intermediate goal was to bring the level of cultural vibrancy in Singapore up to a point comparable to Hong Kong, Glasgow and Melbourne in five years. It was felt that these three cities, viewed as established regional arts centers, offered a level of cultural development that was more realistic for Singapore to achieve in the foreseeable future.

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<sup>12</sup> Saint Joseph Institute was converted into the Singapore Art Museum while Tao Nan School was converted into the first wing of the Asian Civilization Museum. The second wing of the Asian Civilization Museum was opened in March 2003. This is also converted from an old building which used to be a Court House during the colonial days.

The report acknowledged that while various government agencies have mapped out plans to ensure that the strategic concerns of Singapore in areas such as education, urban planning and economic development have been addressed, there has not been a holistic and comprehensive plan to develop Singapore's arts and culture. Thus, the RCR was the first urban cultural plan intended to provide the vision and strategic direction for promoting and developing the arts and culture in Singapore (MITA, 2000a).

Evoking the lofty concept of "renaissance" (instead of simply calling it a Singapore Cultural Plan) also suggests that the government has a much bolder vision in mind. Singapore as a "Renaissance City" can be seen as signifying the rebirth of the city in a variety of ways. In a straightforward manner, the plan can be perceived as a way to inspire a cultural revitalization of the city that will propel its artistic reputation to a level that is acknowledged and admired in the international arena. The plan can also be viewed as a tool for the government to rally its people in its nation building effort by reinforcing the social relations of its multi-racial and multi-cultural society. But most importantly, it appears that the plan is intended to re-position Singapore to meet the challenges of the global economy. It is hoped that the transformation of Singapore as a "Renaissance City" will signal the reinvention of its economy to keep it globally competitive. It will also re-image the city as an attractive place for globetrotting cosmopolitans and tourists (Chang and Lee, 2003). It can thus be argued that envisioning Singapore as a "Renaissance City" has as much to do with achieving social, political and economic goals as attaining artistic and cultural advancement. Whether the arts are truly capable of fulfilling such a tall order is another question altogether. In this section, I elaborate on the various motivations for developing Singapore as a "Renaissance City".

### 2.3.1 Global Aspirations, Economic Imperatives

Two aims were explicated in the RCR. The first was:

“To establish Singapore as a *global arts city*. We want to position Singapore as a *key city in the Asian renaissance* of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and a *cultural center in the globalized world*. The idea is to be one of the *top cities in the world* to live, work and play in, where there is an environment conducive to *creative and knowledge-based industries and talent*” (MITA, 2000a: 4, emphasis added).

This aim is predominantly externally-oriented. It is directed at the global community, trying to project an image of a cosmopolitan city that is accommodating to global talent and foreign visitors. It also places emphasis on attracting creative and knowledge-based industries and talent which are believed to be the drivers for economic development.

It comes as no surprise that global aspirations and economic imperatives are important considerations in Singapore’s urban cultural policy. Kong (2000: 415), observing the economic hegemony of most public policies in Singapore, has argued that “some extremely hard-headed economics underlies the recent promotion of artistic and cultural activities.” Many government officials have unapologetically proclaimed the “instrumentalist” role (Palmer, 2000) that the arts play in economic development. For instance, the chairman of the Economic Development Board, Philip Yeo, stresses the importance of realizing the economic potential of the arts:

“There is now in Singapore a major opportunity to develop the arts, not only for cultural enrichment, but also in the interest of economic growth... There will be significant spin-offs: generating revenue, providing employment for creative talents, attracting overseas business, developing tourism and providing a catalyst for urban renewal. Creativity from the arts sector will add to the cutting edge of the Singapore economy in the coming decade” (cited in EDB, 1992: 3).

The Chief Executive of the Singapore Tourism Board, Tan Chin Nam, also believes that the arts are significant to the tourism industry:

“By their magic, the arts enrapture visitors from all over the world in countless ways. By their endless variety, they tantalize visitors to come to Singapore again and again” (cited in STB, 1996: 7).

The RCR further claimed that culture can be used as a means of image-branding as “[o]ur arts and culture have the potential to help us project Singapore’s ‘soft power’ in the global market place. The value of a country’s national image can be an important contributor to foreign customers’ purchasing decisions” (MITA, 2000a: 35).

Even top government officials often cite economic reasons for promoting the arts. Minister of Information and the Arts, George Yeo, was the main driver behind the RCR. He was most vocal in suggesting that “to be competitive in the next phase of our national development, we need to promote the arts” (Yeo, 1991: 56) and that Singapore should strive to be “an international market for the arts” (Yeo, 1993: 66). He gave the following rationale:

“We should see the arts not as luxury or mere consumption but as *investment* in people and the environment. We need a strong development of the arts to help make Singapore *one of the major hub cities of the world*... We also need the arts to help us *produce goods and services* which are competitive in the world market. We need an artistic culture... we also need taste. With taste we will be able to *produce goods and services of far greater value*” (Yeo, 1991: 54, emphasis added).

He elaborated on the role of the arts in projecting Singapore’s image as an attractive and welcoming cosmopolitan city for foreign talent:

“We want to make Singapore a center for the arts partly for its own sake and partly because we need the arts to help make us *a center for brain services*. We want *talent from all over the world* to meet here, to work here and to live here... We cannot work the magic without the arts” (Yeo, 1993: 65, emphasis added).

Even though the beneficial economic impact of the arts is widely debated among academics<sup>13</sup> and there has yet to be any attempt to measure the economic contribution of the arts in Singapore, the government seems to have

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<sup>13</sup> See Literature Review in Section 1.2.2, pg 13.



bought Richard Florida's recent argument that the economic growth of cities will increasingly be driven by creativity, resulting in the rise of a new "creative class". According to Florida, as creative workers tend to gravitate towards and thrive in places that are vibrant and stimulating, building cultural capital in cities will help to attract these new engines of economic growth (Florida, 2002a). The RCR recognized that cultivating creativity is an important part of Singapore's global economic outlook, stressing that "[c]reativity will move into the center of our economic life" (MITA, 2000a: 31).

In Prime Minister Goh's 1999 National Day Rally speech, he highlighted the global imperative of molding a world class city throbbing with cultural life:

"People laugh at us for promoting fun so seriously. But having fun is important. If Singapore is a dull, boring place, not only will talent not want to come here, but even Singaporeans will begin to feel restless" (cited in *The Straits Times*, August 23, 1999).

He added that "[a]rtistic creativity is an important element of a knowledge-based economy" (cited in *The Alumnus*, October 1999), an important buzzword in the global arena today.

The RCR is thus intended to develop a Renaissance Singapore that will not only be a significant cultural hub but also an attractive international business center (MITA, 2000a). The RCR even coined the term "artspreneurs" to describe individuals who are able to deploy the arts and culture to create new value using innovative business models (MITA, 2000a: 33). While it is probably true that the arts do offer some economic contribution and do help to enhance the physical environment and the atmosphere of the city, one wonders if the arts can truly meet the very high expectations that the Singapore government has placed on them.

### 2.3.2 Nation Building, Social Development

In contrast to the first aim of the RCR, which has an external orientation directed at economic growth of the city in the globalized world, the second stated aim is more internally-oriented:

“To provide *cultural ballast in our nation building efforts*. In order to strengthen Singaporeans’ *sense of national identity and belonging*, we need to inculcate an appreciation of our heritage and strengthen the Singapore Heartbeat through the creation and sharing of Singapore stories, be it in film, theater, dance, music, literature or the visual arts” (MITA, 2000a: 4, emphasis added).

The Singapore Heartbeat is an expression that the government has adopted to inspire Singaporeans to stay bonded to the country and view Singapore as their true home even as they become more connected with other countries in the globalized economy. It is hoped that whether Singaporeans live or work in Singapore or overseas, they will develop a strong sense of belonging to the country and embrace a common vision of the country as a home worth returning to and if need be, fighting and dying for. It is felt that only when all Singaporeans share this common passion for the country will the Singapore Heartbeat be strong<sup>14</sup>.

This second aim is thus firmly focused on Singaporeans and how the arts can help to foster a cohesive Singapore society. Nation building and social development have often been identified as important tasks of the arts in Singapore. As mentioned earlier, the arts served similar socio-political purposes in the initial independence years of the country. Henderson (1999: 2) believes that such purposes remain relevant even in the present day:

“The arts... have a role in helping to establish a sense of identity and binding a population together. The latter consideration is especially relevant for newly established nations, such as Singapore, which have a relatively short history and are still in the process of discovering a common culture and defining nationhood; it becomes even more important when society is made up of

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<sup>14</sup> [http://www.singapore21.org.sg/menu\\_menu\\_5keys\\_heartbeat.html](http://www.singapore21.org.sg/menu_menu_5keys_heartbeat.html).

different racial groups with their own customs and traditions, again a feature of Singapore.”

Kong and Yeoh (2003) thus suggest that the arts play a significant part in legitimizing multi-culturalism and enhancing community development, both of which are essential elements in cultivating national consciousness in Singapore. In fact, the Minister of Information and the Arts, George Yeo, views the arts as a form of social cement:

“I would consider money spent on the arts as not different from the use of public resources to build cathedrals, temples, mosques, [and] public monuments. They are part of the things you need to hold a society together – a way to anchor its historical memory and common heritage, a way to enshrine its soul” (cited in *Asiaweek*, July 7, 1995).

Through arts development, the RCR thus strives to bond a nation of people by smoothing out any potential racial tensions in this multi-racial and multi-cultural society.

In addition to building a cohesive nation, the arts are also intended to serve another rather unusual social objective in Singapore – that of nurturing a more gracious society (Kong, 2000; Nathan, 1999). The Prime Minister, Goh Chok Tong, has always felt that although Singapore has made significant economic progress, its people lagged behind in terms of social development. As mentioned earlier, this was the main reason for his request to set up ACCA to propose ways of promoting the arts in 1988. He believes that to be a successful country (beyond economic wealth) its people should learn to appreciate other finer things in life such as the arts and culture (*The Straits Times*, April 22, 1996). He opines that “[i]mprovements in material well-being must be accompanied by, or at least lead to, more refined behavior and a keener appreciation of non-economic needs” (cited in Nathan, 1999: 298).

The Prime Minister thus called for greater emphasis on developing Singaporeans’ social graces to complement the country’s economic progress:

“Let us now complement our economic achievements with our social, cultural and spiritual development. Then, by the 21<sup>st</sup> century, Singapore will be a truly successful, mature country with a developed economy and a gracious society” (cited in STB, 1996: 3).

By this, he meant a cultured society:

“of well-read, well-informed citizens, a refined and gracious people, a thoughtful people, a society of sparkling ideas, a place where art, literature and music flourish. It is not a materialistic, consumeristic society where wealth is flaunted and money is spent thoughtlessly. In short, a parvenu society” (cited in Nathan, 1999: 298).

Arts and cultural activities are thus promoted with the hope of imparting “a ‘soft’ image for Singapore *vis-à-vis* the ‘hard’ image of economic success” (MITA, 1998: 97). The ambivalent nature of urban cultural policies in the Singapore context is thus revealed by its constant attempt to juggle both economic and socio-cultural, externally- and internally-oriented objectives. However, I argue that finding such a balance has not been an easy task for Singapore to manage.

## **2.4 STRATEGIES & FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

Based on the espoused goals and underlying objectives, the RCR charted six key strategies to guide the city towards its goals. Just as the aims of developing a “Renaissance City” were oriented both externally and internally, these strategies could be grouped into those targeted at achieving global economic objectives versus those directed at meeting local socio-cultural needs. However, a further analysis of these strategies set out in this new policy document suggests that more emphasis has been placed on meeting externally-oriented objectives, much to the distress of those who were hoping to see more attention being paid to meet internally-oriented needs. Of the six strategies, three addressed the city’s global economic goals while two were focused on local socio-cultural objectives. The last strategy was both externally- and internally-oriented. The amount of financial resources committed to the two groups of strategies further confirms the government’s inclination towards the externally-oriented initiatives.

### **2.4.1 Externally-Oriented Strategies**

Externally-oriented strategies were geared towards making Singapore an attractive place for consuming cultural experiences and products. They do so by attempting to establish Singapore's international cultural reputation; enhancing the city's global image; and strengthening its cultural economy to compete globally.

#### ***Strategy 1 – Develop Flagship & Major Arts Companies***

The first strategy proposed was to develop a highly selective number of flagship arts companies (up to eight) in various artistic fields over five years. The RCR acknowledged that currently there are only two major arts companies in Singapore – the Singapore Symphony Orchestra and the Singapore Chinese Orchestra. While they have developed into full-fledged professional orchestras and are acclaimed regionally in their respective fields<sup>15</sup>, it was felt that more “cultural ambassadors” should be nurtured to represent Singapore in the global cultural arena. It was hoped that new flagship arts companies would produce cultural works of high quality and global acclaim so that Singapore could claim a place on the international map of the arts and culture (MITA, 2000a).

This strategy also proposed to strengthen the business perspectives of the flagship arts companies by developing a core of full-time administrative personnel who would help to maximize the market potential of the arts companies (MITA, 2000a). It was believed that with improved technical and managerial skills, arts managers and administrators would be better able to manage and market the flagship arts companies, attracting more audiences to come to Singapore to consume its cultural offerings (MITA, 2000a: 54).

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<sup>15</sup> The Singapore Symphony Orchestra provided music accompaniment for world-famous tenor, Jose Carreras, in a charity concert at the Cambodian Temples of Angkor Wat in 2002 while the Singapore Chinese Orchestra is regarded as the “4<sup>th</sup> Pillar” in the Chinese Orchestral world, in addition to the “Three Kingdom” (China, Hong Kong and Taiwan) in the past.

This strategy is clearly externally-oriented, targeted mainly at improving Singapore's global image by building up its international artistic reputation. However, the suggestion to direct a substantial amount of resources to develop a selected few cultural groups is one of the issues that the majority of the arts community is most displeased about. The inordinate amount of attention paid to only the major flagship arts companies has caused many smaller cultural companies to feel left out of the development process.

### ***Strategy 2 – Go International***

To further enhance Singapore's international cultural standing, it was felt that "[o]ur artists and festivals must be able to stand proud on the world stage" (MITA, 2000a: 55). The second strategy thus proposed to reinforce the current effort at promoting Singapore's artists and art works internationally as another externally-oriented strategy. By going international, "[n]ot only will our artists benefit, Singapore benefits as well because our image as a rounded, vibrant and creative nation is enhanced" (MITA, 2000a: 56).

To facilitate cultural exchange between countries, it was proposed that cultural relations with other countries be strengthened, especially "with countries where culture and the arts are particularly vibrant or countries with which Singapore shares a bond in terms of history, language, and/or cultural affinity" (MITA, 2000a: 56). Enhancement in cultural ties was proposed in the form of cultural Memoranda of Understanding between governments and subsequent inter-agency agreements. It was hoped that such cultural exchanges would "vastly enhance our artistic imagination beyond the base of our own experiences and relations" (MITA, 2000a: 57). Closer ties between the cultural agencies of Singapore and other countries were also intended to facilitate more international artistic collaboration, thus creating more exposure for local artists when they collaborate with their international counterparts (MITA, 2000a).

Once again, this strategy serves the city's global aspirations by promoting the local arts and culture in the international arena. While it claimed to facilitate artistic collaborations between foreign and local artists, many have observed that the Singapore arts scene remains dominated by imported cultural productions. This is a criticism that will be highlighted in the later chapters.

### ***Strategy 3 – Develop an Arts and Cultural “Renaissance” Economy***

The third strategy has three areas of emphasis. First, it proposed to focus on investing in high profile and prestigious arts events and programs intended to add to the excitement and attraction of the local cultural scene. For instance, in addition to proposing the expansion of the existing *Singapore Arts Festival* and the *Singapore Writers' Festival* in order to make them leading cultural events in Asia, it suggested initiating a Sculptural Biennale to showcase sculptures from all over the world and the creation of a new series of mini arts festivals. It also recommended positioning Singapore as a base for hosting respected cultural awards and international arts conferences<sup>16</sup>. Such externally-oriented initiatives were intended to provide opportunities to establish Singapore's international arts reputation and to project the image of Singapore as being “in the top league” of cultural cities (MITA, 2000a: 58).

The strategy also stressed the importance of developing Singapore's cultural economy. It suggested promoting arts and cultural tourism aggressively to “attract more audiences and sponsors from Singapore and abroad” (MITA, 2000a: 58). It recommended setting up an Arts Marketing Task Force to systematically develop arts marketing practices such as building up and attracting new local and international cultural consumers. To position Singapore as an international arts hub, it also proposed to organize an international

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<sup>16</sup> Singapore hosted the 17<sup>th</sup> *International Congress of the International Society for the Performing Arts* (ISPA) in Jun 2003. It will also be hosting the 2<sup>nd</sup> *World Summit on the Arts and Culture*, a conference organized by the International Federation of Arts Councils and Culture Agencies, in November 2003.

performing arts market with an Asian focus<sup>17</sup>. This was targeted at making Singapore “a base for the purchase of Asian productions” (MITA, 2000a: 59). These initiatives are driven by economic imperatives and are directed externally so that Singapore will continue to be well integrated with the global economy as the city develops into a hub for cultural consumption.

In the third area of emphasis, the strategy suggested offering tax incentives to encourage donation of cultural artifacts and to attract world class art fairs and large scale foreign productions. It was believed that such events would attract international collectors and audiences to the city and boost Singapore’s tourism and economy. To encourage more donations of cultural artifacts, a Double Tax Deduction Scheme was proposed for donations of artifacts worth S\$100,000 to S\$1mil (approximately US\$57,100 - US\$571,000<sup>18</sup>). This scheme would allow for twice the value of the donation to be deducted from the donor’s taxable income for the year. To encourage more international arts events to be staged in Singapore, another suggestion was to exempt tax on income earned by foreign performers and production crews. It was also suggested that new auction houses that are based in the city could enjoy a reduced corporate income tax rate of 10% instead of the usual 27% (MITA, 2000a).

The initiatives proposed as part of this strategy are thus largely focused on the business aspect of the arts, attempting to consolidate Singapore’s position as an international arts hub in which cultural experiences and products are easily bought and consumed. By taking such an economically-driven view of the arts, the government engendered criticism that economic goals have overshadowed artistic advancement in the city.

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<sup>17</sup> Singapore hosted the 2<sup>nd</sup> *Asian Arts Mart* in Jun 2003.

<sup>18</sup> The exchange rate used in this chapter is based on the average rate in 2003 of S\$1.00 = US\$0.571.



### ***Strategy 4a – Provide Good Infrastructure & Facilities***

The fourth strategic direction has both an external and an internal focus. With respect to the former, it proposed to expand and support the city's cultural facilities that have potential international appeal. These included the extension of the Singapore History Museum and the Singapore Art Museum to feature a wider collection of exhibits that would be internationally alluring; the refurbishment of the Singapore Conference Hall as a music performance venue with high quality acoustics; supporting the events of Esplanade – Theaters on the Bay, a newly constructed theater touted to be one of the best in the world; converting the Old Parliament House into a heritage center; and building film-making facilities to establish Singapore as the regional hub for post-production work in film (MITA, 2000a).

These initiatives are obviously intended to position Singapore as a significant international cultural consumption hub that is attractive to tourists, foreign investors and highly-skilled professionals. The focus on these rather large scale capital investments without an equally strong commitment to developing local artistic talent would seem to be another problem with this plan.

### **2.4.2 Internally-Oriented Strategies**

In contrast to externally-oriented objectives, internally-oriented strategies are intended to cultivate interest in the arts among local residents; nurture local artistic talent; and support their needs. These strategies therefore emphasize the importance of making the city conducive to cultural production. This set of strategies was more focused on arts development, although lackadaisical attempts by the government left many feeling that these strategies could be further fortified.

### ***Strategy 4b – Provide Good Infrastructure & Facilities***

The fourth strategy of providing cultural infrastructure and facilities has two orientations. The internally-oriented aspect proposed to continue providing and

maintaining cultural infrastructure for use by local cultural producers. The RCR acknowledged that the upgrading of existing facilities and the creation of new ones need to take place at a rate commensurate with the growth of the local cultural scene. This strategic direction thus proposed to expand the current *Arts Housing Scheme* which was initiated to provide work spaces for both arts organizations and individual artists. An estimated 7,000 square meter (approximately 75,350 square feet) of work space would be made available under the scheme over five to seven years in an attempt to make the city more conducive to cultural production (MITA, 2000a).

In this respect, this strategic direction is internally-oriented toward local artists and arts organizations. However, besides continued support of an existing scheme, no new major initiatives were proposed for providing other forms of technical assistance to the local arts community.

#### ***Strategy 5 – Develop a Strong Arts & Cultural Base***

The next internally-oriented strategy is aimed at stimulating interest in the arts among all Singaporeans. By strengthening the current Arts Education Program in schools, it was hoped that this strategy would broaden the understanding and appreciation of the creative possibilities among students. It also proposed to develop a research center for the arts to support the study and documentation of Singapore’s culture. It is believed that this will “enthuse and inspire as many Singaporeans as possible with a love for culture and the arts” (MITA, 2000a: 52). In the process, it hoped to engage more locals in the cultural production process and to enhance the cultural competencies of the general public.

Once again, besides reinforcing existing initiatives, not many new recommendations were made to strengthen this social outreach effort. The suggestion of a new research center, while certainly a welcomed improvement, also seems to be relevant only to people who already have a keen interest in the

arts. More effort could thus be directed at engaging the portion of the population that is currently indifferent to the arts.

### ***Strategy 6 – Recognize & Groom Talents***

The final strategy is more specifically targeted at local artists and arts organizations. Being internally-oriented, it called for initiatives “to discover, groom and recognize promising artistic talents that can contribute to the development of the arts and cultural scene in Singapore” (MITA, 2000a: 54). This would involve beefing up arts scholarships for talented individuals; funding promising projects by fresh talents; giving greater recognition and material support to established local artists and arts groups; and upgrading the current *Singapore Youth Festival* to an international cultural event to showcase budding local talents (MITA, 2000a).

It was believed that these initiatives would nurture Singaporean artists and stimulate the growth of the local cultural scene. Nevertheless, most of the suggestions hardly go beyond providing financial support or monetary incentives for the local arts. No doubt financial backing is a crucial component in developing the local cultural scene and additional funding will always be welcomed by the arts community, but the strategy also left many wanting other forms of support such as technical assistance and management services.

#### **2.4.3 Financial Resources Committed to Realize the Renaissance Vision**

To realize the vision of a “Renaissance City”, the government committed additional funding of S\$10mil per annum (approximately US\$5.7mil per annum) over the next five years to implement the new programs and initiatives proposed in the RCR (Table 2.3). This financial commitment was in addition to the recurring annual budget of about S\$100mil (approximately US\$57mil) allocated for the arts that is used to fund the existing programs and facilities (MITA, 2000a).

While this substantial sum of additional funding is certainly a boost for the arts, the breakdown of the funding directed at the two groups of strategies reveals that the government has placed far greater emphasis on the externally-oriented strategies than on the internally-oriented ones. While a total of S\$1.6mil per annum (approximately US\$0.9mil) has been allocated to implement internally-oriented strategies, more than five times that amount, S\$8.4mil per annum (approximately US\$4.8mil), has been allocated to externally-oriented strategies (Table 2.3). The first strategy of developing a selective group of major flagship arts companies received the most financial support, S\$5.2mil per annum (approximately US\$3.0mil), among the six strategies.

**Table 2.3** Financial commitments for implementing the RCR strategies

Strategy	Financial Resources
<i>Externally-Oriented Strategies</i>	
1. Develop Flagship & Major Arts Companies	S\$5.2mil/annum [US\$3.0mil/annum]
2. Go International	S\$0.7mil/annum [US\$0.4mil/annum]
3. Develop an Arts and Cultural “Renaissance” Economy	S\$2.5mil/annum [US\$1.4mil/annum]
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>S\$8.4mil/annum</b> <b>[US\$4.8mil/annum]</b>
<i>Externally- &amp; Internally-Oriented Strategies</i>	
4. Provide Good Infrastructure & Facilities	Not Applicable <sup>19</sup>
<i>Internally-Oriented Strategies</i>	
5. Develop a Strong Arts & Cultural Base	S\$0.9mil/annum [US\$0.5mil/annum]
6. Recognize & Groom Talents	S\$0.7mil/annum [US\$0.4mil/annum]
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>S\$1.6mil/annum</b> <b>[US\$0.9mil/annum]</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>S\$10.0mil/annum</b> <b>[US\$5.7mil/annum]</b>

(Computed from MITA, 2000a)

Even though externally-oriented strategies may be costlier to implement, the extremely disproportionate distribution of funds between the two sets of

<sup>19</sup> Financial resources for cultural infrastructure are classified under the recurring annual budget that has been previously committed.

strategies betrays the failure of the government to juggle the two orientations of its urban cultural policy. Even if the successful deployment of the externally-oriented strategies were to bring about positive benefits for the local arts scene, it seems obvious that the government would not have found a good balance between achieving its global economic goals and attaining its local socio-cultural objectives.

## 2.5 INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

Implementing the strategies of the RCR requires a clear institutional framework. This section highlights the key agencies involved in developing and promoting the arts in Singapore. Their respective roles are detailed and the key contributions of each agency prior to the RCR are also highlighted. A top-down decision-making structure has been adopted with government ministries taking the lead in making all urban cultural policies and implementing them with minimal public involvement. The roles of the various agencies and their inter-relationships are summarized in Table 2.4.

**Table 2.4** Institutional setup for arts and cultural development in Singapore

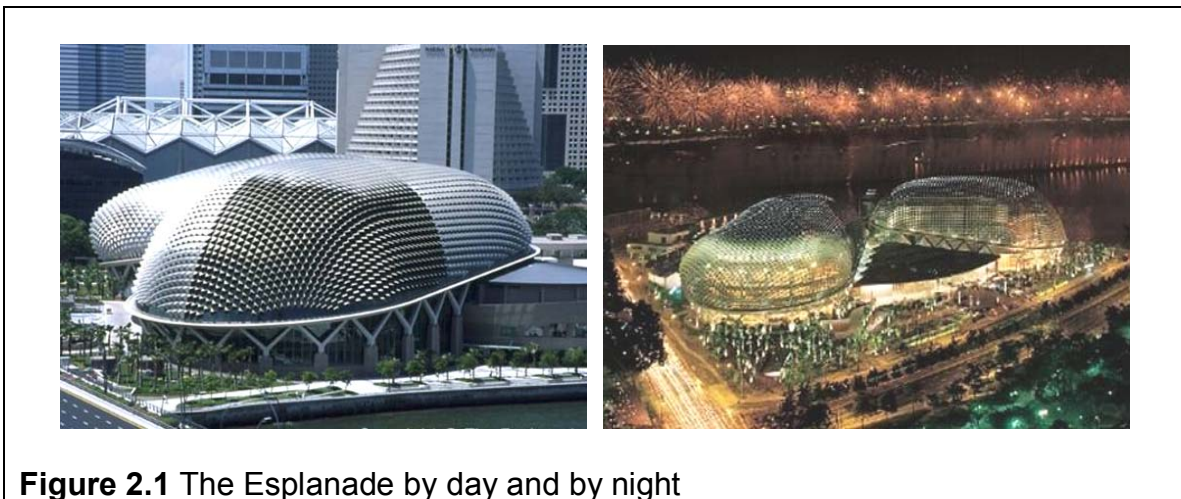
Ministry	MITA		MOE	MTI	
Statutory Board	NAC	NHB	—	STB	EDB
Roles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Promote Singapore’s arts &amp; culture both internationally &amp; locally.</li> <li>▪ Provide funding to implement arts &amp; culture development strategies.</li> <li>▪ Build &amp; maintain cultural infrastructure.</li> <li>▪ Stimulate interest in the arts &amp; culture among the general public.</li> <li>▪ Develop arts &amp; cultural programs.</li> <li>▪ Nurture artistic talent by providing grants &amp; financial assistance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborates with MITA to make arts education policies for schools at different levels (primary, secondary, junior college and tertiary).</li> <li>▪ Runs the Arts Education Program with MITA.</li> <li>▪ Plans arts curriculum in primary &amp; secondary schools as well as junior colleges.</li> <li>▪ Encourages student participation in the arts through extracurricular activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Collaborate with MITA to develop Singapore’s cultural economy.</li> <li>▪ Promote arts &amp; cultural tourism in Singapore.</li> <li>▪ Market Singapore as an International Arts Hub.</li> <li>▪ Offer tax incentives and financial assistance schemes to attract reputable foreign cultural institutions and arts entrepreneurs to set up base in Singapore.</li> </ul>		
MITA	– Ministry of Information and the Arts		NAC	– National Arts Council	
MOE	– Ministry of Education		NHB	– National Heritage Board	
MTI	– Ministry of Trade and Industry		STB	– Singapore Tourism Board	
			EDB	– Economic Development Board	

As mentioned earlier, the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) was established in 1990 to oversee arts development in Singapore among other things. Among the various government agencies involved in the arts, it is the primary lead institution, bearing the most responsibility for developing and promoting the arts and culture in Singapore both locally and internationally. MITA plays a pivotal role in formulating urban cultural policies and providing funding to nurture the local arts scene. In 2000, it released the plan to develop Singapore as a “Renaissance City”, and it is currently spearheading all its initiatives. MITA is assisted by two statutory boards, the National Arts Council (NAC) and the National Heritage Board (NHB), in meeting its objectives. NAC focuses on developing the performing and literary arts while NHB emphasizes the visual arts and museums.

MITA and its two statutory boards have four major roles in arts development. Since the 1990s, MITA has been the main agency in charge of building and maintaining the cultural infrastructure in Singapore. This includes various performance venues and the museums as well as the buildings used for the *Arts Housing Scheme*. Another of its key projects was the construction of Esplanade – Theaters on the Bay (commonly called the Esplanade for short). Opened in 2002, this new performance venue cost over S\$600mil (approximately US\$343mil) and is the largest single arts investment the government has made to date (Figure 2.1). It occupies a total land area of 6ha (almost 15 acres) and has a 2,000-seat Lyric Theater; a 1,800-seat Concert Hall; three smaller studios and abundant outdoor performance spaces. Its halls are acoustically designed to accommodate a wide range of cultural genres from rock concerts to Chinese opera and are touted to be the finest in the region.

Another of MITA’s key infrastructure projects is the *Arts Housing Scheme* which was first introduced in 1985 but really took off only in the 1990s. Under this scheme, many refurbished old buildings and a few newly constructed facilities have been offered to arts organizations and individual artists as work spaces.

Tenants pay a nominal fee of 10% of the rental charges while MITA provides a heavy subsidy of the remaining 90%. These facilities are, however, not allocated to arts groups or artists on a permanent basis as their continued occupation must be justified periodically by their artistic contribution to the local cultural scene. NAC, on behalf of MITA, does an evaluation of the tenants once every three years<sup>20</sup>. While this may seem reasonable given the very high rental subsidy provided, it is also potentially disruptive to the arts tenants who face the uncertainty of being displaced by other arts groups which could have become equally deserving of the assistance over the years. Nevertheless, the program has a rather extensive reach. Currently, 66 arts organizations and 32 individual artists are benefiting from the scheme. The RCR has recommended expanding the scheme over five to seven years.



The second major role that MITA plays is in the programming of cultural events. At the smaller scale, it organizes social outreach programs in an attempt to engage the general public in cultural activities. These events are free and are held in neighborhood parks and shopping malls to make them easily accessible to the general public. At the larger scale, MITA also organizes several major festivals. An example is the annual *Singapore Arts Festival*, a month-long event

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<sup>20</sup> Tenants are evaluated based on their track record, managerial strength, artistic standard, level of activity and growth potential. In addition, they are assessed on their need for housing, merit of planned activities and commitment to organizational and artistic development.

consisting of both international acts and local performances. Over the years, this international festival has developed a reputation for showcasing contemporary and cutting-edge work and is gaining increasing popularity, especially in the Asia region. This is evident from the rising attendance at this festival over the years (MITA, 2000b). Singapore has also hosted a substantial number of famous international productions and blockbuster exhibitions including musicals like *Miss Saigon*, *Les Miserables*, *Rent*, *Chicago*, *Cats*, *Phantom of the Opera* and *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*; operas like *Aida* and *Turandot*; dance performances by the American Ballet Theater and the Bolshoi Ballet; a theater world premiere of *Golden Child*; and exhibitions like *Masterpieces from the Guggenheim Museum*, *Leonardo da Vinci: Scientist, Inventor, Artist*, *The Origins of Modern Art in France* and *Eternal Egypt: Treasures from the British Museum*.

Another key role that MITA plays is in the area of providing financial support for the arts through various scholarships, bursaries and grants. Talented individuals who wish to pursue an overseas arts education have the option of applying for any one of ten different types of overseas financial support (Table 2.5). In 1999, a total of S\$837,000 (approximately US\$477,930) was given out to 114 individuals to support their overseas arts education. Besides supporting individuals, touring grants are also given to arts companies to support their overseas productions (NAC, 1999). For example, in 1997, ACTION Theater was given S\$30,000 (approximately US\$17,130) to bring its production, *Chang and Eng*, to Beijing (*The Straits Times*, September 21, 1998).

**Table 2.5** Overseas arts scholarships, bursaries and grants

Shell-NAC Arts Scholarship	Chen Chong Swee Arts Scholarship
NAC Arts Professional Scholarship	Takashimaya-NAC Scholarship
Rotary Club-NAC Arts Training Grant	Overseas Writing Program Grant
Professional Skills Development Fund	NAC Arts Bursary (Overseas)
Iowa International Writing Program Fellowship	Gifted Young Musicians Bursary

(Source: [http://www.nac.gov.sg/arts\\_funding\\_intro\\_01.html](http://www.nac.gov.sg/arts_funding_intro_01.html))



Besides providing direct financial aid, MITA also encourages arts sponsorship from private corporations. In addition to the fiscal incentives that are available, MITA gives due recognition to private sponsors for their financial contributions to the arts community through an annual award (Table 2.6). Generally, corporate sponsors provide financial support for individual events on an ad-hoc basis. In 1998, corporate sponsorship was recorded at S\$39.9mil (approximately US\$22.8mil). This is set in context by the recurring annual government budget of about S\$100mil (approximately US\$57mil) allocated for the arts. The government is thus the major source of funding for the local arts.

**Table 2.6** Annual awards for private sponsors

Award	Contributions
Distinguished Patron of the Arts	At least \$1.5 million given in five years.
Patron of the Arts	\$300,000 or more in a year.
Friend of the Arts	\$100,000 to \$299,000 in a year.
Associate of the Arts	\$50,000 to \$99,000 in a year.
Arts Supporter	\$10,000 to 49,999 in a year.

(Source: [http://www.nac.gov.sg/artssponsor\\_patron\\_01.html](http://www.nac.gov.sg/artssponsor_patron_01.html))

MITA's fourth major role is shared with the Ministry of Education (MOE) in providing arts education for the younger generation. Together, MOE and MITA formulate arts education policies that are implemented in schools throughout the country. As mentioned earlier, one of the programs is the Arts Education Program which was implemented in 1993 to cultivate students' interests in the arts. There are three parts to this program. Through *Arts Exposure*, performances are brought to schools, hoping that students will benefit from the exposure to various art forms. Through *Arts Experience*, students learn about the arts through participating in activities such as arts workshops, playwriting and sculpting. The third part, *Art Excursion*, involves bringing students to places such as artist studios, rehearsal venues, museums, and concert halls to give them an opportunity to talk with arts practitioners so that they may get a better appreciation of the process of making art. Every year, each school receives a grant of S\$10,000 (approximately US\$5,710) from MITA and MOE to run the Arts

Education Program. The RCR has proposed to expand this program further with additional funding of S\$400,000 per annum (approximately US\$228,400 per annum). This move must surely be applauded, although one wonders if arts education could be enhanced in ways other than simply providing additional financial support.

In addition to the Arts Education Program, MOE also plays an important role in planning the arts curriculum in primary and secondary schools as well as junior colleges. Currently, music and the visual arts are taught as compulsory subjects in all primary and secondary schools. Some secondary schools and junior colleges also offer Music and Art Elective Programs in which students can take music or art as one of their core subjects. Through extracurricular activities such as school bands, school choirs, drama groups, dance troupes, art clubs and literary societies, MOE also tries to encourage student participation in the arts.

MOE oversees tertiary level arts institutions including LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts and the Nanyang Academy of Fine Arts. As mentioned earlier, MOE and MITA revamped tertiary level arts education in 1998. Prior to the revamp, these institutions, offering only diploma programs, were private arts schools and did not receive financial support from the government. With the 1998 revamp, government funding for these institutions was raised to the level comparable to other polytechnics in the country. This was done with the objective of raising the standard of tertiary level arts education in Singapore. It was also proposed that the two institutions would develop their own degree programs in the visual arts while a new Institute of the Arts would be established at the National University of Singapore to offer degree programs in the performing arts (MITA and MOE, 1998). MOE thus works closely with MITA to cultivate interest in the arts among young Singaporeans. By doing so, it attempts to shape future artists and develop future audiences.

The third agency involved in arts promotion is the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI). This ministry is assisted by two statutory boards – the Singapore Tourism Board (STB) and the Economic Development Board (EDB). Together, they promote the economic and business aspects of the arts. MTI works with MITA to develop Singapore’s cultural economy by promulgating various trade and industrial policies.

MTI actively promotes Singapore as an arts and cultural tourism destination as well as a regional hub for arts events and conferences. It tries to position Singapore as a regional artistic marketplace by attracting production companies, art galleries, auction houses and impresarios to Singapore through various tax incentives. To make Singapore an attractive place for art fairs and antiques dealing, the profits of art dealers derived from transactions on behalf of non-resident clients with approved auction houses qualify for a special concessionary tax rate of 10% instead of the normal corporate tax rate of 27%. The Goods and Services Tax is also lifted for non-resident buyers. Arts companies are offered “pioneer status” when they establish themselves in the city. Pioneer status companies enjoy a tax holiday for five to ten years (STPB, 1995).

Such efforts are said to have enticed arts production companies like Andrew Lloyd Webber’s Really Useful Group, Cameron Mackintosh’s Cameron Mackintosh Ltd. and Cirque du Soleil to set up Southeast Asian bases in Singapore instead of other cities like Hong Kong or Kuala Lumpur (Brady, 1995). Reputable auction houses such as Christie’s and Sotheby’s are also believed to have been attracted to Singapore due to these incentives. The RCR has proposed exploring other tax incentive packages to boost the cultural economy in Singapore. MTI thus plays a role in making Singapore conducive to doing business in the arts. However, overemphasis on the economic aspects of the urban cultural policy rather than its cultural aspects could be a problem for Singapore’s attempt to create a “Renaissance City”.

As can be seen, the task of developing and promoting the arts is divided among the three government ministries assisted by their respective statutory boards. Each agency plays a complementary role (MITA, 2002) although MITA has a hand in almost every aspect of arts development. Together, these ministries have orchestrated arts development in the city. They will continue to shape the future of arts development in Singapore by implementing the various strategies proposed in the RCR.

## **2.6 CONCLUSION**

The key characteristics of Singapore's cultural development are summarized in Table 2.7. While Singapore's vision of becoming a "Renaissance City" attempts to be both externally- and internally-oriented, one can argue that the government has placed far greater emphasis on those that are directed at meeting its global and economic objectives.

What could some of the possible outcomes of this plan be? How can the proposed strategies be improved? What potential problems might Singapore face in implementing these strategies? To answer these questions, I examine the cultural development experiences of two other cities in the next two chapters. The first city is Glasgow, which has an externally-oriented urban cultural policy. The second city is Chicago, which has a more internal urban cultural policy focus. Both cities have implemented their respective cultural development strategies since the 1980s. Their experiences provide useful insights for Singapore as it embarks on the cultural development process.

**Table 2.7** Characteristics of arts development in Singapore

Characteristics	Singapore	
Policy Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attempts to be both externally- and internally-oriented</li> </ul>	
Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop creative economy</li> <li>▪ Social development and nation building</li> <li>▪ Enhance international cultural standing</li> </ul>	
Desired Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diverse and robust economy</li> <li>▪ Improved national image</li> <li>▪ Cohesive and gracious society</li> <li>▪ Vibrant and diverse arts scene</li> </ul>	
Intended Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foreign investors and global talents</li> <li>▪ Tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Singaporeans</li> <li>▪ Local artists</li> </ul>
Decision-Making Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Top-down</li> <li>▪ Directed solely by government ministries with assistance from their respective statutory boards</li> </ul>	
Lead Agencies / Key Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ministry of Information and the Arts</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Education</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Trade and Industry</li> </ul>	
Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mainly funded by the government</li> <li>▪ Corporate sponsors fund individual cultural events on ad-hoc basis</li> </ul>	
Pre-existing Cultural Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing cultural scene with several emerging cultural groups and artists</li> </ul>	
Cultural Planning History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely ad-hoc until late 1990s</li> </ul>	
Cultural Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Renaissance City Report, 2000</i></li> </ul>	
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Government agencies spearhead most cultural development initiatives</li> </ul>	
Strategic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Main emphasis on cultural consumption with some attempt to focus on cultural production</li> </ul>	
Specific Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop flagship and major arts companies</li> <li>▪ Go international</li> <li>▪ Develop an arts and cultural “renaissance” economy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provide good infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>▪ Develop a strong arts and cultural base</li> <li>▪ Recognize and groom talent</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<p><u>Predicted Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New and improved cultural facilities</li> <li>▪ Emerging cultural liveliness with new arts groups</li> <li>▪ More local artists &amp; arts groups gaining international recognition</li> <li>▪ More public participation in cultural activities</li> </ul>	<p><u>Potential Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing appetite for foreign productions threatens local arts development</li> <li>▪ Smaller local cultural groups feel left out</li> <li>▪ Risk of the arts catering only to elite taste</li> </ul>



## CHAPTER 3

### RE-IMAGING GLASGOW THROUGH THE ARTS – POST-INDUSTRIAL GLASGOW AS A EUROPEAN CITY OF CULTURE

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Glasgow's urban regeneration efforts have been well documented in the urban planning literature<sup>21</sup>. The arts have played a crucial role in this regeneration process and have produced both quantifiable short-term economic benefits and the less tangible benefits of enhancing Glasgow's international image and profile. The story of Glasgow is one of a predominantly externally-oriented cultural planning approach with the intent of attracting economic investment and generating tourist receipts through an image makeover of the city. Glasgow's Lord Provost (equivalent of a mayor), Dr Michael Kelly, who actively pushed for the city's re-imaging initiative in the 1980s, admitted that "I wasn't aiming it at the people of Glasgow. I was aiming outside Glasgow"<sup>22</sup>. Glasgow is one of the classic cases of how a city suffering from industrial decline attempted to re-image itself as a "city of art" (in this case, beginning as the European City of Culture<sup>23</sup> in 1990<sup>24</sup>) to achieve its economic objectives. Despite all the fanfare, this approach of using the arts as an instrument for economic development and urban regeneration has not escaped criticism. Indeed, the discussions about the problems of Glasgow's City of Culture event were as heated as those about its benefits.

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<sup>21</sup> See Donnison and Middleton (1987); Boyle (1990); Bianchini (1991); Middleton (1991); Wishart (1991); Cowan and Lindsay (1993); Pacione (1995).

<sup>22</sup> <http://www.inside-scotland.co.uk/renfrewshire/express/CAMPAIGN/image.html>.

<sup>23</sup> The European City of Culture program was first initiated in 1985 by Melina Mercouri, then Greece's Minister of Culture. It was conceived as a means of bringing European citizens closer together through cultural sharing but since Glasgow 1990, many cities have started using it as a platform for economic development (Landry, 2002). In 1999, the designation has been renamed European Capital of Culture. I have chosen to use European City of Culture in this thesis as Glasgow was designated the title before the program was renamed.

<sup>24</sup> Prior to 2000, the designation of European City of Culture was confined to one country per year. 1990 was the UK's year to be designated. Hence, Glasgow was chosen from a group of nine UK cities that submitted bids to host the event.

As shown in the previous chapter, Singapore's vision of a "Renaissance City" is both globally- and locally-oriented. The former orientation, similar to the case of Glasgow, is directed at image building and economic development. Glasgow serves as a good example for Singapore to study in this respect. How has Glasgow employed its two decades of experience in using the arts to enhance its international image? What kind of institutional setup was put in place to facilitate this change? What benefits did the city gain in the process? What were the criticisms of the approach? The answers to these questions will be very useful in informing Singapore's urban cultural planning strategy and helping it achieve its vision of a "Renaissance City".

I begin by providing a historical backdrop on Glasgow, documenting its rise and decline as an industrial city. I will then elaborate on the key agencies that were involved in the re-imaging of Glasgow and the resources that were employed in the City of Culture event. The details of how these agencies orchestrated Glasgow's transformation are discussed in the next section. I then provide an analysis of the impact of the City of Culture event. Before concluding, some lessons for Singapore are extracted from the Glasgow experience.

### **3.2 HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

Glasgow is the largest city in Scotland with an area of 68 square miles and a current population of 609,370. It first prospered from the trade in tobacco with the Americas in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. This was followed by the profitable textile manufacture of linen and cotton that saw Glasgow's continued economic growth throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Pacione, 1995). Endowed with local coal and ironstone reserves, Glasgow was also involved in railway engine manufacturing. However, it was shipbuilding that sealed Glasgow's status as one of the heavy engineering capitals and as an industrial city of world standing (Booth and Boyle, 1993). By the turn of the century, it added marine engineering and locomotive manufacture (e.g. sewing machine manufacture, motor vehicle production, specialized steel production, armament production, etc.) to its economic core



(Keating, 1988). Due to the prospering economy, Glasgow's population expanded rapidly from 77,000 in 1801 to 300,000 in 1851, reaching 785,000 before the First World War. Its rapid economic ascent earned the city the title of "Second City of the Empire" (Oakley, 1975).

Just as these industries propelled Glasgow's economic rise, the over-reliance on them also accounted for its decline. The lack of investment in new technologies and the emergence of strong competition for its markets from abroad combined to enervate Glasgow's industrial economy (Boyle and Hughes, 1991). The post 1918 slump and the depression of the 1930s also exposed the vulnerability of Glasgow's heavy industries to stagnation in world trade (Booth and Boyle, 1993). The underlying structural problem in the economy, however, was masked by the huge demand for heavy industry products during the Second World War (Gomez, 1998). When the war ended, the full impact of these moribund industries was felt.

With its economic core in terminal decline, Glasgow's entire manufacturing base was dragged into a downward spiral. A total of 96,769 jobs were lost between 1971 and 1983. Checkland (1981) uses the metaphor of the Upas tree to describe the deteriorating economic situation in Glasgow:

"The Upas tree of heavy engineering killed everything that sought to grow under its branches... now the Upas tree, so long ailing, was decaying, its limbs falling away one by one. Not only had it been inimical to other growths, it had, by an inversion of its condition before 1914, brought about limitation of its own performance."

Moreover, Glasgow also suffered from a poor image stemming from low quality housing, militant labor and an industrial character that was unpleasant to live in.

Faced with the severe nature of its urban blight, city officials felt the urgent need to launch an economic regeneration program to attract capital investment from external sources as well as tourism revenue. However, the negative image

of Glasgow proved to be its biggest problem in attaining this objective (Paddison, 1993). As Taylor (1990: 2) observed,

“Glasgow was seen as the City of mean streets and mean people, razor gangs, the Gorbals slums, of smoke, grime, and fog, of drunks, impenetrable accents and communists.”

The city quickly realized that remaking its unsavory image would have to be a key part of any urban renewal strategy it attempted. “A new look, it was hoped, might stimulate key decision-makers to invest in the city, and might attract important personnel by persuading them that a move to Glasgow would mean a better quality of life” (Boyle and Hughes, 1991: 220). It was with this realization that the image-building campaign was initiated with the arts becoming the central feature in the promotion of post-industrial Glasgow.

### **3.3 KEY AGENCIES & RESOURCES**

Such a campaign required an institutional set up that involved various agencies to drive it. The attempt to transform Glasgow, in part through its designation as the European City of Culture, involved the combined effort of different levels of government (Table 3.1). However, the key agencies spearheading changes were the Scottish Development Agency, the Glasgow District Council and Glasgow Action. Generally, a top-down decision-making structure was adopted.

#### **3.3.1 Key Agencies Spearheading Glasgow’s Transformation**

The Scottish Development Agency (SDA), a regional agency, was created in 1975 and headquartered in Glasgow. It functioned as both an economic development corporation and an environment improvement agency (Pacione, 1995). Its key task was to regenerate the Scottish economy although many of its efforts were directed at Glasgow. Throughout the 1980s, SDA provided financial support for landscaping, stone cleaning and floodlighting of buildings, which helped to highlight the architectural strengths of the city (Booth and Boyle, 1993). SDA also subsidized “flagship” schemes such as the Scottish Exhibition and Conference Center (Boyle, 1988) and coordinated the *Glasgow Garden Festival*

in 1988. As will be shown later, both were part of the effort to position the city as a serious contender for the title of European City of Culture.

**Table 3.1** Levels of government involved in the City of Culture 1990

Government Level	Agency	Role/Contribution
Supra-National	European Community (currently known as European Union)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Designated “City of Culture”</li> <li>▪ Provided some funding for the City of Culture event</li> </ul>
National	UK Office of Arts and Libraries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provided some funding for the City of Culture event</li> </ul>
Regional	<b>Scottish Development Agency</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Facilitated Glasgow’s overall economic development and environmental improvement</li> <li>▪ Created Glasgow Action</li> </ul>
City	<b>Glasgow District Council</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Led Glasgow’s re-imaging efforts</li> <li>▪ Provided primary funding for the City of Culture event</li> </ul>
	Strathclyde Regional Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provided major funding for the City of Culture event</li> </ul>
Local	<b>Glasgow Action</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Provided private sector linkages for public development initiatives</li> <li>▪ Encouraged private sponsors for the City of Culture event</li> </ul>

In 1984, SDA commissioned McKinsey & Co. to conduct an extensive study of Glasgow’s economy (McKinsey & Co, 1984). The report concluded that Glasgow should plan for a post-industrial future and use place marketing projects as the central policy tool to attract post-industrial investment (Gomez, 1998). Promotion of the arts was to become an important part of this strategy. The report further suggested that such a strategy should be led by an independent private organization (Boyle, 1988).

Based on the report, SDA established Glasgow Action in 1985, a public-private partnership organization, which became another key agency working at the local level in Glasgow’s transformation. SDA approached a group of prominent local businessmen as board members and asked the chairman of a successful local printing and packaging firm, Sir Norman Macfarlane, (who was also an existing SDA board member) to lead the board of Glasgow Action. All the board members were well connected in Glasgow and the Scottish business

community, having close links with the local Chamber of Commerce and Scottish financial institutions (Boyle, 1990). In the classic style of public-private partnership, modeled after growth coalitions in American cities such as Boston and Baltimore (McCarthy and Pollock, 1997), the public sector was also represented on the board by two politicians from the Glasgow District Council and the Strathclyde Regional Council. This arrangement provided public agencies access to private sector resources and facilitated private sector participation in public development initiatives. It helped to build close working relations between the public and private sectors and ensured that development goals were aligned.

While the activities and the style of management clearly suggested that the leadership, control, and direction of Glasgow Action were firmly located in the private sector, the organization was effectively a public body. It was funded solely by SDA; its staff were employees of the Agency; its office was located with SDA; its activities were recorded in SDA's annual reports; and its Director (seconded from SDA) was listed alongside SDA's Regional Directors. "Essentially, Glasgow Action seeks to use its private sector profile and its public sector resources to function as a development catalyst, stimulating ideas, projects and schemes, building the appropriate connections among different actors in the process of urban development and promotion" (Boyle, 1990: 124). Indeed, SDA actively encouraged Glasgow Action to come up with ideas for image improvement with the Glasgow District Council (Keating, 1988).

The Glasgow District Council (GDC) is a city level agency, and its role in trying to transform Glasgow cannot be overemphasized. As Booth and Boyle (1993) observe, the city's adaptation to a post-industrial world was largely dependent on the Council's vigorous approach to urban marketing. As will be discussed in greater detail later, GDC's launch of the *Glasgow's Miles Better* campaign in 1983 was the first step towards positioning Glasgow as a "city of art". Hence, even before the concept of the European City of Culture was conceived

in 1985, “Glasgow had been quietly establishing its right to be considered as a great city of the arts” (Daiches, 1977: 253).

Throughout the 1980s, GDC worked closely with SDA, Glasgow Action and the Strathclyde Regional Council (another city level agency) to enhance the image of the city and attract both foreign investment and tourists. In 1986, GDC coordinated and made a formal submission for consideration as European City of Culture 1990 (Glasgow District Council, 1987a, 1987b). Upon the successful bid, in 1987 GDC established a Festival Unit to coordinate the events for 1990. Headed by Robert Palmer and assisted by Neil Wallace, both internationally known figures in the British arts scene, the Festival Unit was tasked to raise Glasgow’s status in the international arts firmament in the years leading up to 1990 as well as to develop a visible, high profile program for the year to mark Glasgow’s designation as the European City of Culture, indirectly proclaiming its arrival into the post-industrial era.

### **3.3.2 Resources Employed for the City of Culture Event**

Extensive resources were directed towards the promotion, planning and implementation of the City of Culture event. Publicity for the event started as soon as Glasgow’s successful bid for the European City of Culture was announced in October 1986 and was sustained throughout the years leading up to 1990. Saatchi and Saatchi, one of the biggest international advertising agencies, was appointed to publicize Glasgow’s year as European City of Culture. They were responsible for coining the slogan for the year: *There’s a lot Glasgowing on in 1990*. Saatchi and Saatchi splashed the promotion campaign across international newspapers and carried out extensive media advertising (Diamond, 1996). The Chief Public Relations Officer of GDC, Harry Diamond, recalls that by the dawn of 1990 the publicity work was virtually done and a special press office was established to handle the world’s news media. Saatchi

and Saatchi's publicity efforts alone cost £2.5mil (approximately US\$4.5mil<sup>25</sup>) (Diamond, 1996).

The planning and implementation of the 1990 event required substantial financial resources drawn from various agencies. GDC was the largest contributor to the event (Table 3.2). Of the £35mil (approximately US\$62.5mil) it contributed, £15mil (approximately US\$26.8mil) from the special arts fund was used to subsidize events, provide guarantees against losses by performing groups, and provide seed money to get various projects started (Diamond, 1996). The Strathclyde Regional Council was the next largest contributor while the impact of Glasgow Action was also significant as evidenced by the substantial private sponsor contributions. The total expenditure for the City of Culture event amounted up to £53.5mil (approximately US\$95.5mil) (Booth and Boyle, 1993).

**Table 3.2** Financial resources for the City of Culture event

Agency	Financial Contribution	
Glasgow District Council	£35.0mil (£15.0mil – special arts fund)	[US\$62.5mil] [(US\$26.8mil)]
Strathclyde Regional Council	£12.0mil	[US\$21.4mil]
Private Sponsors	£5.5mil	[US\$9.8mil]
UK Office of Arts and Libraries	£0.5mil	[US\$0.9mil]
European Community	£0.5mil	[US\$0.9mil]
<b>Total</b>	<b>£53.5mil</b>	<b>[US\$95.5mil]</b>

(Source: Booth and Boyle, 1993: 36)

What is noteworthy about the way key agencies were set up and the way resources were employed is that the agencies spearheading Glasgow's cultural development were actually those whose primary task was economic development, not those whose previous responsibilities included the arts and culture. Until the Festival Unit was set up (three years before Glasgow was to host the City of Culture event), there was no dedicated agency in charge of developing the arts in Glasgow. Even with the Festival Unit in action, no cultural

<sup>25</sup> The exchange rate used in this chapter is based on the average rate in 1990 of £1.00 = US\$1.785.

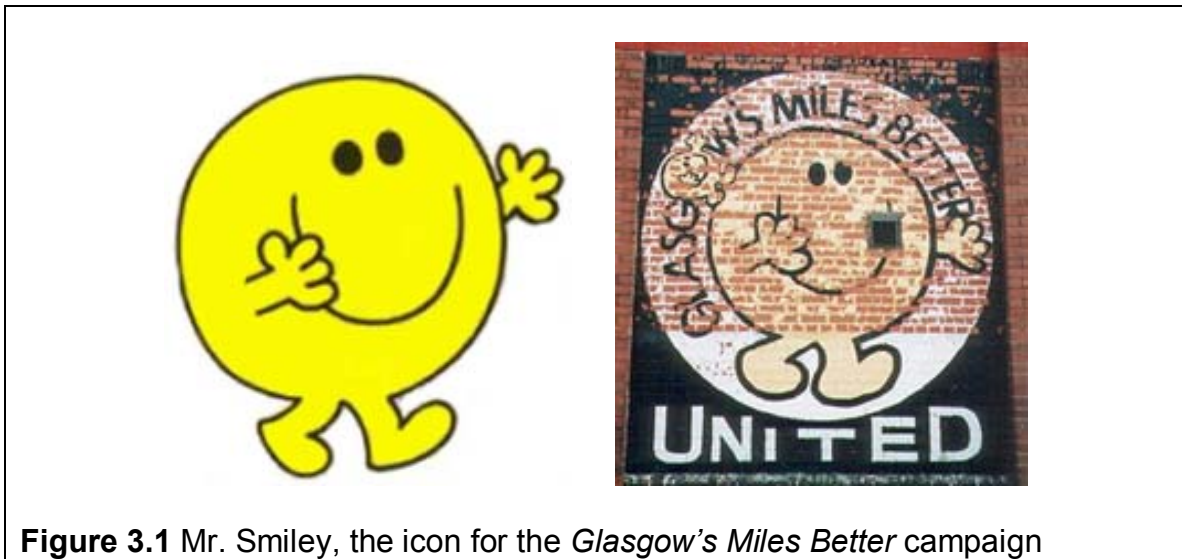
plan was developed to guide Glasgow's arts development. As Lim (1993: 592) notes, "Glasgow's approach has been a mixture of measured incrementalism and opportunistic adventurism bolstered with leadership from the coalition of the Scottish Development Agency, Glasgow Action, Glasgow District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council."

### **3.4 POSITIONING GLASGOW AS A EUROPEAN CITY OF CULTURE**

Glasgow's attempt to transform itself from an industrial city in crisis to a post-industrial city, boasting the accolade of European City of Culture, was not an overnight affair. The agencies gradually developed Glasgow's cultural standing throughout the 1980s, albeit without any cultural plan to guide them. Here, I examine the key strategies that were used to build up Glasgow's image, culminating in its year-long celebration as the European City of Culture in 1990.

#### **3.4.1 Proactive & High Profile Place Marketing**

"Hard-selling" the city was undoubtedly one of the key strategies adopted by the lead agencies to project a new image for Glasgow in the international arena. The *Glasgow's Miles Better* campaign launched by GDC in 1983 was arguably the event that started the whole momentum for change. Devised by John Struthers, a Glaswegian advertiser, the witty *Glasgow's Miles Better* slogan struck a cord with the Lord Provost, Dr Michael Kelly. Impressed by the success of the *I love NY* campaign, Dr Kelly, who was hoping to create a similar effect for Glasgow, quickly convinced the city council to put up £150,000 (approximately US\$267,750) and the business community to contribute £200,000 (approximately US\$357,000) towards a full-scale promotion. The campaign, easily and affectionately recognizable by the Mr. Smiley icon (Figure 3.1), was launched at the city's hotels, museums, parks, restaurants and sporting facilities. Advertisements were also placed in the local and national press as well as in a number of specialized journals targeted at the international business community. Promotional items like badges, car stickers, umbrellas, T-shirts and plastic bags, all donning the new logo, were also widely distributed.



In addition to the advertisements and promotional items, the “Miles Better” theme was also injected into every possible press story about Glasgow. GDC also took its campaign to London, selling Glasgow on the sides of double-decker buses, taxis and inside subway and railway stations. Even the Queen was deliberately photographed under an umbrella bearing the logo (Diamond, 1996). Basically, GDC spared no opportunity to market the campaign and it quickly caught on with the international news media. For the city, this campaign was so successful that it was revived more than a decade later in 1996 with an initial cost of £100,000 (approximately US\$178,500) (Diamond, 1996).

Such “unabashed self-promotion” (Booth and Boyle, 1993: 30) became the ubiquitous symbol of a changed city. It tried to define Glasgow’s new found role in the service sector, and particularly in the arts. As Myerscough (1988b) showed, in the 1980s there were more Glaswegians working in the arts than building ships in the Clyde. The *Glasgow’s Miles Better* campaign was thus built on the belief that Glasgow should be proud of its artistic and cultural heritage and that the arts and culture should be used to the city’s advantage (Booth and Boyle, 1993). This campaign hence started to position Glasgow as a significant cultural center in Europe.



Similar high profile marketing was carried out subsequently. The *Glasgow's Miles Better* campaign was succeeded by *Glasgow's Alive!* in 1989 while an international advertising agent, Saatchi and Saatchi, devised the slogan *There's a lot Glasgowing on in 1990* for the year-long City of Culture celebration, as mentioned earlier. Appointing Saatchi and Saatchi to promote the City of Culture event revealed the city agencies' objectives for capturing the title. 1990 was to be an extension of the city's 1983 campaign. While the first campaign was to alter outsiders' rough and unattractive image of Glasgow, the City of Culture event was to demonstrate Glasgow's cultural richness, reinforcing its international profile. Unlike previous European Cities of Culture whose cultural reputations were well established internationally<sup>26</sup>, "Glasgow would use the title to further its establishment as an international post-industrial city with a growing cultural tourism appeal" (Booth and Boyle, 1993: 32). Hence, in the case of Glasgow, the title was bringing status to the city rather than the status of the city bringing the title (Taggart, 1987). As Boyle and Hughes (1991: 221) note, the aggressive way in which the place marketing campaign was carried out was also evidence of

"a conscious attempt, by professional marketers, to fashion a new identity for the city of Glasgow. The new image has been constructed from the drawing board and exposed to Glaswegians in a marketing campaign for a year... we might think of this image therefore, not as one sedimented down the years in Glaswegian consciousness but one which encourages thinking about Glasgow in new terms, i.e. without having direct reference back to any external reality."

This rather top-down approach was to become one of the criticisms of the event.

### **3.4.2 Build Up & Enhance Cultural Assets**

Building on the momentum established by the city marketing campaigns, SDA, GDC and Glasgow Action worked to build up and enhance the city's cultural assets. Adopting what Bianchini (1991) identified as a consumption-

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<sup>26</sup> Before Glasgow, the cities that earned the European City of Culture title were Athens (1985), Florence (1986), Amsterdam (1987), Berlin (1988) and Paris (1989).

based strategy, which uses the arts to develop and enhance tourism infrastructure, new cultural facilities and programs, complementing existing cultural resources were developed to establish the city's reputation as an arts hub. To begin with, Glasgow was already home to the Scottish Opera, the Scottish Ballet, the Scottish National Orchestra, the Scottish Theater Company, the Scottish Early Music Consort and the Citizens' Theater (Coveney, 1990). In terms of developing its physical assets, a new art gallery housing the internationally renowned Burrell Collection (Figure 3.2) was opened the same year the *Glasgow's Miles Better* campaign was launched. This attracted a large number of visitors and it quickly became the most visited attraction in Scotland other than Edinburgh Castle. This was undoubtedly a catalyst that stimulated further development (Booth and Boyle, 1993).

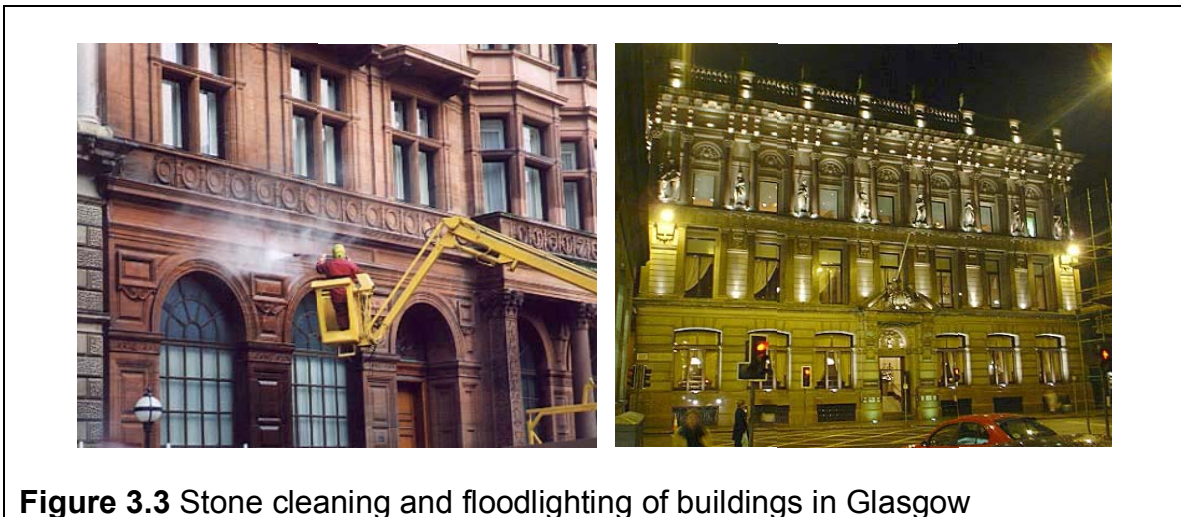


**Figure 3.2** The Burrell Collection

Besides the Burrell Collection, new cultural infrastructure was also built and refurbished throughout the 1980s. The Scottish Exhibition and Conference Center, a SDA subsidized project, was inaugurated in 1985 while the newly built Royal College of Music and Drama was opened in 1987. In 1988, the former Museum of Transport was converted into Tramway, a venue for contemporary visual and performing arts (Cameron, 1992). GDC also financed most of the

construction of the 2,500-seat Glasgow Royal Concert Hall and the refurbishment of the McLellan Galleries, the largest air-conditioned exhibition space outside London. Both facilities opened just in time for the City of Culture event in 1990. As can be seen, there was a heavy emphasis on developing cultural hardware to build up Glasgow's standing in the arts world. These cultural facilities not only served as assets to attract cultural tourists but also provided hard evidence for the post-industrial image Glasgow was trying to project, hence drawing new investment into the city. Daiches (1977: 253) was thus prophetic to suggest that Glasgow "will have a place of rank as an art center among European cities".

As more tourists visited the city, there was a need to enhance its physical environment. SDA and GDC, working with the private sector through Glasgow Action, thus started a series of landscaping, stone cleaning and floodlighting projects. Sauchiehall Street, one of the main shopping streets in the city center, was converted to pedestrian use. Stone cleaning of city buildings also helped to enhance the appearance of Glasgow's fine Victorian buildings and architectural gems designed by famous architect, Charles Rennie Mackintosh. Floodlighting provided another quick means of enhancing the image of the city at relatively low outlay (Figure 3.3). By the early 1990s, over 100 floodlighting projects had been completed (Cowan and Lindsay, 1993).



**Figure 3.3** Stone cleaning and floodlighting of buildings in Glasgow

In terms of programming, in 1984 Glasgow launched *Mayfest*, a month-long arts festival intended to be Glasgow's answer to the well-established *Edinburgh International Festival* (Hewison, 1995). However, GDC soon realized that having only one event in the month of May and not throughout the entire summer months, when most tourists are traveling, was not enough. An *International Jazz Festival*, a *Choral Festival* and a *Festival of Folk Music and Dance* were thus quickly initiated in 1985 to be held annually between May and September to enliven the summer months and attract more tourists.

These new cultural facilities and programs quickly became part of the marketing literature, promoting the city for cultural tourism, inward investment and business. As can be seen, since the early 1980s the arts have held center stage in the promotion of a post-industrial Glasgow. The strategy of building up and enhancing cultural assets throughout the 1980s certainly helped to contribute to Glasgow's image as a "city of art". Glasgow was thus able to defeat Bath, Bristol, Cambridge, Cardiff, Edinburgh, Leeds, Liverpool and Swansea for the coveted title of European City of Culture in 1990.

### **3.4.3 Host Cultural Spectacles Involving Famous Cultural Acts**

With one strategy to aggressively market Glasgow and another to develop its cultural assets, a third strategy to host highly visible cultural spectacles, showcasing famous artists and cultural groups was intended to consolidate Glasgow's international reputation as a cultural mecca. GDC explicitly defined one of the objectives of 1990 as being "to celebrate Glasgow as the cultural capital of Europe in 1990 by developing a *visible high profile program of cultural activity*" (Myerscough, 1992: 324, emphasis added). The large scale nature of these events and the presence of famous international artists and arts groups were typical characteristics of these events, further evidence of Glasgow's consumption-focused cultural strategy.

The 1988 *Glasgow Garden Festival*<sup>27</sup>, funded and coordinated by SDA, was undoubtedly one such spectacle. Although this was largely intended to be a garden event, Glasgow injected a strong cultural component into it by incorporating art performances at the festival. To complement the festival, GDC also established a £500,000 fund (approximately US\$892,500) with the objective of creating 900 cultural events featuring opera, classical music, children's projects, community events and anything else that would heighten the air of festivity in the city during the year (Diamond, 1996). Attractions at the *Glasgow Garden Festival* itself included a Coca Cola Thrill Ride; a 250-foot tower celebrating Clydesdale Bank's 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary; the Bell's Bridge, the first footbridge built across River Clyde in 120 years; the biggest tea pot in the world; 24-foot metal and glass fiber irises; six major theme areas; and 112 gardens (Figure 3.4). Adding an air of aristocracy and a touch of star quality to the event, the Royal couple, Prince Charles and Princess Diana, was also invited to open the event (Diamond, 1996).



**Figure 3.4** The *Glasgow Garden Festival* featuring the Coca Cola Thrill Ride

<sup>27</sup> The idea of garden festivals originated in Essen, Germany in 1937 and the concept quickly spread throughout Europe after the Second World War. The idea was to convert derelict areas through large scale garden events in hope that it would stimulate further development after the event was over. Britain held four Garden Festivals: Liverpool (1984), Stoke-on-Trent (1986), Glasgow (1988) and Ebbw Vale (1992) (Diamond, 1996).

In every way, the *Glasgow Garden Festival* was a spectacle. The hyperbolic expressions used to describe the event in the newspapers were perhaps one of the testaments to that: “Britain’s biggest consumer event of the year”; “the most spectacular and exciting event of 1988”; “a celebration symbolizing the continual quest for improved standards of living” (Diamond, 1996). Not only did this event help to further improve the international image of Glasgow, it also set the standard for future Cities of Culture to meet.

If the five-month garden festival event in 1988 was considered big, the year-long City of Culture celebration in 1990 would be nothing less than mega. Robert Palmer, head of the Festival Unit, admitted that one of the key strategies for 1990 was to attract high profile international performing companies (Hewison, 1995). Described as a year of “unceasing cultural bonanza, possibly to the point of surfeit” (Middleton, 1991: 118), the celebration involved 3,439 public events; performers from 23 countries; 40 major works commissioned in the performing and visual arts; 60 world premieres in theater, dance and music; 656 theatrical productions; 3,122 musical performances; and 1,091 exhibitions. The Festival Unit used a series of prestigious events involving world famous artists to raise the international profile of Glasgow. They included an exhibition featuring paintings by Van Gogh; a theater production by famous producer Peter Brook; a play directed by renowned director Ingmar Bergman; an opera by the Bolshoi Opera Company; performances by the Berlin Philharmonic Orchestra; and concerts featuring famous stars like Frank Sinatra and Luciano Pavarotti.

According to Lim (1993: 592), 1990 was an important platform for Glasgow because:

“[f]irst, it provided a hook on to which the achievements of prior regeneration projects could be hung and, second, it opened the door for the use of the arts as a component of economic planning.”

Glasgow was sold as a place buzzing with enthusiasm for the arts and the Queen was often quoted as saying that “Glasgow leads from the front in matters

artistic” (Glasgow District Council, 1989: 1). The strategy of promoting cultural spectacles with well-known artists and arts groups was the final step towards Glasgow’s transformation. With the 1990 celebration, the Festival Unit thus boldly proclaimed that:

“Glasgow’s days as a great industrial city are over... Glasgow’s post-industrial future will stem in large part from its civic heritage and cultural wealth... With Glasgow perceived as a great city of culture, we can expect arts related tourism to grow – and with that comes jobs (Glasgow 1990 Festival Office, 1990: 20).”

Thus, while it was wealth that traditionally produced art, for Glasgow it was pretty much the reverse (Middleton, 1991).

### **3.5 IMPACTS OF THE EUROPEAN CITY OF CULTURE EVENT**

The strategies used to attract inward investment and cultural tourists did pay off to a certain extent but the approach of using the arts as an instrument for development also engendered substantial criticism. In this section, I will highlight both the achievements and problems encountered in planning, promoting and implementing the City of Culture event.

#### **3.5.1 Gains & Achievements**

In terms of benefits, the City of Culture event not only improved the image of Glasgow but also left behind economic and cultural legacies. UK’s Culture Secretary, Chris Smith said:

“Glasgow shows, I believe, how effective a year’s festival and a particular and prestigious designation can actually do. It has certainly improved the image and self respect of the city. It also provided an economic legacy for the city. There was much in terms of economic regeneration which spun off the back of what was happening for the City of Culture, and it also helped the process of social regeneration. For the city, it represented a real step change in the way in which it regarded itself, and how the outside world regarded it, and much of the physical fabric of the city began to improve as a result of that” (cited in *The Western Mail*, April 12, 2002).

John Myerscough, who monitored the impact of the 1990 event on Glasgow, generally found favorable results to back this remark (Myerscough, 1992). Acknowledging that there are limitations to his study, the findings, nonetheless, do serve as a helpful guide to start evaluating the outcomes of hosting the event.

### ***Improved Image & Perception of the City***

Generally, the City of Culture event was widely considered to have successfully portrayed Glasgow as a dynamic and sophisticated city, placing it as an important tourist destination (Boyle and Hughes, 1991; Hughes and Boyle, 1992). Measuring outsiders' perception of the city found that there was a 15 percentage point increase between 1989 and 1990 in the belief that Glasgow was rapidly changing for the better. Among Glaswegians, almost everyone surveyed agreed that the 1990 program improved the public image of Glasgow and 61% thought the program made the city a more pleasant place to live (Myerscough, 1992). Wishart (1991: 52) notes that Glasgow has "become a 'fashionable' city, and those who come to examine its inner workings pronounce it exciting, speak of the perennial 'buzz' to be found there and compare it to a small scale New York". Holcomb (1993) thus concludes that the image of Glasgow, both within and outside the city, has been radically reconstructed.

### ***Generated Short-Term Economic Gains***

With regards to economic gains, there were marked short-term benefits. It was found that the event generated a net economic return of £10.3mil to £14.1mil (approximately US\$18.4mil-US\$25.2mil) and created approximately 5,500 new jobs. In 1990, the cultural sector alone supported approximately 21,500 jobs (equivalent to 2.8% of the economically active population). Tourist visits to arts events and attractions also increased by 81% between 1986 and 1990 (Myerscough, 1992). In 1990, the celebration attracted an estimated 3 million visitors (Wishart, 1991) and hotel bed occupancy and room occupancy also increased by 39% and 35% respectively (Booth and Boyle, 1993). The city also claimed that its promotional efforts had resulted in greater inward investment.



Between 1986 and 1991, 18 service organizations were attracted to the city, creating 7,340 jobs (Law, 2002).

### ***Stimulated Some Cultural Development***

In terms of cultural legacies, besides the above-mentioned list of the new and refurbished cultural facilities that were added to the city landscape in preparation for the 1990 celebration, a variety of theater, music and arts groups as well as new festivals were spawned as a result of the City of Culture event<sup>28</sup>. Myerscough (1992) also found that attendance at theaters, halls, museums and galleries jumped by 40%, rising from 4.7mil in 1989 to 6.6mil in 1990. The proportion of Glaswegians attending cultural events increased in all art forms, bringing Glasgow above British averages and suggesting an increasing interest in the arts. He thus concluded that, overall, the year-long celebration delivered “a major boost to Glasgow’s cultural system” (Myerscough, 1992: 327).

### **3.5.2 Problems & Criticisms**

Just as there was praise for the event, criticism of the celebration abounded. The emphasis on using aggressive place marketing to re-image Glasgow for economic objectives resulted in critics branding the year of culture as “the year of the vulture” (Kemp, 1990: 13). The need to project images conducive to inward investment and tourism also meant that there was a heavy reliance on prestigious art events or flagship developments, in which organizers were accused of “put[ting] cosmetics before culture” (Kemp, 1990: 5).

### ***Economic Objectives Prioritized above Cultural Development***

One of the main criticisms of the 1990 event was that the economic emphasis on attracting inward investment and tourist revenue was prioritized above cultural advancement (McLay, 1990; McGrath, 1990; Damer, 1990). In the eyes of the event organizers, this may not be a valid criticism because the City of

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<sup>28</sup> Examples include Call That Singing, a 500-strong choir; Jewish Arts, which organizes concerts, recitals, art exhibitions, children’s events and talks by famous writers (Diamond, 1996); and Street Biz, an annual festival of street theater and buskers (Wishart, 1991).

Culture event was intended to be one of the stimuli for economic revitalization in Glasgow's declining industrial economy. But to others, especially the arts community, this situation was viewed as a misplacement of priorities and was thus problematic. McLay (1990: 87), for instance, felt that "the great year of culture has more to do with power politics than culture; more to do with millionaire developers than art." McGrath (1990) echoed similar sentiments, acknowledging that the City of Culture event was primarily embraced as an economic tool to be used in Glasgow's regeneration. Booth and Boyle (1993: 40) thus note that:

"The use of a program of events meant that any development of the cultural industries was largely overlooked and led to a concentration upon cultural tourism... arts venues such as theaters, concerts halls, performance space and galleries would be stimulated to create growth in the tourism and leisure industries but the cultural industries that produce artistic goods and performances would be left to look after themselves and respond to market forces... Tourism has expanded but it gives rise to an emphasis upon the servicing of the visitor rather than the development of local talent and cultural industries."

Hence, the City of Culture celebration can be viewed as a cultural event only in name but generating limited *real* cultural benefits for Glasgow. Indeed, "[t]here is plenty of creation, but relatively little creativity" (Richards, 2000: 187).

### ***Sustainability of Economic Gains & Uneven Distribution of Economic Benefits***

Despite having a fundamentally economic objective, the City of Culture event was also criticized for generating hardly any sustained long-term economic benefits and for the fact that whatever short-term gains were realized, they were not well distributed. As Young (1992) underlines, Glasgow's image may have improved, but it has a long way to go before it achieves economic momentum and work for its people. Workers City, a group of Left wing activists, was one of the most vocal critics of the 1990 celebration. To this group, Glasgow was simply a pawn in the capitalist game in which multinational companies would milk

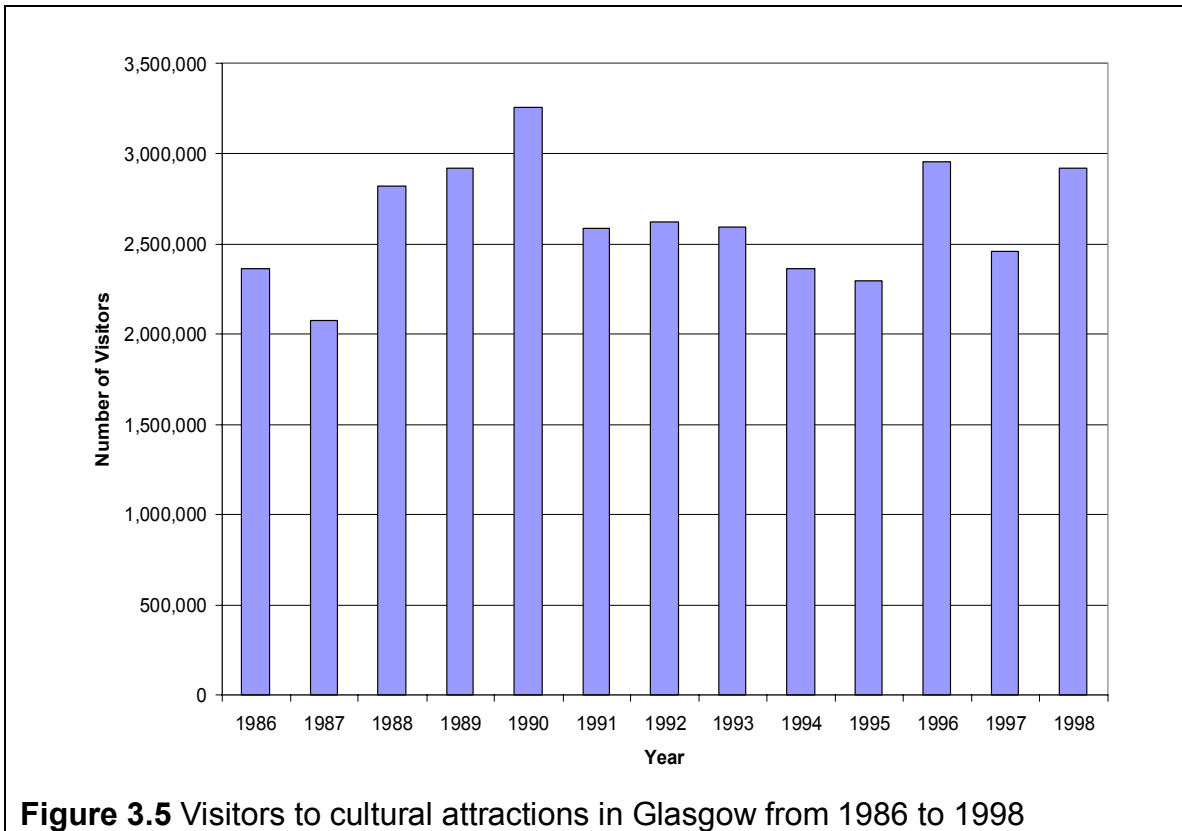
Glasgow for all its worth while it was still fashionable before moving on to abuse other cities once the event was over (Boyle and Hughes, 1991).

Indeed, the economic benefits found in Myerscough's study (1992) were essentially short-lived. Richards (2000) reports that by January 1991, surveys carried out in the UK indicated that the perception of Glasgow as an increasingly important arts city had slipped by three percentage points as compared to September 1990 and its rating as an exciting place to visit had also fallen by five percentage points over the same period. While it is within reason to expect the level of economic activity to fall after a year-long mega-event has ended, it is also realistic to anticipate some kind of overall upward economic trend over the longer term as a legacy of the event. This, however, was not evident. While the number of visitors to Glasgow's cultural attractions increased in 1990, this figure fell after the event ended and remained stagnant or dipped further in the years following<sup>29</sup> (Figure 3.5). Visitor numbers did not recover until 1996, when the new Gallery of Modern Art was opened. Overnight visitors to Glasgow also dropped by nearly half in the early 1990s (Law, 2002). In terms of jobs, unemployment increased by 2.3% between July 1991 and July 1992 (Richards, 2000) and by 1993, local unemployment was recorded at 15% (Hewison, 1995).

It was also felt that the economic benefit of hosting the City of Culture event was unevenly distributed and brought little economic comfort for the average Glaswegian. While there were physical improvements in the fabric of the city and increases in the number of tourists, there were doubts as to whether these had been translated into real employment opportunities or had helped to fortify other economic sectors (Hayton, 1990).

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<sup>29</sup> The figures were based on visitors to the following attractions: Burrell Collection, Gallery of Modern Art, Hunterian Art Gallery, Hunterian Museum, McLellan Galleries, Museum of Transport, Peoples Palace Museum, Glasgow Art Gallery, Hutcheson's Hall, Tenement House and Pollock House.



**Figure 3.5** Visitors to cultural attractions in Glasgow from 1986 to 1998

(Source: Richards, 2000)

Like most public policy, it is only natural that the policy outcomes would benefit certain segments of the population more than others. However, Glasgow’s situation was criticized because it was overly selective in the people who benefited from the City of Culture event. Workers City argues that even where there were economic gains from the 1990 event, it only served to provide low-paid, part time, menial service jobs (McLay, 1988; 1990). Damer (1990) wrote extensively about the large number of Glaswegians still living on income support and located in parts of greater Glasgow designated as “areas of priority treatment”<sup>30</sup>. He asserts that the City of Culture event only benefited the business elites and civil servants, largely concentrated in the city center, at the expense of thousands of unemployed and low-paid workers living in peripheral estates. He remarked:

<sup>30</sup> “Areas of priority treatment” are places containing high concentrations of the most deprived households in Glasgow. These areas include Drumchapel, Maryhill, Easterhouse, Castlemilk and Pollok.

“the question has to be asked: Glasgow’s Miles Better for Whom? The short answer is: not for the bulk of Glaswegians” (Damer, 1990: 12-13).

Keating (1988: 195) therefore describes the result as a “dual city”, in which the residents of the peripheral estates remain both physically and economically removed from the city center.

Looking at the £4.6mil bill (approximately US\$8.2) for organizing *Glasgow’s Glasgow*, one of the large scale exhibitions on the history of the city, there were many doubts about whether “a poor city like Glasgow, with so many pressing urban problems and with nothing in particular to celebrate, should seek to emulate the expenditure of two of the richest European capitals [Berlin and Paris<sup>31</sup>] in the commemoration of great events in their history” (Kemp, 1990: 26). It was argued that money spent on the celebration could have been better used for needier causes to help improve the lives of the average Glaswegian, such as improving housing. In sum, Kemp (1990: 23) stated that “1990 has delivered Glasgow little more than hype.”

### ***Foreign Cultural Acts Generated Little Local Cultural Gains***

Beyond the economic criticisms, many people also felt that the City of Culture event was inimical to the local arts scene. The lack of a real cultural legacy from the City of Culture event has been partly attributed to that fact that much of its program relied on foreign artists and mega-events. Richards (2000) felt that 1990 generated limited gains in Glasgow’s cultural arena because cultural facilities in Glasgow were used to host external celebrities rather than to develop their own programming. Making a similar argument, Kemp (1990: 21-22) wrote:

“What has been so depressing about 1990 is that there has been no attempt to make it a showcase for Scottish culture. Instead we have had a ragbag of touring international acts foisted on us by

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<sup>31</sup> The *Glasgow’s Glasgow* exhibition concept was modeled after similar exhibitions held in Berlin (1987) as part of its 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration and in Paris (1989) as part of the Bicentennial of the French Revolution.

rootless cosmopolitans, the mercenaries of the arts circuit, recruited to 'do' 1990 for us... We never saw evidence of any effort to seek out excellence in any field of Scottish artistic activity and build around it... We got instead the usual run of traveling exhibitions that would probably have arrived in any year."

The quest by the event organizers to attract famous international acts for 1990 thus led Kemp (1990: 19-20) to wonder:

"Is it now the fact that a city with a 'cultural workforce' can now ignore its own 'culture'... and that a safe, packaged, bland, internationally-acceptable 'culture' will be provided for us by the 'cultural workforce' who now travel the world searching for art and theater in ever more far-flung and exotic locations?... Is 'culture', then, now merely a commodity, to be bought, sold or bartered, with no uniqueness or attachment to place."

Such a dependence on imported arts could be detrimental to the development of Glasgow's local arts scene in several ways. Firstly, as Boyle and Hughes (1991: 225) note, having many "[e]litist imported cultural events" could "displace working class community events." Also, the trend towards unthinking cultural internationalism might impede local cultural development as Glaswegians may make a fetish of visits by international companies, perceived to be *de facto* better than anything made in Scotland (Cameron, 1992). Further, the high cost of many of the imported events<sup>32</sup> also meant that these were irrelevant to the poorer sections of Glaswegian society. They were hence deprived of the opportunity to enrich themselves culturally because they had been priced out of the system. As Kemp (1990: 31) comments, "[i]t is not by, for or of the people of Glasgow. It is a classic example of cultural imperialism, done in the cause of economics".

Even when attempts were made to engage the local community through various community-based projects during 1990, it was noted that "few have been formally linked with job creation as it appears that no one was given this task as part of the 1990 organization" (Booth and Boyle, 1993: 41). This once again shows that the organizers of the City of Culture event were more concerned with

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<sup>32</sup> The Pavarotti and Sinatra concerts had a maximum ticket price of £75 (approximately US\$134).

importing foreign acts than developing the local cultural industries as the former is probably easier to accomplish.

### ***Spectacle-Making Efforts Overwhelmed Local Arts Scene***

The desire to make 1990 as spectacular as possible also saw the organizers predominantly emphasizing large scale cultural consumption activities. As mentioned earlier, numerous cultural mega-events were staged during the year-long celebration. To some of the smaller local cultural groups in the city, this was seen as a threat as these mega-events might overwhelm and crowd out the smaller players in the arts scene.

The sheer number of events throughout the year also reveals that the event organizers were more concerned with quantity than quality of programs. Kemp (1990: 24) notes:

“many Glaswegians are, I imagine already ‘cultured out’. They are confused about the purpose and direction of an event that seems to equate quantity with quality, and in which the gulf between the promise and the performance has often been breathtaking.”

The emphasis on creating many cultural consumption activities was inadvertently overwhelming the local arts scene. In the bid to make spectacles out of the 1990 celebration, the organizers overlooked the importance of the city’s own cultural growth through development of its local cultural producers.

### ***Presentation of a “Manufactured” Glasgow***

Presentation of an unauthentic image of Glasgow was another key criticism of the 1990 celebration. To achieve the objective of favorable place promotion, some events of the year often presented only sanitized versions of the city’s history and image, hence failing to relate to Glaswegians at large. As Boyle and Hughes (1991: 223) note, “PR [public relations] is fundamentally all about covering up the weak points and highlighting the good points. The implication is that this is no [*sic*] natural culture; it is synthetic, hyped up and manufactured”.

Workers City were affronted that much of the 1990 program had little relevance to the working-class cultural heritage of Glasgow (McLay, 1988). They took particular issue with an exhibition called *Glasgow's Glasgow* and a theater production called *The Ship. Glasgow's Glasgow*, the most expensive event for the year, was intended to showcase the city's historical development. Critics felt that the industrial history of the city was misrepresented and that it lacked coherence and critical awareness. It was condemned as "a ragbag of artifacts presented with a cacophony of noise in a claustrophobic space" (Kemp, 1990: 21). *The Ship*, on the other hand, was a re-enactment of the construction and launch of a ship performed at the banks of River Clyde to feature the importance of shipbuilding in Glasgow. This production was criticized for being sentimental and superficial, "reek[ing] of easy options and intellectual laziness... exploit[ing] that appetite for the past by twanging easily on the heart-strings and memory cells" (McMillan, 1990). Damer (1990: 211) protested that "[t]he culture of the city's working class is now being repackaged as some kind of anodyne and quaint survival instead of the result of two centuries' struggles." Workers City thus counterposed a slogan of *There's a lot of con going on in 1990* to the official *There's a lot Glasgowing on in 1990* (Boyle and Hughes, 1991), suggesting that the City of Culture event was essentially all form but little substance.

### **3.6 LESSONS FOR SINGAPORE**

What implications does Glasgow's experience have for Singapore's plan to develop itself as a "Renaissance City"? In this section, I highlight the relevance of the Glasgow experience to the Singapore context and evaluate Singapore's proposed strategies. Table 3.3 compares the Glasgow and Singapore experiences to facilitate the analysis.



**Table 3.3 Comparisons between Glasgow and Singapore**

	Glasgow	Singapore
<b>Characteristics</b>		
Policy Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predominantly externally-oriented</li> <li>▪ Develop post-industrial economy</li> <li>▪ Urban Regeneration</li> <li>▪ Image Improvement</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attempts to be both externally and internally-oriented</li> <li>▪ Develop creative economy</li> <li>▪ Social development and nation building</li> <li>▪ Enhance international cultural standing</li> </ul>
Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic growth through inward investment and tourism</li> <li>▪ Enhanced international profile</li> <li>▪ Foreign investors</li> <li>▪ Tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diverse and robust economy</li> <li>▪ Improved national image</li> <li>▪ Foreign investors and global talents</li> <li>▪ Tourists</li> </ul>
Desired Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mainly top-down</li> <li>▪ Directed by government agencies with inputs from consultants and business elites</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cohesive and gracious society</li> <li>▪ Vibrant and diverse arts scene</li> </ul>
Intended Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scottish Development Agency</li> <li>▪ Glasgow District Council</li> <li>▪ Glasgow Action (public-private partnership)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Singaporeans</li> <li>▪ Local artists</li> </ul>
Decision-Making Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely funded by city agencies</li> <li>▪ Private sector resources tapped through public-private partnership</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Top-down</li> <li>▪ Directed solely by government ministries with assistance from their respective statutory boards</li> </ul>
Lead Agencies / Key Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Several established cultural institutions but without a very high profile</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ministry of Information and the Arts</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Education</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Trade and Industry</li> </ul>
Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Started in the 1980s</li> <li>▪ None</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mainly funded by the government</li> <li>▪ Corporate sponsors fund individual cultural events on ad-hoc basis</li> </ul>
Pre-existing Cultural Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focused largely on cultural consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing cultural scene with several emerging cultural groups and artists</li> </ul>
Cultural Planning History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultants and event organizers employed to promote and program cultural activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely ad-hoc until late 1990s</li> <li>▪ <i>Renaissance City Report, 2000</i></li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focused largely on cultural consumption</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Government agencies spearhead most cultural development initiatives</li> </ul>
Strategic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place marketing campaigns</li> <li>▪ Cultural infrastructure development</li> <li>▪ Host visible cultural spectacles</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Main emphasis on cultural consumption with some attempt to focus on cultural production</li> <li>▪ Develop flagship and major arts companies</li> <li>▪ Go international</li> <li>▪ Develop an arts and cultural “renaissance” economy</li> <li>▪ Provide good infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>▪ Develop a strong arts and cultural base</li> <li>▪ Recognize and groom talent</li> </ul>
Specific Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actual Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved city image</li> <li>▪ Short-term economic benefits</li> <li>▪ New cultural facilities and programs added</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited gains to local cultural industries</li> <li>▪ Foreign cultural acts displaced some local cultural groups</li> <li>▪ “Unreal” city image projected</li> <li>▪ Limited long-term economic impact</li> <li>▪ Uneven distribution of benefits</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predicted Outcomes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New and improved cultural facilities</li> <li>▪ Emerging cultural liveliness with new arts groups</li> <li>▪ More local artists &amp; arts groups gaining international recognition</li> <li>▪ More public participation in cultural activities</li> </ul> </li> <li>▪ Potential Issues <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing appetite for foreign productions threatens local arts development</li> <li>▪ Smaller local cultural groups feel left out</li> <li>▪ Risk of the arts catering only to elite taste</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
Outcomes		

### **3.6.1 Developing Effective Public-Private Partnerships Can Be Beneficial**

The institutional setup is an important component of Glasgow's attempt to transform itself into a "city of art". One unique feature of Glasgow's institutional set up is the existence of Glasgow Action. SDA went to extensive lengths when forming this public-private organization to ensure that recruited board members would be helpful in forwarding the Agency's objectives, both politically and financially. The close and amicable working relationship between SDA and Glasgow Action was achieved by having an existing SDA board member head the board of Glasgow Action and seconding a SDA officer to Glasgow Action to direct its initiatives. This helped to align the development goals and strategies between the public and private sectors. As a result, the private sector was very supportive of many SDA schemes, including converting Sauchiehall Street to pedestrian use, stone cleaning and floodlighting city buildings. It also worked closely with GDC on ways to improve Glasgow's image. Arguably, its most significant contribution in terms of cultural development must be in convincing private sponsors to fork out £5.5mil (approximately US\$9.8mil) in support of the City of Culture event. Having an effective public-private partnership can thus be beneficial to cultural development.

In Singapore, there has always been a very clear line drawn between the public and the private sectors and the two are often set in opposition to one another. Nevertheless, there might be a possibility of pioneering public-private collaborations in the arts, similar to Glasgow Action, to break down the barriers and encourage greater cooperation between the two sectors. After all, the private sector does have a very crucial role in arts and cultural development by providing financial support.

One possible approach could be for public agencies (e.g. the National Arts Council and/or the Singapore Tourism Board) to work with various private corporations and cultural institutions to form a coalition to champion arts development in Singapore. This public-private organization could act as an

advisory panel for urban cultural policies and could also help to constantly look for additional financial resources to support the growth of the arts. However, caution should be taken to prevent such a partnership from developing into a downtown growth coalition in which only the interests of downtown business elites are addressed. Having a good mix of representatives from large and small organizations located in both downtown and the neighborhoods will be a crucial element to ensure that a wide range of stakeholders is represented in such an arts coalition and that their activities will not be dominated by downtown business interests.

### **3.6.2 Emphasis on Developing Cultural Hardware Alone is Insufficient**

As shown earlier, Glasgow placed a strong emphasis on developing cultural infrastructure throughout the 1980s. While adding new and refurbishing old cultural facilities did play a part in projecting Glasgow's image as a "city of art", it did little for local arts and cultural development (Kemp, 1990; Richards, 2000). As mentioned earlier, even though cultural development may not be the main objective for promoting the arts in Glasgow, this point is still worth highlighting to caution Singapore of the potential problems of overemphasizing the development of cultural hardware.

Ritzer (1999) suggests that the new cultural facilities built to help establish a city's cultural reputation and attract more cultural consumers could be viewed as "cathedrals of consumption" which:

"have an enchanted, sometimes even sacred, religious character for many people. In order to attract ever-larger numbers of consumers, such cathedrals of consumption need to offer, or at least appear to offer, increasingly magical, fantastic and enchanted settings in which to consume." (Ritzer, 1999: 8)

Hence, the quest to build ever bigger and grander concert halls, theaters, museums and exhibition centers to host more spectacular cultural extravaganzas. The danger in doing so is that these cathedrals of consumption may become nothing more than empty cultural shells without much cultural substance inside.

To remake itself as a “Renaissance City”, Singapore, like Glasgow, has placed substantial emphasis on developing cultural infrastructure, particularly on large scale urban mega-capital development. The latest addition of Esplanade – Theaters on the Bay is perhaps one of the clearest statements of this. Some segments of the arts community I interviewed felt that the provision of arts infrastructure heralds the efflorescence of local arts. For instance, Uekrongtham, artistic director of a well-established Singaporean theater company (ACTION Theatre), is very optimistic about jumpstarting Singapore’s artistic renaissance with the Esplanade. Benson Puah, CEO of the Esplanade, shares this optimism and explains the role of the new theater:

“We create a greater depth of arts infrastructure. That stratification is not a bad thing for the arts community where you now have different-size theatres for different types of works.” (personal interview)

However, other members of the arts community are less upbeat. One major concern that surfaced in many of my interviews was that its halls have such a huge seating capacity that it is unlikely that many local arts groups can stage productions on a scale large enough to draw on such a big audience. Chong Tze Chien, playwright of a local community theater group (The Necessary Stage), articulates:

“I am not putting down the Esplanade and what they are trying to do, but a very obvious concern would be: Which local arts group will be able to fill up their seats? So, going by very logical terms and pragmatics, they’ll bring in the big time musicals... if you are talking about one big time musical after another without a single local program in the calendar, how can you say that it’s cultivating the Renaissance City?” (personal interview)

Focusing on developing cultural hardware alone without a concomitant nurturing of cultural “heartware” will be detrimental to the Singapore arts scene. Singapore must be careful to direct equal, if not more, effort at nurturing its cultural producers as at developing its cultural infrastructure. Without that, in order to survive, these cathedrals of consumption might resort to programming series after series of international mega-events. When this happens, instead of

creating a “city of art”, Singapore runs the risk of creating a “city of *borrowed art*” (Chang, 2000); all form but little substance.

### **3.6.3 Be Cautious of Over-Reliance on Imported Arts & Mega-Events**

The dependence on imported foreign cultural acts and mega-events to enhance the international cultural profile of the city also brings other problems. One of Glasgow’s strategies to position itself as a “city of art” was to host highly visible cultural spectacles involving world famous artists and cultural groups. As discussed, this approach not only generated limited cultural benefits for the local arts scene, as mega-events threatened to displace some of the smaller local cultural players, they also catered more to the cultural elites to be economically profitable. Over time, local audiences may also be conditioned to believe that foreign productions are always better than local shows. Furthermore, such cultural spectacles have been accused of diverting attention away from more pressing urban issues. Harvey (1989b: 32) thus portends that these mega-events may function as “a carnival mask that diverts and entertains, leaving the social problems that lie behind the mask unseen and uncared for.”

In the case of Singapore, importing foreign artists and cultural acts to enhance the appeal of its cultural calendar is one of its strategies to establish its global cultural profile. While some amount of foreign input may stimulate cultural exchange and help develop Singapore’s arts scene, many artists I spoke to felt that an over-reliance on foreign mega-events could overwhelm the nascent local cultural scene. A Singaporean musician, Lionel Tan from The Tang Quartet, remarks:

“We feel marginalized! Foreign talent should be supplementary and complementary to local ones – not forming the bulk of what we have in Singapore.” (cited in *The Straits Times*, December 8, 1999)

Singapore thus needs to find the right balance between importing foreign productions and promoting local arts. As Khiew Huey Chian, a visual arts lecturer at a Singapore arts college (LaSalle-SIA) suggests:

“I think the arts council should still bring in foreign productions but, at the same time, promote more local arts. Instead of fully focusing on foreign productions, they should also concentrate on local productions and build up that reputation.” (personal interview)

This balance could perhaps be achieved by facilitating artistic collaborations between foreign and local artists as seen in the case of several productions at the recent *Singapore Arts Festival*<sup>33</sup> (*The Straits Times*, June 23 & 25, 2003).

By focusing mainly on promoting foreign mega-events, Singapore also faces the potential problem of developing an arts scene only for cultural elites, similar to what critics of Glasgow have highlighted. The profile of Singaporeans attending arts and cultural events reveals this potential problem. More than 80% of the audience at the annual *Singapore Arts Festival* earns a monthly income of at least S\$2,001 (approximately US\$1,130) and more than half of them have tertiary-level education (MITA, 2000b: 60). Recent reports also indicate that prices of theater tickets have escalated to as high as S\$130 (approximately US\$73) for a musical (*The Straits Times*, November 15, 1999). Thus, the arts may be catering mainly to the *nouveau riche*. A true cultural renaissance should involve people from all segments of society; in trying to create a “Renaissance City”, Singapore must be conscious to keep most of its cultural events accessible to the general public instead of pricing out certain segments of society.

The warning that Glasgow poses with regard to local audiences becoming conditioned to believe that imported acts are superior to local production also echoes some emerging sentiments among the Singaporean artists I interviewed. Jamaludin, Assistant Ballet Master of the Singapore Dance Theatre, commenting on Singaporeans’ perception of foreign dance troupes, laments:

“The mentality is still very colonial! It’s like ‘foreign equals better’. However bad they are, they are still better, just because they came on a plane from a Western country.” (personal interview)

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<sup>33</sup> Examples of local-foreign artistic collaboration at the *Singapore Arts Festival 2003* include the Singapore Dance Theater with cutting edge Japanese choreographer from H.Art Chaos; Singaporean composer, Mark Chan, with Hong Kong musicians; Singaporean director, Ong Keng Sen with artists from Sweden and France.

Prejudice against local arts is also evident when many local artists and productions first have to be acknowledged abroad before they are well-received at home<sup>34</sup>. Singapore would have to make a stronger effort to promote its local artists and cultural groups to instill a sense of pride among the local audience for the cultural achievements and contributions the local artists have made.

While the final problem of using the arts as a smokescreen for other unpleasant urban problems may be less relevant for Singapore, I feel that authorities should still be cognizant of this potential criticism. This is especially so in light of the recent economic downturn and the spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), a highly contagious and fatal disease, in the country. Authorities have to be careful not to appear to mask these problems with mega-cultural events, promoted in the name of cultural advancement, or this will have an adverse impact on its efforts to create a “city of art”.

#### **3.6.4 Focus More on Quality than Quantity of Cultural Events**

For the 1990 City of Culture celebration, Glasgow tried to build up its reputation as a “city of art” quickly by programming a highly eventful cultural calendar. Critics, however, felt that the quality of some of the performances was compromised and that organizers seemed to equate quantity of cultural events with quality of artistic development (Kemp, 1990). This shows that there is no quick way of creating a “city of art”. In its rush to develop a cultural reputation for itself, Singapore authorities must be wary not to fall into the trap of believing that more is necessarily better. Very often, a few good quality productions may have far greater impact on stimulating the cultural scene than a deluge of mediocre shows. Hence, an important learning point from Glasgow is not to compromise artistic quality for the sake of having a greater quantity of cultural productions.

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<sup>34</sup> Musicians like Dick Lee and Siow Lee Chin, movie-directors like Glenn Goei, actors like Ivan Heng, and theatrical productions like *Lear* and *Nagraland* all made their individual mark in foreign countries like Scotland, Australia and Japan before they became well-received back in Singapore.

### **3.6.5 Find a Balance between Achieving Cultural & Economic Objectives**

Another key criticism of Glasgow's approach to cultural development is that it seemed to have prioritized economic objectives above cultural advancement. Authorities were thus accused of having sold out to the dictates of free market capitalism (McLay, 1990). As discussed in the previous chapter, economic development is one of the underlying objectives of Singapore's Renaissance City plan. Although the arts and economic development need not be mutually exclusive, Singapore's infamous history of pragmatism hints at the potential domination of economic objectives over artistic gains. Chang (2000) notes that the government's pragmatic mindset has always guided development in Singapore and the same approach seems to have been adopted for arts development as well.

For better or for worse, economic benefits have become arguably the most convincing reason for directing public funds to cultural programs, and citing cultural gains alone is not likely to rally strong support for urban cultural policies. While ancillary economic benefits may be large and are certainly desirable, I feel that there are still other good reasons to support cultural programs and economic objectives should not be prioritized over cultural goals. I believe that urban cultural policies should ultimately be directed at achieving some cultural goals. This is especially important in the case of Singapore where it is trying to juggle both externally- and internally-oriented objectives. Many artists I spoke to agreed that it is unhealthy for the arts to be commercialized for tourism, for example, to achieve economic objectives. Mohamed Noor Sarman, dancer and choreographer of the Singapore Dance Theater, thought that nurturing artists should take precedence over generating economic benefits:

“[T]o be really an arts city, it's not just about making money. I think the most important thing is how to filter and handpick good artists and groom them, not just whether they can bring in money or not.”  
(personal interview)

To create a “Renaissance City”, Singapore thus has to find the right balance between achieving artistic goals and fulfilling economic objectives. If such a



balance is not found, Singapore's plans to develop a "Renaissance City" will face similar criticisms as those of Glasgow.

### **3.6.6 Be Conscious of the Distribution of Economic Benefits**

The uneven distribution of economic gains from cultural development is also a problem in the case of Glasgow. Although this dual city problem may not be that threatening to Singapore, as it does not have much core-periphery tension, authorities should still be conscious of such a potential issue. If arts development is seen to only benefit selected parts of the city or segments of the society, support for the Renaissance City vision will quickly run out of steam as it would not seem relevant to the majority of the population. This problem could perhaps be pre-empted by having a strong social outreach program that helps to involve a wide spectrum of the society in the arts through accessible and engaging community arts projects. With community involvement, benefits of cultural development hopefully would be well distributed throughout the city.

### **3.6.7 Long-Term Economic Gains Require Sustained Cultural Planning**

A final learning point to take away from the Glasgow experience is that to obtain sustained economic gains from cultural development, cultural planning needs to adopt a long-term view. In Glasgow's case, Richards (2000) observes that:

"the Cultural Capital event is in itself not enough to guarantee success in the highly competitive European cultural tourism market, or to ensure structural improvements in the cultural climate. Isolated events will generate short-term benefits, but in order to ensure long-term success the event needs to be integrated into a total cultural strategy. This can involve staging a series of events in order to convince visitors that there is always 'something happening' in the city."

As shown earlier, visitors to Glasgow's cultural attractions fell after the 1990 celebration and remained stagnant or dipped further until other new cultural events and attractions were introduced. These included the opening of the Gallery of Modern Art in 1996; the *Festival of Visual Arts* in 1996; the British City

of Architecture and Design event in 1999; and the opening of the Glasgow Science Center in 2001 on the site of the 1988 *Glasgow Garden Festival*.

Given that we would expect some decline in visitorship after a mega-event like the City of Culture, the case also shows how a city could be caught in a trap to continuously host such cultural spectacles in order to remain attractive to cultural consumers. Richards (2000) thus warns that the pressure to plan and program a sustained series of cultural events “harbors the danger, however, that the city will become trapped on a treadmill of investment, requiring a constant supply of events to ensure the visitor flow.” The warning for Singapore is to make sure that its attempt to create a “city of art” is well-paced and guided by a cultural plan with a long-term view of art development. Events could be used to attract short-term attention to the city, but efforts must also be directed at building up the cultural capital of the city if it hopes to successfully create a “Renaissance City”.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **ARTS AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHICAGO – AN INTERNALLY-ORIENTED DEVELOPMENT APPROACH**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

Chicago is one of America's premiere arts capitals and is internationally known for its diverse cultural offerings and renowned architecture. Its effort in preserving and promoting the arts is one of the reasons why the city has been nicknamed the "Paris of the Midwest". Unlike Glasgow's cultural planning focus which is predominantly external, Chicago's cultural development experience is more internally-oriented. While acknowledging that the arts and cultural development contribute to enhancing the city's international image and improving its economy, Chicago's approach to cultural planning is less directly focused on meeting these global and economic objectives. Instead, it places more emphasis on nurturing artistic talent and stimulating interest in the arts among the general public.

As shown in Chapter 2, although Singapore's attempt to develop a "Renaissance City" is both externally- and internally-oriented, the government has placed less emphasis on specifying strategies for the latter orientation. Thus, Singapore has much to learn from the experiences of Chicago. By examining Chicago's approach to cultural planning, Singapore may draw many useful lessons to strengthen its internally-oriented strategies for arts development.

To examine Chicago's cultural development process, I will first sketch the history of arts development in Chicago, highlighting how the focus for arts development has expanded over the years. Then, I elaborate on the institutional setup that facilitates and shapes arts development in the city today. The next section discusses the strategies used to develop the arts. The outcomes of these initiatives are then analyzed. Before concluding, I will highlight some insights from Chicago's arts development experience that have relevance for Singapore.

## 4.2 HISTORY OF ARTS & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT IN CHICAGO

While Glasgow was the “Second City of the Empire” in the UK, Chicago has been known as “The Second City” in the US because of its historical position as America's second largest city. It has a physical area of 228.5 square miles and a population of almost 2.9 million. In these respects, it is somewhat similar to Singapore. But unlike Singapore which has less than four decades of history, Chicago has more than 150 years of cultural legacy. Since its early days as a small prairie city, a rich and diverse culture has developed. Nevertheless, arts development in Chicago has never really been planned for or directed in any deliberate or organized manner. Instead, the arts and culture have generally been allowed to evolve on their own within a facilitating framework that the City has set up.

Even more recently when the City government started playing a more active role in shaping arts development in the city, this organic development philosophy has permeated the initiatives taken by Chicago. This probably accounts for the cultural vibrancy and dynamism that makes Chicago an undeniable “city of art”. Today, Chicago boasts a panoply of cultural offerings ranging from fine arts and high culture to architecture and literature to informal arts and popular culture.

The involvement of the City government in the arts was not actively pursued until the Chicago Council on Fine Arts (CCFA) was formed in the mid 1970s (CCFA, 1977). Prior to that, arts development in the city was largely ad-hoc or led by the federal government. In the 1930s and 1940s, Chicago artists were commissioned by the Works Progress Administration to produce murals depicting American life before and during the Great Depression<sup>35</sup>. In the 1960s

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<sup>35</sup> The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was a federal program initiated in 1935. It was designed to rejuvenate America's economy after the Great Depression. Initially, the program was targeted at funding the building and improvement of America's infrastructure as a way to pump-prime the economy. Gradually, the program also funded development in the arts and culture of America. Arts-related programs included the Federal Arts Project; the Federal Writers Project; and the Federal Theatre Project (McDonald, 1969).

and 1970s, there was an increasing interest in contemporary public art pieces, inspired by the dedication of Pablo Picasso's untitled sculpture at the Daley Civic Center in 1967 (Figure 4.1). When CCFA was formed, its key mission was to promote the public art program. Over the years, the public art program helped to develop the Loop<sup>36</sup> into an outdoor sculpture gallery. Today, there are more than 100 public artworks adorning the plazas and buildings throughout the downtown area of Chicago.



**Figure 4.1** Pablo Picasso's untitled sculpture at Daley Civic Center

<sup>36</sup> The downtown area of Chicago is commonly known as the Loop due to the elevated tracks of the railway system that encircles the area.

This limited emphasis on public art started to expand in the 1980s when the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA) was set up. DCA was established because the Mayor felt that arts and cultural promotion should encompass a variety of aspects including cultural festivals, film and tourism<sup>37</sup>. CCFA, which was responsible only for overseeing the public art program, could no longer meet this vision. Thus, when DCA was established in 1984, CCFA was subsumed as one of the offices within the department and renamed the Chicago Office of Fine Arts. The other two components of the newly established DCA were the Mayor's Office of Special Events and the Office of Film and Entertainment Industries<sup>38</sup> (Agard and Spencer, 1987). To provide DCA with the human and financial resources to undertake the expanded mission, it was also made a cabinet level agency. With the formation of DCA, in addition to promoting public art, the City became more involved in arts programming and the promotion of Chicago's diverse culture. DCA acted as "the principal advocate and spokesperson in City government for cultural development and funding" (DCA, 1986: 8).

During the initial years, DCA's efforts were mainly concentrated on downtown, specifically, the Chicago Cultural Center (Figure 4.2). It filled the Cultural Center with visual, performing and literary arts programs throughout the year and offered these activities free of charge to everyone in Chicago. As DCA became more established, it started to branch out and channel its efforts to the rest of the city as well. DCA now has several activities in the neighborhood cultural centers in addition to the Cultural Center downtown. As the Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), Julie Burros, explains, the development of the department was based on first "growing into this building [the Chicago Cultural Center]" and then "our programs slowly evolved to encompass the rest of the city" (personal interview).

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<sup>37</sup> It was Mayor Harold Washington's 1983 *Transition Team Report* that recommended the formation of DCA to promote different aspects of the arts and culture.

<sup>38</sup> The Mayor's Office of Special Events (MOSE) was subsequently separated from DCA. With this change, the Office of Film and Entertainment Industries was placed under MOSE and renamed the Chicago Film Office. A new Chicago Office of Tourism was also created under DCA to promote tourism, a responsibility that was previously held by MOSE.



**Figure 4.2** The Chicago Cultural Center

In 1986, DCA initiated the development of Chicago's first and only long range, coordinated plan for the arts and culture (DCA, 1986). Called the *Chicago Cultural Plan*, it charted clear directions for arts development and made specific recommendations on how to support cultural advancement in the city. Despite being a plan that could have potentially dictated cultural development, the process in Chicago remained true to an organic form of evolution because the *Chicago Cultural Plan* was the product of a very inclusive process. A diverse range of relevant stakeholders was brought to the discussion table to provide input when the plan was being drafted. Over a period of 18 months, more than 300 meetings were held at each of the 65 community areas in the city. The meetings involved more than 10,000 representatives from all arts disciplines, cultural institutions, City departments, planning groups and local communities (DCA, 1986).

The public consultation process was a very crucial part of developing the *Chicago Cultural Plan* because it helped to avoid the perception of the plan as "an attempt to impose one vision upon the city, but rather a plan that springs from the hearts and minds of the very people it seeks to serve" (DCA, 1986: 28). As Alison Zehr, an arts consultant recalls,

“Everyone loved it because it was really far spreading... everybody was pretty darn happy with what happened and I think that is why they keep referring to it now, even 20 years later... It looks good in peoples’ mind!” (personal interview).

Regrettably, the full impact of the plan was never really felt as the Mayor who was the strongest advocate for the plan passed away shortly after it was released. His original commitment to direct a million dollars to implement the plan died with him. The succeeding administration was less enthusiastic about going ahead full steam with implementation. Hence, “the million dollars became US\$400,000 and the cultural facilities to be developed disappeared... due to budget cuts” (Harris cited in Keens *et al.*, 1989: 26). Nevertheless, the development of the plan established an important process and developed a set of recommendations that continue to guide DCA’s approach and vision to facilitate and advocate for arts and cultural development in Chicago.

Since the late 1990s, a new focus on the social role of the arts has started to emerge among various academic institutions in Chicago. The Chicago Center for Arts Policy at Columbia College has conducted a study on the social impact of the informal arts in Chicago and has found that a huge number of Chicagoans engage in informal cultural activities like singing in a church choir or painting and writing during their leisure (Wali, 2002). The study concluded that “informal arts activities are significant social resources, valuable assets that help strengthen our communities and cities, while benefiting the whole of the arts sector” (Chicago Center for Arts Policy, 2002: 1). Another on-going study done by the University of Chicago examines the social and economic impact of *Chihuly in the Park: A Garden of Glass*, a highly popular art exhibition in Garfield Park, on its surrounding neighborhood. It analyzes how the exhibition has contributed to the economic and social redevelopment of the Garfield Park neighborhood, an area plagued by property crime, gang activities and urban decay (Harris-Lacewell, 2003). Following the burgeoning interest in the social role of the arts, DCA has recently embarked on a joint project with the Department of Planning and



Development called *Advancing Chicago's Civic Agenda through the Arts*. Alison Zehr, an arts consultant appointed as one of the Project Directors, explains that this study will explore the ways of “using the arts for community development... we'll be looking primarily at building up the asset base for the city” (personal interview). The social and community focus of the arts thus seems to be gaining rising attention in Chicago at this point in time.

### **4.3 INSTITUTIONAL SETUP & FUNDING FOR THE ARTS**

As pointed out earlier, DCA was established in 1984 to facilitate arts and cultural development in Chicago. Today, it is still the chief agency in charge of this task. Other City agencies involved in supporting the arts and cultural development process include the Mayor's Office of Special Events (MOSE) and the Chicago Park District. Together, these three agencies may seem to impose a rather authoritative structure in directing arts development in Chicago, but Julie Burros, Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), asserts that the agencies work closely with the arts community and neighborhood organizations to allow for the arts to evolve on their own within this City framework (personal interview). In this section, I elaborate on key roles that each agency plays. What becomes apparent is that while there is an attempt to distribute distinct tasks to the different agencies, there remains some overlap in certain areas of responsibility. I will also provide an overview of the funding mechanisms for the arts in Chicago.

#### **4.3.1 Key Agencies**

As the chief agency overseeing arts and cultural development in Chicago, DCA facilitates the growth and development of the diverse art forms in the city. It concentrates its efforts in three main areas. One of its most important tasks is to program and publicize arts and cultural events at various locations in the city. As mentioned earlier, an array of visual, performing and literary arts programs is presented at the Chicago Cultural Center all year round. Similar programming is also carried out at the Historic Water Tower and the Daley Civic Center. Other DCA programming efforts include overseeing the public art program, organizing

the *Grant Park Music Festival* (jointly with the Chicago Park District) and the *World Music Festival* as well as operating the Clarke House Museum. It also coordinates international cultural exchanges through the *Chicago Sister Cities International* program. DCA's programming effort fills the city with cultural activities all year round, making the arts widely and easily accessible with the intention of stimulating general interest in the arts.

The second main area that DCA focuses on is to provide financial and technical assistance to encourage arts development in Chicago. Various grants are given out by DCA annually to provide general operating support for nonprofit arts organizations. These grants not only benefit the arts community; neighborhood residents also gain as there are grant programs specifically designed for funding community arts and cultural events, particularly in Chicago's low to moderate income neighborhoods. Technical assistance is also offered to help artists and arts organizations deal with issues such as finding appropriate locations to develop or relocate a cultural facility as well as the planning and site-development of such facilities. In addition, DCA provides arts management services and organizes cultural network meetings that help individual artists and arts organizations share resource information and engage in collaborative programming and publicity works. These initiatives thus facilitate the growth of the arts in the city.

Arts education and training is the third major area of work that DCA is actively involved in. This is mainly done through Gallery 37, a City program that provides "job training and education initiative in the arts for young people" (Gallery 37, 2000: 2). Young people enter into the program as apprentices, earning a paycheck and learning the skills and techniques of a specific artistic discipline under the direction of professional artists. In the process, they produce artworks for public installation, performance, publication and sale at the Gallery 37 Store. Such training provides the youths with advance job skills and a potential career in the arts. DCA's arts training and education initiatives not only

help to hone the skills of artistic talent but also create opportunities for established artists to pass on their knowledge to the younger generation. This process thus facilitates the perpetuation of artistic life and enthusiasm within the city.

Other than these three major areas of work, DCA undertakes other administrative tasks such as research on the local arts community to assess its needs. A cultural landscape survey that studied the location, sources of funding and state of financial health of nonprofit arts organizations was recently completed. Being the first study of its kind that attempted to create a database of basic information on the nonprofit arts organizations in Chicago, this study was a crucial first step towards getting a better understanding of these organizations in the city<sup>39</sup>. It was hoped that such information “will be used by the City, arts funders, policy makers and the arts organizations themselves to better assist the growth and viability of nonprofit arts in Chicago” (Zehr and Burros, 2002: 6).

Another administrative task that DCA undertakes is collaborating with other relevant agencies to advocate for arts development. DCA works closely with the Department of Planning and Development (DPD) to identify and develop infrastructure for the arts. Alison Zehr explains that “DCA becomes involved as a consultant, working between the arts organizations and DPD as a middleman... DPD brings the resources to the table; money or buildings... there are times when DPD has a building that they need to do something with and then they will go actively looking for arts organizations” (personal interview). A list of arts and culture capital projects (anticipated and completed) which DCA and DPD have helped to develop is shown in Appendix C. By undertaking these administrative roles, it is hoped that DCA will develop a better understanding of the needs of the arts community so as to more effectively advocate for having those needs met.

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<sup>39</sup> The findings of this study, however, raised many controversies and the quality of the survey was widely debated. For example, it was felt that the study did not provide an accurate reflection of the geographical distribution of nonprofit arts in the city because it mapped the location of the nonprofit arts organizations based on their Post Office Box addresses rather than the actual location in which the organizations reside.

Another City agency involved in facilitating arts development in Chicago is the Mayor's Office of Special Events (MOSE). Charged with the mission of producing and promoting free festivals and city-wide celebrations, MOSE's activities are mainly concerned with ephemeral cultural events. These can generally be divided into two major types (Figure 4.3). The first type – large scale city-wide celebrations – is similar to the earlier mentioned *Grant Park Music Festival* and the *World Music Festival* organized by the Chicago Park District and DCA respectively. These are usually held at the lakefront area of downtown and feature the diverse arts and culture of Chicago. For example, the *Chicago Gospel Music Festival* honors the social and historical significance of gospel music which originated from Chicago; the *Chicago Blues Festival* presents one of the great art forms in the city; *Great Chicago Places and Spaces* celebrates the city's world-renowned architecture and urban design; and the *Chicago Outdoor Film Festival* features short films by Chicago directors and other acclaimed international films. Other similar events include the *Chicago Jazz Festival*, the *Chicago Country Music Festival*, *Viva! Chicago Latin Music Festival* and the *Celtic Fest Chicago*.



Figure 4.3 Events organized by MOSE in 2003

The second type of events is collectively called *Chicago Neighborhood Festivals*. These are usually smaller in scale and are held at numerous different neighborhoods in the city over the summer months. MOSE works with various community organizations in planning and producing these festivals. It provides grants and technical assistance as well as training for the leaders of the community organizations involved in staging these events. Both the larger scale and the neighborhood events organized by MOSE are presented free to Chicagoans, exposing them to the diverse artistic and cultural offerings available in the city in a fun and accessible way. This is intended to celebrate Chicago's multitude of art forms, contributing to the cultural vibrancy of the city. As Director of Program Development (MOSE), Cheryl Hughes, explains, these events form a crucial element in the cultural dynamism of the city (personal interview).

The third agency, the Chicago Park District, is involved in the arts in three major ways. First, it supports the many established museums located on Park District land<sup>40</sup>. While they are privately operated, the Chicago Park District's subsidy to these museums ranges from 45% to 74%. (Davis, 2002: 21). The money is distributed through an umbrella agency called Museums in the Park. Such financial aid assists these institutions with general operating costs. Second, like the other two agencies, the Chicago Park District programs many of its parks with cultural activities. These activities range from musical concerts and movie screenings to ballet classes conducted in the parks. Alison Zehr points out that the Chicago Park District opens up field houses and other park facilities for artists to work or perform in at very low or no rent (personal interview). As such, the public has easy access to cultural events while artists are able to present their work to a ready audience at low cost. Finally, the Chicago Park District also runs an elaborate program of park revitalization and restoration for one of the major park systems in the world, further reinforcing the perception of Chicago as a

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<sup>40</sup> These cultural institutions include the Adler Planetarium & Astronomy Museum, the Art Institute of Chicago, the Chicago Historical Society, the DuSable Museum of African-American History, the Field Museum, the Mexican Fine Arts Center Museum, the Museum of Science and Industry, the Nature Museum of the Chicago Academy of Sciences and the Shedd Aquarium.

cultural city. Like the other two agencies, the initiatives of the Chicago Park District are intended to make the arts accessible to the public as well as to provide support for cultural institutions and artists. It must be noted, however, that the Chicago Park District's involvement in the arts is strictly confined to cultural institutions and facilities within parks.

The division of roles and responsibilities between the three agencies makes for effective management of the diverse aspects of the arts. The Chicago Park District takes care of most of the major cultural institutions within the city, leaving DCA free to focus more attention on nurturing emerging artists and smaller arts organizations. MOSE complements this by organizing large scale ephemeral cultural events, and its role in reaching out beyond the city center through its numerous neighborhood festivals is particularly important in stimulating interest in the arts among the general public throughout the whole city. However, overlaps in terms of the specific nature of the events seem to be common. For instance, it is hard to tell why the *Grant Park Music Festival* and the *World Music Festival* are organized by the Chicago Park District and DCA respectively instead of being one of MOSE's larger scale city-wide celebrations. Likewise, the provision of field houses and park facilities by the Chicago Park District as workspaces for artists seems to overlap with DCA's technical assistance effort. MOSE's neighborhood festivals also seem to duplicate DCA's neighborhood arts program. Such overlaps are certainly evidence of the organic nature of the structure in which each organization decides what it wants to do and how it will do it to forward its own mission. It probably also accounts for the diversity of cultural activities in the city. Despite some duplication of activities, Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development (MOSE), stresses that all the agencies cooperate with each other to make Chicago a better city:

“[W]e are just really good partners. I am on the phone everyday with someone from those agencies... All of our missions include improving the lives of Chicagoans... things may overlap but each of us also has other different responsibilities that don't overlap” (personal interview).

### 4.3.2 Funding for the Arts

Although there may be some duplication of activities among the three agencies, each agency derives funding for their respective arts and cultural programs from different sources. DCA's budget is mainly derived from the hotel-motel tax<sup>41</sup>, the City of Chicago Corporate (General) Fund<sup>42</sup> and funds from the Community Development Block Grant program<sup>43</sup> (Agard and Spencer, 1987). These are supplemented by philanthropic dollars raised by the department's three nonprofit charitable foundations<sup>44</sup> which act as independent fiscal agents for the department. These three foundations accept financial contributions from outsiders and use the money to fund DCA's activities. This arrangement is an important institutional innovation as it offers DCA the ability to accept financial contributions from organizations that would otherwise not fund the activities of a government agency. It also allows DCA to use these funds in a more flexible manner than actual City funds. Other sources of funds are derived from rental income of spaces at the Chicago Cultural Center (used for private functions such as weddings) and a small amount of corporate sponsorship.

While DCA derives its budget mainly from the City, MOSE's primary source of funding comes from private corporate sponsorship and income generated from its own activities. According to Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development (MOSE), MOSE raises about US\$10 million worth of

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<sup>41</sup> The hotel-motel tax is a tourism tax levied on visitors through their lodging bills at places of accommodation in the State of Illinois. DCA is entitled to use part of the tax revenue as the Department oversees the activities of the Chicago Office of Tourism. The arts and cultural activities planned by DCA also attract more tourists into the city. The revenue derived from the hotel-motel tax for FY 03 (July 1, 2002 – June 30, 2003) was US\$151,898,915 (Source: <http://www.illinoistourism.org>).

<sup>42</sup> The Corporate (General) Fund is the aggregate major operating fund of the City. All general tax revenues and ordinary receipts are aggregated into this fund. Disbursements are based on spending plans of the City departments (Source: <http://www.chicagocitytreasurer.com/policy.html>).

<sup>43</sup> The Community Development Block Grant is a one of US's largest Federal grant programs. It provides eligible metropolitan cities and urban counties with annual direct grants that they can use to revitalize neighborhoods, expand affordable housing and economic opportunities, and/or improve community facilities and services, principally to benefit the low and moderate income groups (Source: <http://www.hud.gov/progdsc/cdbgent.cfm>).

<sup>44</sup> The three nonprofit charitable foundations are the Cultural Center Foundation, the Chicago Tourism Fund and the Gallery 37 Foundation.

corporate sponsorship annually to finance their programs. The *Taste of Chicago* is the festival which earns MOSE the most income<sup>45</sup> (personal interview). In 2002, this event attracted over 3.3 million people<sup>46</sup>, generating an approximate income of more than US\$23mil. Net income from this event cross subsidizes some of the other activities organized by MOSE. City funding from the hotel-motel tax, which MOSE shares with DCA, forms a secondary source of funding.

The Chicago Park District, on the other hand, is an independent taxing authority that generates tax revenues to support the major cultural institutions residing on Park District land. “The Park District also supports these institutions by allowing majors [sic] to employ their bond rating, selling bonds for cultural capital improvement projects periodically” (Agard and Spencer, 1987: 66-67). Julie Burros adds that the Chicago Park District has a lot of services and facilities within their parks (such as a golf course and a marina) which have been privatized in recent years. The Chicago Park District siphons off a percentage of the profits from these private operators as another source of income. In addition, it also raises some money through corporate sponsorship (personal interview).

Such an arrangement of having separate funding sources for the three agencies that are responsible for developing different aspects of the arts is rather sensible because it reduces conflicts of interest and competition for resources among different segments of the arts community. For example, the emerging arts organizations and individual artists that are supported by DCA need not compete for resources with the major museums that are subsidized by the Chicago Park District because the two City agencies fund their respective programs with money derived from different sources. Thus, the needs of a wide spectrum of the local arts community can be supported.

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<sup>45</sup> *Taste of Chicago* is an annual food fair held in June/July in conjunction with the *Country Music Festival*. Food tickets costs US\$7 and ticket holder can sample 11 different varieties of food offered at the fair. The event is highly popular and has consistently attracted more than 3 million people every year.

<sup>46</sup> <http://www.chicago.il.org/STATS/ATTENDANCE.HTM>.



Funding for the arts in Chicago is also characterized by a strong presence of direct private contributions by individuals, foundations and corporations. This is partly a legacy of the period before the 1960s in which support for the arts by all levels of government was generally uncommon in the US<sup>47</sup>. Private contributions are also encouraged by tax incentives. For instance, corporations can deduct charitable contributions as an expense up to an amount equal to 10% of the taxable income<sup>48</sup>.

A recent DCA survey shows that in 2000, individual donations accounted for 16% of the total income of nonprofit arts organizations (Table 4.1). The survey also found that foundations and corporations are the biggest grant contributors, representing 42% and 25% of the total grant revenue received by nonprofit arts organizations respectively. This is compared to municipal grants (including but not limited to those contributed by DCA, MOSE and the Chicago Park District) which formed only 13% of the total grant revenue received<sup>49</sup>. Hence, private contributions are important sources of income for arts organizations in Chicago. In this context, arts organizations have to learn to develop a robust financial foundation as they cannot rely very much on government support. They should also be aware that even though the tradition of private contributions in Chicago is strong, the amount of funding will often be subject to the prevailing economic conditions.

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<sup>47</sup> Heilbrun and Gray (2001) suggested three reasons for the hostility to government support for the arts before the 1960s: 1) Until the period of the New Deal in the 1930s, most Americans accepted the philosophy of *laissez-faire*, according to which government intervention in economic matters should be kept to a minimum; 2) The arts, especially high arts, were thought to be elitist and unimportant to the masses, hence requiring little government support ; 3) Cultural institutions have a tradition of relying on private contribution partly for fear that government aid would lead to government control.

<sup>48</sup> Individuals enjoy similar tax incentives but at an even higher tax deductible limit.

<sup>49</sup> However, note that the breakdown of total income and total grant revenue was based on different sample groups. Hence, the figures are not entirely comparable.

**Table 4.1** Breakdown of total income for nonprofit arts organizations in Chicago

Source of Income	Percentage
Earned Income	50%
Grant Revenue <sup>50</sup>	25%
Individual Donations	16%
In-kind	5%
Return on investment	4%

(Source: Zehr and Burros, 2002: 36)

#### **4.4 STRATEGIES FOR ARTS & CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT**

The current state of arts and cultural development in Chicago is the result of a multifaceted approach taken by the three key agencies. No specific program or single cultural plan made the city the vibrant cultural center it is today. Rather, the deployment of different key strategies has resulted in the efflorescence of diverse arts and cultural offerings in the city. In Chicago's context, the strategies are largely internally-oriented. I now elaborate on each of them with reference to specific programs of the various agencies.

##### **4.4.1 Make Arts & Culture Widely & Easily Accessible**

Unlike Glasgow which adopted a strategy to engage in proactive place campaigning directed at the international arena, one of Chicago's key strategies is to stimulate local interest in the arts by aggressively promoting the arts and culture to Chicagoans. To do this, arts and culture are made widely and easily accessible. Besides the earlier mentioned year-round free exhibitions and performances at the Chicago Cultural Center, DCA programs the City Gallery of the Historic Water Tower with Chicago-themed photograph exhibitions by local photographers. At the Daley Civic Center, DCA showcases the performing arts during lunchtime for the office workers in the downtown area to enjoy. The Chicago Park District similarly offers free cultural programs through its Movies in the Park and Concert in the Park series in which free films and concert performances are held in one of Chicago's parks almost every other evening.

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<sup>50</sup> This category includes grants from foundations and corporations as well as municipal grants, state grants and federal grants.

Through the Chicago Public Art Program, DCA decorates the city with numerous monumental outdoor sculptures and artworks. This program was established to implement the City's Percent-for-Art Ordinance enacted in 1978. The ordinance stipulates that 1.33% of the original budgeted cost of construction or renovation of municipal buildings must be set aside to commission or purchase artworks to be located in a public area in or at these buildings<sup>51</sup>. The objective is to provide Chicagoans with an improved public environment through the enhancement of city buildings with quality works of art. One of its latest projects, costing US\$190,000, is a series of 16 narrative panels and 12 decorative panels of ceramic murals installed along the walls of the Riverwalk Gateway, a 170-foot trellised passageway connecting the lakefront with the south riverwalk (Figure 4.4).



**Figure 4.4** The latest Riverwalk Murals

These cultural activities and public artworks are presented free of charge to everyone in Chicago with the aim of stimulating public interest in the arts and broadening the arts audience in the city. As Lois Weisberg, Commissioner of Cultural Affairs, commented, “we like to give away cultural opportunities the same way they give out books at a library” (cited in *LINK Daily Report*, May 11, 2002). Mention must also be made about DCA's special effort to reach out to all segments of society, including the underprivileged. The Neighborhood Arts Assistance Program and the Cultural Outreach Program are examples in which

<sup>51</sup> <http://www.ci.chi.il.us/CulturalAffairs/PublicArt/PublicArtOrdinance.html>.

DCA encourages and supports cultural programs benefiting youth-at-risk, seniors, or persons with disabilities in low to moderate income neighborhoods by providing funding for these activities. Such effort thus helps to engage more Chicagoans in the arts, contributing to the cultural vibrancy and dynamism of the city.

The festivals and celebrations organized by MOSE similarly engage the general public in a variety of arts activities. The neighborhood festivals particularly reach out beyond the city center to the peripheral areas of the city. Indeed, the strategy of making the arts and culture widely and easily accessible is internally-oriented, focusing mainly on Chicagoans. While such effort may eventually improve the image of the city and attract tourists as a result, the starting point of many of Chicago's cultural events is directed at the local residents. Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development (MOSE) puts this across most clearly:

“Our ultimate goal is to develop events and festivals that speak to Chicagoans. We believe that if you do that, the tourists will follow. So we don't necessarily develop festivals specifically with tourists in mind... We start from what Chicagoans are going to like – How do we get Chicagoans to come to the festivals? – and then we look at the tourists. The tourists are more icing on the cake” (personal interview).

#### **4.4.2 Nurture & Support Local Artistic Talent**

Complementing the first strategy of stimulating general public interest in the arts, the second key strategy is focused on developing and supporting local cultural producers and making the city conducive to artistic production. To nurture local artistic talent, DCA has created a cultural incubator to provide opportunities for artists and people aspiring to have a career in the arts to get training and exposure. As mentioned earlier, Gallery 37 is a job training and education program in the arts for youths. This program has a wide geographic reach by having training locations distributed all over the city. The program annually employs more than 4,000 young people between the ages of 14 to 21 in

downtown, the Chicago Public Schools, the Chicago Park District cultural centers and the neighborhood community centers throughout the city. Under the mentorship of professional artists, young apprentices hone their skills in a specific artistic discipline and their works are showcased in the city through various avenues (Figure 4.5). With a 10 to 1 apprentice-teacher ratio (Gallery 37, 2000), the mentors are able to establish close relations with the apprentices, imparting valuable professional experiences to them while inspiring their artistic imagination. Cheryl Hughes, who was the first Director of Gallery 37, points out that the program opens up opportunities for youths to have a career in the arts by developing their talent and building up their confidence at an early age (personal interview). This helps to sustain the growth of the arts scene within the city by constantly producing young artists.



**Figure 4.5** Some of the artworks produced by apprentices at Gallery 37

Besides cultivating young talents, the City also makes an effort to create opportunities for emerging artists and performing groups. DCA runs the Storefront Theater as part of the Gallery 37 Program. Alison Zehr explains that the Storefront Theater “allows theater groups that have good plays but are not

getting a lot of exposure to come downtown to get more exposure.” She notes that this is very beneficial for the performing groups as they do not need to pay for usage of the space and the City does the publicity for the event. In exchange, the artists will teach certain classes at Gallery 37. Alison Zehr adds that the Chicago Park District runs a similar support system where emerging arts groups can take up rent-free residence at the field houses in the parks to develop programs to be staged at Theater on the Lake, one of the parks located at Fullerton Avenue and Lake Michigan (personal interview). Such avenues offer great opportunities for emerging artists to present their work and widen their professional experience.

Another program that nurtures the artistic talent in Chicago is the annual *Chicago Artists’ Month* organized by DCA every October. During the month, promising visual artists are selected to take part in the Artists at Work program in which the public get to meet the artists at their studios and see how they work. This creates an opportunity for the artists to interact with the public and share with them both their completed pieces and works in progress. Through such events, the artists not only build up their confidence but also widen their audience base, generating greater interest in the arts among the general public.

Supplementing these efforts to nurture artists are initiatives to support the growth of arts organizations. DCA provides financial assistance to Chicago-based arts organizations through the CityArts Program. This is a tri-annual grant program designed to assist arts organizations in Chicago through supporting the general operating costs of these groups. Since its inception in 1979, the program has awarded over US\$14mil to Chicago-based arts organizations. Currently, this program is divided into four levels to cater to a range of arts organizations of different sizes<sup>52</sup> (Table 4.2). On average, each organization receives around US\$3,000 annually (Zehr and Burros, 2002). In 2003, CityArts grants totaling US\$1mil were awarded to 236 organizations. Besides the CityArts Program, DCA

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<sup>52</sup> <http://www.ci.chi.il.us/CulturalAffairs/CulturalGrants/CityArts.html>.

offers other grant packages such as the Community Arts Assistance Program, the Neighborhood Arts Assistance Program and the Cultural Outreach Program<sup>53</sup>. Together, these grant packages provide financial support for various arts institutions in Chicago.

**Table 4.2** The different levels of the CityArts Program

Level	Type of Organizations that Qualify	Maximum Request	No. of Recipients in 2003	Total Amt Granted in 2003
CityArts I	Emerging arts organizations with annual cash income of less than US\$100,000	US\$5,000	96	US\$182,200
CityArts II	Developing arts organizations with annual cash income between US\$100,000 & US\$250,000	US\$8,000	41	US\$170,000
CityArts III	Mid-size arts organizations with annual cash income between US\$250,000 & US\$2mil	US\$15,000	73	US\$452,000
CityArts IV	Major cultural institutions with annual income of more than US\$2mil	US\$25,000	26	US\$200,800

(Source: <http://www.ci.chi.il.us/CulturalAffairs/CulturalGrants/CityArts2003.html>)

There are some good points worth highlighting in the grant programs. First is the evaluation process. To ensure quality and a fairer distribution of the various grants, a peer review process is adopted where a review panel of artists, arts administrators, arts advocates and educators representing a broad range of the community evaluates all grants applications. This professional panel decides which organization will receive a grant and the amount it will get. Although the average grant amount received by the arts organizations might not be substantial, this program should be credited for the number of organizations it supports and its geographical reach. The breakdown of the CityArts grant into different levels

<sup>53</sup> The Community Arts Assistance Program funds Chicago's multi-ethnic artists and nonprofit organizations; the Neighborhood Arts Assistance Program funds high-quality instructional arts programs benefiting youth-at-risk, seniors, or persons with disabilities in Chicago's low to moderate income neighborhoods; and the Cultural Outreach Program supports nonprofit delegate agencies that offer cultural programming in low to moderate income communities.

also helps to ensure that arts organizations at various stages of development are supported. Hence, the arts community as a whole is able to grow without large institutions crowding out the smaller organizations.

In addition to financial aid, DCA also offers technical support. *Arts Management Services* and *Site and Development Assistance* are two such support programs. *Arts Management Services* offers resources for artists to develop professional networks with others in their field. It also facilitates the use of cost effective and efficient marketing strategies for their events. In addition, it provides access to shared facilities and administrative resources like health insurance and credit unions. As part of this program, DCA compiles an Arts Technical Assistance Guide that has updated information about other organizations that offer management services throughout the city.

The *Site and Development Assistance* program, on the other hand, helps artists and arts groups deal with issues such as obtaining a building permit or finding space to construct a cultural facility. Julie Burros, Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), explains that she would meet with the arts organizations individually to assist them. She notes that such one-on-one assistance is important because very often arts organizations do not have any expertise in real estate or development and have little experience in working with the City about incentives, permits or zoning (personal interview). MOSE offers similar technical assistance to community organizations that are planning a festival or a parade. Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development (MOSE), explains that the office serves as a conduit to all other City agencies. Festival organizers approach MOSE as a one-stop center to get all their permits from the relevant City agencies such as the sanitation department, the transportation department and the police department (personal interview).

The technical support offered by DCA and MOSE is helpful to the art community, particularly to individual artists and smaller arts organizations,



because they often do not have the resources or the expertise to handle technical issues. Such technical assistance thus helps the arts community deal with issues that it may not be well equipped to handle. This leaves artists and arts organizations more energy and resources to focus on their creative activities.

Support is also offered in the form of cultural infrastructure provision for artists. Julie Burros, Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), explains that DCA works with the Department of Planning and Development to identify vacant buildings for use by cultural groups on a temporary basis. In recent years, DCA has also been working with the Department of Housing and Artspace Projects, Inc.<sup>54</sup> to build artists live/work housing, something that is sorely missing in Chicago. A pilot project that converted a vacant school in East Garfield Park into low income artist live/work housing has been completed recently. The project, known as Switching Station Artist Lofts, opened in April 2002 (Figure 4.6). This is a significant step as the shortage of artist live/work housing had been identified as early as 1986 in the *Chicago Cultural Plan* (DCA, 1986). Although rather belated, this pilot project is still important to artists as it offers permanent and affordable purpose-built live/work housing, which is often not easily available in the city. According to Alison Zehr, Chicago artists hope that more of such infrastructure provision will be forthcoming in the near future (personal interview).

By focusing on developing artistic talent and supporting their creative activities with various financial and technical assistance programs, Chicago has created a strong artistic foundation to build upon. The City constantly builds up and supports the works of a pool of cultural producers. This will ensure that the development of the arts community is sustained by an ever growing group of new artists and arts groups.

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<sup>54</sup> Artspace Projects, Inc. is a nonprofit property development agency based in Minneapolis. It creates and manages space for artists and their families in cities throughout the United States. It has developed several artists housing in Minneapolis and its work has been recognized nationally.



**Figure 4.6** The exterior and interior of the new artist live/work housing

#### **4.4.3 Celebrate Local Arts & Cultural Assets**

The third internally-oriented strategy focuses on developing local cultural assets. While Glasgow employed the approach of importing foreign cultural events and artists to boost its international cultural reputation and attract tourists worldwide, Chicago’s emphasis is on celebrating its existing local arts and cultural capacities and developing them.

Most of the arts programs and cultural events in Chicago have a very strong local flavor, many of which were originated by the communities themselves. As Pam Morris, a Festival Coordinator at MOSE, remarks:

“The festivals and celebrations that really do well in our community are not things that are just plunked in. They are things that come up from the communities... You can’t just import an idea that is from elsewhere. What makes an event successful is the fact that it has a history and it has a root in Chicago” (personal interview).

Indeed, events like the *Chicago Blues Festival*, the *Chicago Gospel Music Festival* and the *Chicago Jazz Festival* all celebrate music forms that are strongly rooted in the city. This approach builds on the capacities of the local culture to develop an arts scene that is rooted and unique to Chicago.

An event that demonstrated the City's commitment to celebrating local cultural assets is the *Cows on Parade* exhibition organized by DCA. This was a special public art project held in 1999 in which nearly 320 fiberglass cows were painted and decorated by Chicago artists, architects, photographers and designers and displayed at various locations in the city (Figure 4.7). According to Fred Klaus, a retired history teacher who has been living in Chicago for more than 50 years, the cow is an appropriate symbol for Chicago for two reasons. Not only was the city's growth based on being the stockyard and railroad center of the Midwest, there is the legend of Mrs. O'Leary's cow starting the Great Chicago Fire of 1871 by kicking over a kerosene lamp. He feels that "the relevance of the cows to the history our city has definitely accounted for the popularity of the exhibition" (personal interview).



As important as the relevance of cows to the history of Chicago is the fact that local artists were involved in creating the array of different designs for the

cows on display. This provided an opportunity to showcase the artistic imagination and creative diversity of Chicago artists. Alison Zehr notes that many artists who took part in the exhibition were “really happy because they made all kinds of connections by being involved in the cow exhibition and it was great publicity for them” (personal interview). More than half of the exhibits were subsequently auctioned off for charity after the event ended. This exhibition was tremendously successful<sup>55</sup>. It was claimed to have attracted more than a million visitors, both locals and foreigners, supposedly generating an economic impact estimated at US\$200mil<sup>56</sup>. By celebrating the local arts, Chicago not only created opportunities to showcase its local cultural scene, it also generated an event that was unique to the city, making it attractive to visitors.

Similar focus on showcasing the local arts and culture is also seen in other arts programs. For the public art program, the earlier mentioned Percent-for-Art Ordinance stipulates that at least half of the commissions have to be awarded to Chicago-area artists to provide opportunities to the local arts community<sup>57</sup>. At the Chicago Cultural Center, DCA dedicates a huge gallery space on the ground floor (the Michigan Avenue Galleries) to feature the works of local and emerging artists. DCA also presents photographs by Chicago photographers at the City Gallery in the Historic Water Tower. Likewise, in many of the neighborhood festivals organized by MOSE, the local culture of the community is highlighted. Pam Morris, a Festival Coordinator at MOSE, cites the example of the *Bud Billiken “Back to School” Parade* as an event that celebrates local African-American culture and encourages African-American children to stay in school. This parade is organized by the Chicago Defenders Charities and it celebrates the culture of African-Americans, a major community in Chicago. Started in 1929,

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<sup>55</sup> However, subsequent versions of the event, such as *Suite Home Chicago* that featured life-sized fiberglass furniture displays, were less successful.

<sup>56</sup> <http://www.ci.chi.il.us/Tour/CowsOnParade/>.

<sup>57</sup> However, there were controversies over this because some felt that this rule was not observed as many of the works were by artists living in other US cities. The official response to the accusation was that the artworks were by artists who used to be from Chicago but are not living in the city anymore.

this parade has evolved to become the largest African-American parade in the US attracting not just the local African-American community but also participants from the rest of the nation (personal interview). Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development (MOSE), thus stresses that

“we highlight and hire artists from Chicago and the festivals that we develop highlight Chicago... There’s that relationship there it is celebrating: the unique culture of Chicago” (personal interview).

In the process, the City fosters the development of an arts and cultural scene that relates to Chicagoans and creates avenues for local artists to present their works. The focus on celebrating local cultural assets thus serves as an effective strategy in showcasing Chicago’s diverse arts and cultural scene.

#### **4.5 IMPACTS OF THE ARTS DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES**

The approach taken by the three agencies of Chicago to facilitate arts development has various impacts on the city. In this section, I highlight both the positive outcomes as well as some of the problems that were encountered.

##### **4.5.1 Positive Impacts**

One obvious impact of Chicago’s effort in promoting and developing the arts is the enhancement of its physical environment. All over the city center, sculptures and murals adorn the public plazas and buildings, complementing the interesting architectural backdrop of the city. Public art is also installed in every neighborhood and artworks can be found in police and fire stations, transit stations, branch libraries and other municipal buildings. Cultural events are always going on somewhere in the city contributing to the liveliness and vitality of the city. These activities have also helped to change the views people have of certain neighborhoods. For instance, Lasso (2001) notes that the perception of the Humboldt Park area as a place plagued by crime and violence was gradually changed when the community initiated an annual neighborhood festival, *Fiesta Boricua*. The festival helped to create a safe space for people to come to the neighborhood and enjoy a day of cultural celebration.

Improved place perceptions are not confined to neighborhoods. As the physical environment of a city improves, the image of the city as a whole is also enhanced. The City's effort to promote the arts and culture in Chicago serves to reinforce the city's status as one of the premiere American arts capitals. The related impact on tourism and the economy is certainly significant. As mentioned earlier, the *Cows on Parade* exhibition alone attracted more than a million visitors and had an economic impact estimated at some US\$200mil. Other cultural attractions also drew huge crowds. In 2002, the Art Institute of Chicago had more than 1.4mil visitors while the Chicago Cultural Center had more than 840,000 visitors<sup>58</sup>. Although I did not come across any studies that isolate the economic impact of the arts from other contributing factors in Chicago, one can quite surely say that the arts are important drivers of the city's economy.

Arts and cultural development generates other positive social and cultural impacts. With substantial effort directed at nurturing artistic talent, more arts organizations have emerged as the cultural scene in Chicago expands. This is apparent from the number of young cultural groups in the city. Based on a survey conducted by DCA, more than a third of the nonprofit arts organizations (36%) were less than 10 years old in 2000<sup>59</sup>. Among these, about half of them have an average age of only 3.5 years. Most of the new arts organizations are either theater groups, multi-arts organizations<sup>60</sup> or dance troupes (Zehr and Burros, 2002). This could be an indication that the City's effort directed at arts training and education has developed more cultural producers that feed the growth of new and emerging arts organizations.

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<sup>58</sup> These figures include both local as well as foreign visitors (Source: <http://www.choosechicago.com/STATS/ATTENDANCE.HTM>).

<sup>59</sup> 29% of the nonprofit arts organizations are between 10 and 20 years old while 35% are older than 21 years.

<sup>60</sup> In the survey, multi-arts organizations consist of an eclectic group of organizations ranging from performance-oriented groups like Performing Arts Chicago to visual arts and exhibition groups like Around the Coyote. The survey acknowledged that at times, some of these groups may be more appropriately aggregated with other disciplines (Zehr and Burros, 2002).

The organic nature of the institutional framework set up by the City also facilitates the growth of diverse art forms. The Chicago Park District recently decided to reorient 12 of its existing park centers as cultural centers. Julie Burros, Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), notes that “how [these cultural centers in the parks] are defined is different in every single one of them... it is very much organic and bottom up”. She goes on to explain that the programming in each of the 12 centers will be “decided upon by a local council and by the people who are involved from the neighborhood”. The individual park supervisor will then work with the local council to run the programs accordingly (personal interview). A similar process is observed for the festivals that MOSE organizes. Pam Morris, a Festival Coordinator at MOSE, explains that she works closely with an advisory committee that comprises a wide range of people from the community when designing the annual *Gospel Music Festival*. They meet on a regular basis to discuss, give feedback and decide on what materials to include in the event. As a result of the multitude of input from the ground, the events are more diverse and colorful each year (personal interview).

With the active promotion of the arts in Chicago, not only is public interest in the arts stimulated, there is also greater awareness of the value of the arts. Cheryl Hughes, previously Director of Gallery 37, cites how the Gallery 37 Program has brought about this effect:

“it brings the arts and the value of the arts to the communities that don’t normally value them or view the arts as careers...it gets people who otherwise wouldn’t buy a ticket to the symphony or wouldn’t buy a ticket to any other type of cultural events to sit in the audience when their sons and daughters get into Gallery 37. They start paying attention to the arts... When you can raise that level within communities, it’s a higher recognition that has a huge impact on how the arts are perceived” (personal interview).

The City’s efforts thus engage more Chicagoans in the arts, stimulating the cultural dynamism of the city. It also improves the perception of the arts as a professional occupation, creating more opportunities for young artists who wish to pursue a career in the arts.

When public interest in the arts is stimulated, more people are encouraged to pursue those interests further. Wali (2002) found that many Chicagoans are involved in arts and cultural activities during their leisure. She classifies such activities as the “informal arts”. One of her findings was that participation in the informal arts “helped people to bridge social boundaries of age, gender, race/ethnicity and occupational status” (Wali, 2002: 16). As the arts bring together diverse participants to engage in community activities, interactions and communications between people are facilitated. In this way, the arts help to foster social cohesion. The numerous neighborhood cultural activities that DCA, MOSE and the Chicago Park District organize certainly play a part in developing stronger social bonds among the participants, be they organizers, performers or audiences.

At the individual level, the arts create opportunities for expression and creativity. People engaged in the arts acquire skills that they can apply to other aspects of their life (Rabkin, 2002). Wali’s study cited an example of a Chicagoan who extracted her experiences of working as an artist in informal settings to frame the political organizing work she does in improving the neighborhood conditions in the community (Wali, 2002: 22). Through engagements in the arts, individuals also develop their confidence and discover their role in society. Cheryl Hughes noticed such subtle development among the apprentices of Gallery 37:

“It is interesting to see how being in that program can really grow someone’s self-confidence or their vision of where they fit into the city... They perceive themselves in a much more positive role and Chicagoans who come and visit the program... start recognizing our teenagers for the contributions they make to the community. It makes a big difference and that’s all achieved because the arts crosses a lot of boundaries” (personal interview).

At the community level, engagement in the arts also helps to build the organization and management skills of community organizations. In the process, community organizations gain new capabilities to plan and organize more activities. Lasso’s (2001) research, for instance, documented how the Pilsen



Neighborhood Community Council, one of Chicago's community organizations, developed its management capacity through organizing *Fiesta del Sol*, a neighborhood festival that MOSE helps to plan. Community leaders receive training from MOSE while working with it to plan for the neighborhood festival. Over the years, the community council gained sufficient economic and social capacities to initiate projects beyond festival planning and undertook urban design and environmental improvement projects in some of the areas in the neighborhood. The arts thus have an important social role of developing the capacities of both individuals and communities beyond the field of the arts.

Although Chicago's approach to cultural development is not specifically directed at economic gains or image enhancement as in the case of Glasgow, beneficial spin-offs in these aspects are evident. In addition, Chicago gains socially and culturally from promoting the arts by adopting an internally-oriented policy approach.

#### **4.5.2 Problems and Issues**

Chicago's cultural development experience is, however, not problem free. Several issues surfaced during my interviews. One of the most commonly raised issues was regarding the CityArts Program. Most interviewees highlighted that until recently the funding allocated to the grant program has remained stagnant while the number of arts organizations applying for the grant has been increasing. For those who view the grant as an entitlement and believe that the average amount that each arts organization receives should at least be maintained every year, this is a major problem because the same pool of funds has been spread thinner and thinner each year. Currently, each arts organization receives an average grant of around US\$3,000 which may not be very significant<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> However, a counter argument could be that grants are intended to stimulate development of new arts organizations rather than to support the operations of established cultural institutions. The gradually declining average amount may even be viewed as a way of weaning off arts organizations that have reached a certain level of development. This is, nevertheless, not the philosophy adopted in Chicago whose intention is to reach out to as many arts organizations at various stages of development as possible.

Acknowledging that the relatively low average grants from the CityArts Program are probably the result of DCA's decision to fund a larger number of organizations, most interviewees, including City officials, still feel that the funding for the CityArts Program should grow in relation to the number of arts organization applying for it. Julie Burros, Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), even suggested that perhaps a separate arts council could be set up with the main mission of providing grants at the city level:

“In other cities, what you see is a different kind of model to support the arts which includes an arts council. We have the Illinois Arts Council which is a state agency mostly granting municipal state funds. We don't have a Chicago arts council; DCA sort of functions like a *de facto* arts council. But I actually think that if we have a separate arts council, then perhaps our granting program may spin-off separately from DCA and that might allow the arts council to grow more robust support financially for the nonprofit arts community. I think that if it were structured differently, it just might be more logical [with] less conflict and it might just be more robust” (personal interview).

Hence, although the CityArts Program may have a wide reach, the general sentiment is that funding of the program should be commensurate with the increasing number of organization applying for the grant. Without such adjustments, the amount granted may fall so low that it might not be effective in helping arts organizations fund their activities<sup>62</sup>.

Another problem is regarding the issue of artist live/work housing. Typically, artists have space needs similar to light industry users. Among other things, they prefer high ceiling, fairly large work areas, freight elevators and loading docks. In a 1983 study conducted by the National Endowment for the Arts, Chicago was found to be the only one out of eight major cities surveyed that did not have any policy to support artists' space needs (cited in DCA, 1986). Although the shortage of artist live/work spaces had been recognized in the 1986 *Chicago Cultural Plan*, little progress was made until the earlier mentioned pilot

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<sup>62</sup> However, note that the CityArts grant amount ranges from US\$1,200 to US\$8,000 (Zehr and Burros, 2002: 41). Some arts organization may thus receive a larger amount of financial support.

project, Switching Station Artist Lofts, was completed at East Garfield Park in 2002.

Julie Burros admits that artist live/work housing was one area which DCA did not champion due to the lack of resources. It has, however, tried to focus more in this area in recent years (personal interview). Alison Zehr explains that artist live/work housing development has been slow because it is not a priority of the Department of Housing, the main agency responsible for housing construction whose main concern is to provide housing for the low and moderate income groups. As most artists do not fall into these categories, the provision of artist live/work housing is of low priority (personal interview). Given this problem, the lack of a champion to push for development of artist live/work housing did not see much development until recently. This is a problem because the artists' space needs often cannot be accommodated within the normal residential units. Without some assistance from the City, it may be hard to find suitable and affordable spaces for artists to engage in their creative work.

The problem with providing artist live/work housing raises another important issue – that of failure to take action on public feedback in a timely fashion. Alison Zehr noticed that certain members of the arts community felt disenchanting because although the problem of artist live/work housing was raised during the public consultation process of the *Chicago Cultural Plan* in 1986, no action was taken until about 15 years later. While the City is not obliged to address every need that has been raised, to maintain the credibility of any consultation process, suitable follow-up action must be taken within appropriate time or at least explanations should be provided if any suggestions are not adopted. Without that, the consultation process may appear to be a mere public relations exercise without real impact.

## **4.6 LESSONS FOR SINGAPORE**

The cultural development experiences of Chicago provide many useful insights for Singapore. In this section, I highlight the relevant aspects for Singapore to consider. To facilitate the discussion, Table 4.3 compares the cultural experiences of Singapore and Chicago.

### **4.6.1 Separate Institutions for Promoting Different Aspects of the Arts**

One aspect of Chicago's cultural development experience which Singapore could adopt is its institutional framework. As mentioned earlier, the tasks of promoting different aspects of the arts are distributed between DCA, MOSE and the Chicago Park District. The Chicago Park District takes care of the major and well-established museums while MOSE focuses on planning and organizing ephemeral cultural events with substantial effort directed at neighborhood festivals and parades. Such an arrangement allows DCA to focus its resources on programming cultural activities in the city center and nurturing local artists and smaller arts organizations.

Given that Singapore's urban cultural policy is both internally- and externally-oriented, a division of roles between different agencies to focus on different aspects of the arts may be logical. Currently, although there are three agencies responsible for developing and promoting the arts in Singapore, the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) is still the lead organization involved in almost every aspect of arts and cultural development. While it works with the other two agencies on certain aspects, MITA juggles a variety of tasks including the provision of grants, the cultivation of public interest, the planning of arts education, the development of cultural facilities, the programming of international cultural events, and the establishment of Singapore's global cultural reputation. In doing all these, it often finds itself trying to balance externally-oriented goals with internally-oriented objectives. The result, as discussed in Chapter 2, is a greater emphasis on the former.

**Table 4.3 Comparisons between Chicago and Singapore**

Characteristics	Singapore	Chicago				
Policy Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attempts to be both externally- and internally-oriented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predominantly internally-oriented</li> </ul>				
Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop creative economy</li> <li>▪ Social development and nation building</li> <li>▪ Enhance international cultural standing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reinforce the city's cultural capacities</li> <li>▪ Produce more creative talent</li> <li>▪ Stimulate local interest in the arts and culture</li> </ul>				
Desired Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diverse and robust economy</li> <li>▪ Improved national image</li> <li>▪ Foreign investors and global talents</li> <li>▪ Tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Cohesive and gracious society</li> <li>▪ Vibrant and diverse arts scene</li> </ul>				
Intended Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Singaporeans</li> <li>▪ Local artists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local arts community</li> <li>▪ Local Residents</li> </ul>				
Decision-Making Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Top-down</li> <li>▪ Directed solely by government ministries with assistance from their respective statutory boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Top-down in structure but organic in substance</li> <li>▪ Facilitated by government agencies with inputs from the arts community and local community organizations</li> </ul>				
Lead Agencies / Key Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ministry of Information and the Arts</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Education</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Trade and Industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Department of Cultural Affairs</li> <li>▪ Mayor's Office of Special Events</li> <li>▪ Chicago Park District</li> </ul>				
Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mainly funded by the government</li> <li>▪ Corporate sponsors fund individual cultural events on ad-hoc basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely funded by private contributions</li> <li>▪ City funding is derived from various tax revenues and earned income of lead agencies</li> </ul>				
Pre-existing Cultural Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing cultural scene with several emerging cultural groups and artists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many established cultural institutions with a diverse group of smaller arts organizations</li> </ul>				
Cultural Planning History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely ad-hoc until late 1990s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Started in the 1980s</li> </ul>				
Cultural Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Renaissance City Report</i>, 2000</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Chicago Cultural Plan</i>, 1986</li> </ul>				
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Government agencies spearhead most cultural development initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lead agencies work closely with arts community and neighborhood organizations</li> </ul>				
Strategic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Main emphasis on cultural consumption with some attempt to focus on cultural production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focused largely on cultural production</li> </ul>				
Specific Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop flagship and major arts companies</li> <li>▪ Go international</li> <li>▪ Develop an arts and cultural "renaissance" economy</li> <li>▪ Provide good infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>▪ Develop a strong arts and cultural base</li> <li>▪ Recognize and groom talent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make the arts widely and easily accessible</li> <li>▪ Nurture and support artistic talent</li> <li>▪ Celebrate local cultural assets</li> </ul>				
Outcomes	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predicted Outcomes</li> <li>▪ New and improved cultural facilities</li> <li>▪ Emerging cultural liveliness with new arts groups</li> <li>▪ More local artists &amp; arts groups gaining international recognition</li> <li>▪ More public participation in cultural activities</li> </ul> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential Issues</li> <li>▪ Growing appetite for foreign productions threatens local arts development</li> <li>▪ Smaller local cultural groups feel left out</li> <li>▪ Risk of the arts catering only to elite taste</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predicted Outcomes</li> <li>▪ New and improved cultural facilities</li> <li>▪ Emerging cultural liveliness with new arts groups</li> <li>▪ More local artists &amp; arts groups gaining international recognition</li> <li>▪ More public participation in cultural activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Potential Issues</li> <li>▪ Growing appetite for foreign productions threatens local arts development</li> <li>▪ Smaller local cultural groups feel left out</li> <li>▪ Risk of the arts catering only to elite taste</li> </ul>	<table border="0"> <tr> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actual Outcomes</li> <li>▪ Improved physical environment and image</li> <li>▪ Contribution to tourism and economy</li> <li>▪ Greater cultural vibrancy and diversity</li> <li>▪ Greater awareness and participation in the arts</li> <li>▪ Social and community development</li> </ul> </td> <td style="vertical-align: top;"> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Issues</li> <li>▪ Insufficient funding for grant program</li> <li>▪ Insufficient provision of artist live/work housing</li> <li>▪ Delayed response to public feedback</li> </ul> </td> </tr> </table>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Actual Outcomes</li> <li>▪ Improved physical environment and image</li> <li>▪ Contribution to tourism and economy</li> <li>▪ Greater cultural vibrancy and diversity</li> <li>▪ Greater awareness and participation in the arts</li> <li>▪ Social and community development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Issues</li> <li>▪ Insufficient funding for grant program</li> <li>▪ Insufficient provision of artist live/work housing</li> <li>▪ Delayed response to public feedback</li> </ul>
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One possible approach Singapore could consider is to divide the promotion of externally- and internally-oriented strategies between two different agencies. Currently, the Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI) is involved in some externally-oriented activities such as promoting arts and cultural tourism and developing the cultural economy in the city by attracting international arts companies and events to Singapore. It could take on the role of championing other externally-oriented strategies and oversee the affairs of major cultural institutions such as the Esplanade and the flagship arts companies that will be developed as proposed in the *Renaissance City Report*. This would leave MITA to focus on internally-oriented activities. Such a division of roles would ensure that strategies under the two policy orientations would be directed and funded by resources from two different ministries.

Some may feel that such an arrangement could result in other problems. For instance, could an established cultural institution that used to get funding from MITA for its internally-oriented programs (e.g. arts education programs for school children) still seek support from MITA when it is placed under the care of MTI? This could be a difficult situation if there were many established cultural institutions facing a similar dilemma. Indeed, any form of institutional framework is bound to have its own problems. Nevertheless, the reason why such a division of role could be applicable in Singapore is because there are currently not many major cultural institutions in the city. These issues could thus be pre-empted and taken into consideration by the respective agencies as the flagship arts companies are developed. For example, MITA and MTI could work together for selected projects that straddle both externally- and internally-oriented objectives.

#### **4.6.2 Adopt an Inclusive Development Process**

A related aspect of Chicago's cultural development experience that is relevant for Singapore is the inclusive and organic nature of arts development which is made possible partly by the above-mentioned institutional framework. As discussed earlier, an inclusive process is adopted in many aspects of designing

Chicago's cultural programs and policies. The approach is very organic involving a lot of input from the field and bringing all the relevant stakeholders to the discussion table. Not only is this evident at the city-wide level (such as the consultation process of the 1986 *Chicago Cultural Plan*), it is also practiced on a smaller scale (such as during the planning of various festivals and events).

Adopting an inclusive process is very important because it creates a stronger sense of ownership in the proposed initiatives among the people who are going to be affected by them. The diversity of input also generates a wider range of programs and recommendations. This process is especially crucial in the arts because the arts are multifaceted and artists generally tend to be antiestablishment. They need to know that their diverse views are being considered before they will be convinced of the efficacy of any plan. As Alison Zehr opines, "I totally believe that all you have to do is to start having conversations about things and if you are hitting on the right thing, and people are interested, then things are going to happen" (personal interview).

In this respect, Singapore has much to improve upon. Having been an authoritarian city-state for much of its political history, its style of public policy has seen very few instances of engaging the public in a dialogue of any kind. Its approach to arts development suffers from the same problem. Many of the emerging concerns regarding the government's vision of a "Renaissance City" could have been addressed had a more inclusive process been adopted when drafting the *Renaissance City Report*. Singapore has to be more conscious in this area and make an attempt to gradually open up the process of urban cultural planning to include more public opinions. There are already signs that the arts community and the general public are ready for discussion. The arts community has been conducting its own forums to discuss a range of issues on arts

development and related government policies<sup>63</sup>. The public has also responded positively to the recent public consultation exercises when the Urban Redevelopment Authority drafted the Concept Plan in 2001 and the Master Plan in 2003 to guide the city's urban development. As society becomes more educated and vocal, more avenues will have to be provided for the public to air their views and participate in the decision-making process. Without a more inclusive process, the implementation of any arts program could be plagued by criticism and resistance.

However, a precaution must also be drawn from Chicago's consultative approach to urban cultural planning. As mentioned earlier, many Chicago artists were disillusioned by the lack of artist live/work housing because no follow-up action was taken by the City although the issue was first raised in the consultation process of the 1986 *Chicago Cultural Plan*. When Singapore opens itself up to stronger public opinion, it must also be prepared to undertake the necessary steps to act upon the feedback gathered from the inclusive planning process. If no resources are available to embark on immediate action, explanations must at least be given to justify the situation. Without proper follow-up, a consultation process risks appearing as nothing more than a public relations exercise and the merits of the process would be lost as the exercise would not be considered credible.

#### **4.6.3 Emphasize the "Local"**

A natural extension of adopting a more organic and inclusive cultural development process would be to focus on the "local". One of Chicago's urban cultural strategies is to focus on developing local arts and culture that relate to Chicagoans. This emphasis on capitalizing on the "local", be it on local history, local culture, local artists or local audience, is a useful principle to apply to arts development in Singapore. Chang (2000: 818) argues that in Singapore's quest

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<sup>63</sup> A forum called the Substation Conference has been organized by the arts community bi-annually to discuss issues related to arts development. See Lee (1993 and 1996) for two of the conference proceedings.



to develop a “Renaissance City”, it is important to ensure that “local communal needs and cultural values are not compromised”. As highlighted in the previous chapter, one of the issues raised by many Singaporean artists I interviewed is that the government seems to be putting more effort on attracting world-class foreign productions and exhibitions. As such, insufficient effort is directed at showcasing the local arts community and catering to its needs.

This situation is reminiscent of the Sydney 2000 Cultural Olympiad (Stevenson, 1997). The Cultural Olympiad is a cultural festival held in conjunction with the Olympic Games in which the host city is free to determine the nature, design and duration of the cultural event. For the Sydney 2000 Cultural Olympiad, instead of taking the opportunity to provide space for local artistic expression, the host organizing committee programmed a series of international acts which the Executive Producer of the event proudly proclaimed as being the “elite of elite” (cited in Stevenson, 1997: 233). Stevenson (1997) thus argues that far from providing opportunities for local artistic expression, the Cultural Olympiad was more concerned with making a statement about Sydney’s status as a world city and asserting Australia’s position as a center of cultural and artistic excellence<sup>64</sup>.

As in the case of the Sydney 2000 Cultural Olympiad, Singapore’s focus on importing foreign acts is intended to raise the city’s international cultural profile. The imported shows also seem to cater more to the taste of international visitors rather than to the local audience. Such an obsession with the “foreign” at the expense of the “local” is inimical to the arts scene in the long run. Not only are local artists not given the exposure and opportunity to present their work, the dependence on international visitors as the audience base is not going to be sustainable.

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<sup>64</sup> Ironically, unlike the Cultural Olympiad, the local arts and culture were featured in the opening and closing ceremonies of the Olympic Games which were televised globally.

In its attempt to develop itself as a “city of art”, Singapore has to start looking at what artistic and cultural attributes it has to offer from within the country. As Cheryl Hughes, Director of Program Development (MOSE), stresses,

“I just couldn’t say enough about how I think that cities need to understand the value of events that celebrate their own culture rather than just doing those corporate booking festivals that don’t really have anything to do with one’s culture... whatever you do, it needs to have a relevance and be rooted back to the place” (personal interview).

While Singapore may not have the benefit of drawing upon 150 years of cultural history like Chicago, it does have its own unique blend of eastern and western cultures and an emerging group of local artists adept at exploiting this cultural quality. The government should consider looking into the special cultural character of the country and capitalize on these local characteristics in developing the arts scene. Only with a firm local artistic foundation can the country take on bolder ambitions to be a global arts hub.

#### **4.6.4 Establish a Cultural Incubator to Nurture Artistic Talent**

Related to the issue of placing more emphasis on the “local” is paying more attention to nurturing local artistic talent. Through Gallery 37, Chicago created a cultural incubator for young artists to learn, experiment and grow creatively under the mentorship of a professional artists. A win-win relationship has also been established between emerging performing groups and the City through the Storefront Theater because professional artists conduct classes for Gallery 37 in exchange for free usage of the theater space. For the creative growth of artists, it is important to provide such havens for them to test out and refine their creative ideas. Artistic productions of world-class standards do not just appear in the cultural scene. Time and space is needed for creativity to germinate. An often cited example is Andrew Lloyd Weber’s musical, *Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat*, which started off as a 20-minute junior

school performance in 1968. The show has since expanded to become a popular full length musical that opened in London's West End in 1991<sup>65</sup>.

Although Singapore's *Renaissance City Report* recognized the need to groom talent, it only recommended providing additional financial support for beefing up arts scholarships and funding promising projects by fresh talent. While this is a helpful first step, more could be done to establish a cultural incubator for young talent to experiment, explore and excel. Joey Chua, a recipient of the Singapore arts scholarship felt that financial backing alone is insufficient:

"I find that there is still a lack of support... I'm not talking about only financial support. For artists to grow, definitely we need money, but we also need other forms of support, such as a mentor to guide and direct us. The government provides financial assistance but not other things" (personal interview).

Learning from Chicago, Singapore could consider establishing a cultural incubator similar to Gallery 37. Some artists I interviewed suggested that MITA could compile a directory of professional artists in Singapore and set up a mentorship program to pair up young talent with more experienced artists. Such an attempt could see benefits similar to those of Gallery 37. Beyond financial backing, more effort needs to be directed towards nurturing local artists who will be the life source of a vibrant cultural center. Only with a constant supply of new artists can the cultural life of the city be sustained in the long-term.

#### **4.6.5 Improve the System for Providing Arts Grants**

Another aspect in which Singapore can learn from Chicago's experience is in the grant program. There are three areas that could be relevant to Singapore. First, Chicago's CityArts Program is a tri-annual grant which is divided into four levels to cater to arts organizations at different stages of development. The multi-year nature of the grant assures arts organizations of a definite flow of income over three years and facilitates the planning of larger scale projects over a longer period of time. The different levels of the program also ensure that all types of

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<sup>65</sup> <http://www.reallyuseful.com/disp.cgi?page=joseph/aboutshow.html>.

arts organizations stand to benefit from the financial support offered by the City. Currently, Singapore gives out mostly annual grants. This restricts the financial planning of long-term projects. MITA could consider changing Singapore's grant program to a multi-year grant and breaking the program down to several levels so that a variety of arts organizations can enjoy financial support. Given that Singapore's arts scene is still relatively young, it is perhaps premature to divide the program into as many levels as Chicago's CityArts Program. However, some level of division is certainly helpful in making sure that both new and established arts groups are supported by the grant program.

Another aspect of Chicago's grant program that may be relevant for Singapore is in the process of evaluating grant applications. As mentioned earlier, Chicago adopts a peer review process. A panel, made up of not just City officials but also members of the arts community, decides which organization would receive a grant and how much each organization gets. This process is helpful in ensuring a fairer distribution of grants to deserving organizations. Singapore's current grant allocation process is not as transparent. The decision regarding which organization or artist receives a grant and the amount to be given is made by the staff of the National Arts Council. In the attempt to be objective, these officers use a set of assessment criteria that include factors such as good track record, level of activity, and growth potential. However, not much consideration is given to the quality and artistic standards of grant applicants. With a peer review panel, practicing artists sitting on the review panel will be better able to evaluate the quality and artistic standards of applicants and ensure that deserving artists and arts organizations get the suitable financial support.

Finally, it was noted that although DCA's objective is to support as many arts organizations at different stages of development as possible, funding for the CityArts Program had remained stagnant until recent years. As a result, the average amount that each organization gets is not very substantial. For those who believe that the average amount should at least be maintained every year,

this program suffers from the problem of funding falling behind the emergence of new arts organizations applying for the grant. This should be a warning for Singapore if one of the objectives of its grant program is to have a wide reach. As its cultural scene develops, sufficient financial support should be given to the grant program to match this growth. Without that, Singapore might experience the same problems that Chicago has encountered.

#### **4.6.6 Improve Technical Assistance**

In addition to financial support, Singapore can also learn from the technical assistance programs offered by Chicago. Many programs and initiatives are put in place to help artists and arts organizations with various technical issues in Chicago. As mentioned earlier, DCA runs *Arts Management Services*, *Site and Development Assistance*, and the *Artist Live/Work Housing* program while MOSE functions as a one-stop center that assists community organizations in applying for permits from various City departments when organizing a cultural event.

In Singapore, more effort could be directed towards setting up a similar technical support system. Presently, other than the *Arts Housing Scheme*, there are no other programs that offer technical assistance for arts organizations in Singapore. In fact, to stage a public performance, arts organizations have to obtain licenses separately from various agencies such as the Public Entertainment Licensing Unit and the Censorship Unit. MITA could establish a technical support system that facilitates networking among artists and sharing of resources, just like Chicago's *Arts Management Services*. Similar to the way MOSE acts as a one-stop center for Chicago arts organizations in applying for permits to host a cultural event, streamlining of the license application process could also be introduced in Singapore so that arts organizations could apply for all the necessary permits through just one agency.

With regard to the provision of arts housing, although Singapore already has a rather well established *Arts Housing Scheme* that provides a 90% rent subsidy as mentioned in Chapter 2, the scheme can still be improved further. The spaces offered to artists and arts organizations under Singapore's *Arts Housing Scheme* are usually converted from old buildings without catering to the special needs of artists and arts organizations. The buildings are also not allocated on a permanent basis. In contrast, although Chicago's *Artist Live/Work Housing* program is much belated, permanent purpose-built spaces are offered for artists to use. Julie Burros, Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), explains the need for permanent provision:

“[F]or artist live/work space, it's much more preferable to have permanent spaces... live/work space is not viable on a temporary basis. We want to create permanent live/work space. Temporary living space is just not practical because they [artists] have to be uprooted every now and then and that's really not what we are trying to do” (personal interview).

The temporary nature of Singapore's *Arts Housing Scheme* thus creates the problem of displacing artists and arts organizations when tenancy ends. This lack of certainty also limits the willingness of arts organizations to undertake costly refurbishment to make the old buildings suitable for their use. Hence, although a high rental subsidy is provided, many of the buildings are not suitably designed to meet the space needs of artists and arts organizations. In this respect, Singapore's *Arts Housing Scheme* would be improved if MITA were to undertake the necessary refurbishment of the old buildings to make them suitable for use by artists and arts organizations. These spaces could then be allocated on a permanent basis.

#### **4.6.7 Undertake Aggressive Public Outreach Programs**

Besides initiatives directed at artists and arts organizations, Chicago's cultural development experience also offers insights into the social outreach efforts that actively engage Chicagoans in a variety of cultural activities. As discussed earlier, DCA, MOSE and the Chicago Park District program the entire

city with a massive assortment of cultural events throughout the year. The arts and culture are thus injected into almost every aspect of Chicagoans' daily lives to stimulate public interest in the arts. Special efforts are even made to reach out to the underprivileged segments of society. Julie Burros, Director of Cultural Planning (DCA), explains that

“the idea is to think about the arts as a tool for community development; not in the big splashy tourist-driven, expensive high art projects but to think about what the neighborhoods and the citizens really need in terms of art... What we hope to accomplish is community improvement through the arts, but through hundreds of small projects instead of maybe four or five very large projects, so that the cumulative value of hundreds of small projects actually will have tremendous impact throughout all parts of the city versus maybe building a US\$500mil arts center with elite arts for visitors in just downtown” (personal interview).

Although Singapore already engages in some social outreach programs, these are usually concentrated in selected months. The most aggressive public outreach in which cultural events are presented in various neighborhood locations is usually scheduled in May or June to coincide with the annual *Singapore Arts Festival*. To really attract public attention in the arts, such a selective effort concentrated in a few months will not be enough. Given the weather in Singapore, a more consistent and aggressive outreach program should be adopted to inundate the entire city with easily accessible cultural activities throughout the year. Like Chicago, Singapore could step up the level of arts programming at different locations of the city. This will not only raise the level of awareness and interest in the arts among the general public, it will also create more opportunities for local artists to present their works. Complementing this, proper publicity and information should be provided to inform the public about these events. A simple monthly or weekly cultural calendar program should suffice. Singapore could thus consider looking into programming more social outreach events that feature local artists and arts groups similar to the way Chicago's Cultural Center, Historic Water Tower and Daley Civic Center offer performances and exhibitions featuring Chicago-based artists.

#### **4.6.8 Celebrate All Aspects of the Arts & Culture**

A final aspect of Chicago's cultural development that has relevance for Singapore is in the way the city embraces all the diverse art forms and provides support to all aspects of the arts. Unlike many other cities whose cultural development efforts are often directed only at the "high arts" portion of the performing and visual arts, Chicago's cultural development programs embrace the informal arts, film, photography, literary arts and architecture. MOSE, for instance, organizes an event that celebrates the architecture of the city and a festival that showcases films as an art form. The neighborhood festivals MOSE organizes similarly engage people who participate in the informal arts and celebrate their contribution to the arts scene in Chicago. As a result, Chicago can boast of a vibrant and diverse arts community offering anything from symphonic music and ballet to hip hop music and street funk dances.

Singapore needs to break away from just focusing its efforts on a narrow band of the performing and visual fine arts and take steps to promote its architecture, literature, film and informal arts activities as well. There are already cultural and heritage trails developed jointly by the Singapore Heritage Board and the Singapore Tourism Board. A new initiative that Singapore could consider introducing is architectural guided tours. Singapore has a substantial number of architectural landmarks designed by renowned architects, and its urban conservation effort has resulted in the preservation of numerous traditional buildings reflective of its unique Asian heritage. This blend of tradition and modernity has resulted in a signature skyline in which skyscrapers are contrasted dramatically with conserved traditional shophouses (Figure 4.8). Such unique architectural attributes should be celebrated to strengthen the perception of Singapore as a "city of art". Indeed, to be a true "city of art", all aspects of the arts should be celebrated.





**Figure 4.8** Singapore's skyline of modern skyscrapers and traditional buildings



## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

#### 5.1 REFLECTIONS

The primary motivation behind this thesis was my curiosity about how the arts and culture could be used most effectively to stimulate urban development and regeneration. I was keen to discover how and why many cities that once were indifferent to arts and cultural development have undertaken heroic city-wide effort to create “cities of art”. This interest was stimulated by Singapore’s recent release of the *Renaissance City Report*, an urban cultural policy document that charted directions and proposed strategies to develop the arts and cultural scene in my country. My intention was to take a critical yet constructive examination of arts and cultural development in Singapore. I argue that although Singapore’s urban cultural policy attempts to address both external and internal policy orientations, the Singapore government has inappropriately placed undue emphasis on the external at the cost of internal strategies for arts and cultural development.

By comparing Singapore’s urban cultural policy with those of Glasgow and Chicago, my purpose was not only to highlight the problems in Singapore’s approach but also to extract relevant programs and initiatives that Singapore could adapt and adopt. I also wanted to point out some of the problems encountered by the other two cities so as to caution Singapore against these pitfalls in its quest to become a “Renaissance City”. In this concluding chapter, I summarize the main findings of this comparative analysis and make recommendations on the ways to strengthen and improve the proposals for arts and cultural development in Singapore. Table 5.1 compares the arts and cultural development experiences of all three cities.

**Table 5.1** Comparison between Glasgow, Chicago and Singapore

Characteristics	Glasgow
Policy Orientation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predominantly externally-oriented</li> </ul>
Goals and Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop post-industrial economy</li> <li>▪ Urban Regeneration</li> <li>▪ Image Improvement</li> </ul>
Desired Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Economic growth through inward investment and tourism</li> <li>▪ Enhanced international profile</li> </ul>
Intended Target Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foreign investors</li> <li>▪ Tourists</li> </ul>
Decision-Making Structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mainly top-down</li> <li>▪ Directed by government agencies with inputs from consultants and business elites</li> </ul>
Lead Agencies / Key Actors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Scottish Development Agency</li> <li>▪ Glasgow District Council</li> <li>▪ Glasgow Action (public-private partnership)</li> </ul>
Funding Sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely funded by city agencies</li> <li>▪ Private sector resources tapped through public-private partnership</li> </ul>
Pre-existing Cultural Condition	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Several established cultural institutions but without a very high profile</li> </ul>
Cultural Planning History	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Started in the 1980s</li> </ul>
Cultural Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ None</li> </ul>
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Consultants and event organizers employed to promote and program cultural activities</li> </ul>
Strategic Model	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focused largely on cultural consumption</li> </ul>
Specific Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Place marketing campaigns</li> <li>▪ Cultural infrastructure development</li> <li>▪ Host visible cultural spectacles</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<p><u>Actual Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved city image</li> <li>▪ Short-term economic benefits</li> <li>▪ New cultural facilities and programs added</li> </ul> <p><u>Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Limited gains to local cultural industries</li> <li>▪ Foreign cultural acts displaced some local cultural groups</li> <li>▪ “Unreal” city image projected</li> <li>▪ Limited long-term economic impact</li> <li>▪ Uneven distribution of benefits</li> </ul>

**Table 5.1 (Continued)**

Singapore	Chicago
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Attempts to be both externally- and internally-oriented</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Predominantly internally-oriented</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop creative economy</li> <li>▪ Social development and nation building</li> <li>▪ Enhance international cultural standing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Reinforce the city's cultural capacities</li> <li>▪ Produce more creative talent</li> <li>▪ Stimulate local interest in the arts and culture</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Diverse and robust economy</li> <li>▪ Improved national image</li> <li>▪ Cohesive and gracious society</li> <li>▪ Vibrant and diverse arts scene</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Vibrant and diverse local cultural scene</li> <li>▪ Active local participation in the arts</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Foreign investors and global talents</li> <li>▪ Tourists</li> <li>▪ Singaporeans</li> <li>▪ Local artists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Local arts community</li> <li>▪ Local Residents</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Top-down</li> <li>▪ Directed solely by government ministries with assistance from their respective statutory boards</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Top-down in structure but organic in substance</li> <li>▪ Facilitated by government agencies with inputs from the arts community and local community organizations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Ministry of Information and the Arts</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Education</li> <li>▪ Ministry of Trade and Industry</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Department of Cultural Affairs</li> <li>▪ Mayor's Office of Special Events</li> <li>▪ Chicago Park District</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Mainly funded by the government</li> <li>▪ Corporate sponsors fund individual cultural events on ad-hoc basis</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely funded by private contributions</li> <li>▪ City funding is derived from various tax revenues and earned income of lead agencies</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Developing cultural scene with several emerging cultural groups and artists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Many established cultural institutions with a diverse group of smaller arts organizations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Largely ad-hoc until late 1990s</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Started in the 1980s</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Renaissance City Report, 2000</i></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <i>Chicago Cultural Plan, 1986</i></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Government agencies spearhead most cultural development initiatives</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lead agencies work closely with arts community and neighborhood organizations</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Main emphasis on cultural consumption with some attempt to focus on cultural production</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Focused largely on cultural production</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Develop flagship and major arts companies</li> <li>▪ Go international</li> <li>▪ Develop an arts and cultural "renaissance" economy</li> <li>▪ Provide good infrastructure and facilities</li> <li>▪ Develop a strong arts and cultural base</li> <li>▪ Recognize and groom talent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Make the arts widely and easily accessible</li> <li>▪ Nurture and support artistic talent</li> <li>▪ Celebrate local cultural assets</li> </ul>
<p><u>Predicted Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ New and improved cultural facilities</li> <li>▪ Emerging cultural liveliness with new arts groups</li> <li>▪ More local artists &amp; arts groups gaining international recognition</li> <li>▪ More public participation in cultural activities</li> </ul> <p><u>Potential Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Growing appetite for foreign productions threatens local arts development</li> <li>▪ Smaller local cultural groups feel left out</li> <li>▪ Risk of the arts catering only to elite taste</li> </ul>	<p><u>Actual Outcomes</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Improved physical environment and image</li> <li>▪ Contribution to tourism and economy</li> <li>▪ Greater cultural vibrancy and diversity</li> <li>▪ Greater awareness and participation in the arts</li> <li>▪ Social and community development</li> </ul> <p><u>Issues</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Insufficient funding for grant program</li> <li>▪ Insufficient provision of artist live/work housing</li> <li>▪ Delayed response to public feedback</li> </ul>

## **5.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS**

In the preceding two chapters, I have compared Singapore to the cases of Glasgow and Chicago separately. Individually, the arts and cultural development experiences of these two cities have already offered many useful pointers for Singapore. In this section, I lay out the experiences of all three cities simultaneously to draw additional insights while I summarize the main findings of the research and make recommendations for improving Singapore's urban cultural policy. These observations are classified into four main categories.

### **5.2.1 Institutional Framework**

Both Glasgow and Chicago have provided useful observations with respect to institutional framework. Chicago has shown that it may be effective to allocate the various tasks of promoting and developing the different aspects of the arts to different agencies. This arrangement has allowed for both the concerns of the large and well established cultural institutions as well as the needs of emerging arts groups and individual artists to be addressed.

In Singapore where urban cultural policy is intended to achieve both global and local objectives, there has been a conflict between externally- and internally-oriented strategies. While these divergent aspects of urban cultural policy need not be mutually exclusive, the heavier emphasis that Singapore has placed on externally-oriented strategies has created some discontent among the proponents for more local artistic development. I thus suggest that it may be logical to entrust the task of promoting externally- and internally-oriented strategies to separate ministries. The Ministry of Trade and Industry (MTI), which is already engaged in some externally-oriented activities, can champion other externally-oriented strategies leaving the Ministry of Information and the Arts (MITA) to concentrate on nurturing local cultural development. This suggestion is made to reduce conflicts of interest and competition for resources between large and small as well as established and emerging arts organizations as the

strategies under each orientation will be directed and funded by resources from two different ministries.

Glasgow offers a different perspective on the institutional framework for arts development – that of public-private partnership. The experience of Glasgow has shown that such a partnership can facilitate amicable working relationships and has helped to align the development goals and strategies between the public and the private sectors. It has also provided significant private sector financial resources to support various cultural development initiatives. A similar public-private partnership in Singapore might help to break down the current barriers between the two sectors. The arts might be a suitable area in which to pioneer such collaborations where public agencies (e.g. National Arts Council and/or Singapore Tourism Board) can work with private corporations, major cultural institutions and neighborhood arts communities to form a public-private coalition to champion arts development in Singapore. This organization could act as an advisory panel for government urban cultural policies. It could also serve as an independent fiscal agent for the public sector to encourage private financial contributions for the arts, much like the charitable foundations of Chicago's Department of Cultural Affairs that raise philanthropic dollars to support arts development.

***Recommendations for Singapore***

- 1) Put MTI in charge of externally-oriented cultural strategies to achieve arts excellence while MITA concentrate on the internally-oriented cultural strategies for fostering local arts development.
- 2) Set up a public-private partnership organization to act as an advisory panel for urban cultural policies and an independent fiscal agent for the public sector to encourage private sector financial support for arts development.

### 5.2.2 Development Process

The two cases have also offered helpful pointers with respect to the development process. While both cities adopt a top-down decision-making structure that is largely government-led, they have shown that such a framework does not preclude non-government parties from participating in the decision-making and development process. The public-private partnership in Glasgow is one example of a limited involvement by the business community in the arts development process. Chicago's takes this much further by adopting an inclusive and consultative approach in many aspects of its cultural development initiatives. The organic and inclusive nature of cultural planning and development is evident at the city-wide level (e.g. the public consultation process of the 1986 *Chicago Cultural Plan*) as well as on a smaller scale (e.g. the involvement of community organizations in planning various festivals and cultural events).

In Singapore, as society has become better educated and increasingly vocal, there have been indications that the public is eager to engage the government in a dialogue regarding public policy. The field of urban cultural policy is no exception. As the government plans its moves to develop Singapore into a "Renaissance City", adopting an inclusive development process, like that of Chicago, will be an important element to bear in mind. Having been an authoritarian city-state for most of its political history, it is perhaps unrealistic to expect changes in the political system to take place over a short period of time. However, attempts should be made gradually to open up the urban cultural planning process to the local arts community and stakeholders. Not only will this generate greater "buy-in" for the proposed policies, the diversity of opinion obtained from the ground will also offer a multitude of ideas that will be helpful in forwarding the government's vision of becoming a "Renaissance City".

As a first step towards embracing a more inclusive development process, I propose for MITA to start a cultural network program to provide an avenue for the local arts community to talk to the government as well as among themselves.



This group should meet on a regular basis to discuss any important issues that the local arts community or the government wishes to raise. In addition to this program, I also suggest that MITA undertake a survey of the local arts community to assess their needs and concerns. The government is not obliged to address every concern raised by the arts community, but the information gathered from the cultural network program and the survey can be used to establish an information database. Such a database would be helpful for policy makers in assisting them determine what the more pressing priorities are and how to develop suitable policies to assist the local cultural community.

Caution should, however, be taken. As more information is gathered through an inclusive cultural development process, a system must be put in place to act on the feedback generated. The disillusionment of Chicago's artists regarding artist live/work housing should serve as a warning that without a proper system, the public might lose faith in the consultation process and view it as a mere public relations exercise.

Another relevant lesson regarding the development process that Singapore can learn from Glasgow and Chicago is that in developing and promoting the arts, all aspects of the arts and culture should be celebrated. To a certain extent, Glasgow tried to do this by promoting not only the visual and performing arts but also by celebrating its architecture and urban environment (e.g. architectural tours of the works by Charles Rennie Mackintosh). In the 1988 *Glasgow Garden Festival*, the city also promoted children's activities, community events and landscape design to strengthen the perception of Glasgow as a "city of art". This development process of embracing diverse art forms is practiced more extensively in Chicago where the city's varied cultural assets are nurtured and developed. Be it traditional arts (e.g. theater, dance, music, painting, sculpture, poetry, etc.) or contemporary cultures (e.g. film, photography, architecture, landscape design, parks system, popular culture, informal arts, etc.), effort is made to embrace and support these diverse art forms. Chicago thus

offers a plethora of cultural activities on any given day, contributing to the vibrancy and vitality of the city.

In trying to create a “Renaissance City”, Singapore has emphasized the performing and visual arts. This limited focus should expand to embrace the other aspects of Singapore’s arts and culture. One way to strengthen the perception of Singapore as a “city of art” is to start with an obvious aspect that is missing in Singapore’s urban cultural plan: featuring its unique blend of eastern and western, traditional and modern architecture and urban environment. Progressively, the scope should be expanded to include other emerging and informal art forms (e.g. electronic music, graphic design, informal arts, etc.).

### ***Recommendations for Singapore***

- 3) Gradually adopt an inclusive urban cultural planning approach, starting with:
  - a) setting up a cultural network program to facilitate dialogue between the local arts community and the government and
  - b) conducting a survey to access the needs and concerns of the local arts community.
- 4) Progressively embrace and celebrate all aspects of the arts, starting with the obvious aspect that is missing in Singapore’s urban cultural plan: highlighting the city’s unique blend of eastern and western, traditional and modern architecture.

### **5.2.3 Development Strategies**

Glasgow and Chicago have offered many important insights for Singapore in another area of arts and cultural development – that of development strategies. While the urban cultural policies of the two cities are of different policy orientations, the lessons learned regarding development strategies point in the same direction. I have grouped these issues into two different categories.

#### ***Hardware versus Software***

The first set of learning points relates to the issue of cultural hardware versus artistic software. Glasgow’s experience has shown that while

concentrating on cultural hardware provision has helped to project its image as a “city of art”, critics have pointed out that it did little for developing the local arts and cultural scene. On the flip side, Chicago’s cultural incubator established to groom artistic talent and the financial as well as technical support system set up to facilitate local arts development reinforced the importance of nurturing and supporting artistic software.

Despite having both policy orientations, Singapore’s approach to positioning itself as a “Renaissance City” has placed an inordinate amount of focus on strategies for developing cultural hardware, much to the neglect of strategies for nurturing and supporting artistic software. While Glasgow’s experience has highlighted potential criticism of such an approach, Chicago has offered several programs and initiatives that Singapore can emulate to direct more effort at nurturing and supporting local arts development. I recommend a few specific strategies that Singapore can implement to help provide a better balance between the development of cultural hardware and artistic software.

To nurture young artistic talent in Singapore, beyond providing additional financial backing as proposed in the *Renaissance City Report*, one strategy is to establish a mentorship program that pairs up young talent with experienced artists, much like Chicago’s Gallery 37 Program. Such a program is intended to create opportunities for young artists to refine their artistic skills and techniques by learning from established professional artists. This process also ensures the perpetuation of artistic life and enthusiasm in the city by constantly producing young artists.

I also suggest improvements to Singapore’s arts grant system to offer better financial support for artists and arts organizations. Similar to Chicago’s CityArts Program, Singapore’s current annual grant could be changed to a multi-year grant and broken down into different levels. This change is proposed for two reasons. First, the multi-year nature of the grant will assure arts organizations of

a definite flow of financial support, allowing them to undertake the planning of larger scale projects over a longer time frame. Second, the different levels of the grant program will ensure that arts organizations at all stages of development will enjoy financial support from the government. Another suggestion relating to the grant program is to establish peer review panels to better assess the artistic quality of grant applicants. These would facilitate a fairer distribution of grants to deserving arts organizations and artists.

In terms of technical support, a system like Chicago's *Arts Management Services* should be set up to provide technical assistance to the arts community as well as to facilitate networking and sharing of useful resources among themselves. This could be tied to the earlier suggested cultural network program. Such a system is important for the arts community because artists often do not have the expertise or resources to handle technical issues. MITA should also streamline the current license application process so that arts organizations can apply for all the necessary licenses to stage a performance or an exhibition through a one-stop center. This system will assist the arts community with technical issues, freeing more energy and resources for artists to focus on their creative activities.

Another area of technical support that can be improved is Singapore's *Arts Housing Scheme*. Although this scheme must be credited for the many benefits it has provided to the local arts community, it has also been plagued by issues regarding its temporary nature and the suitability of the spaces provided. Despite having a fair share of problems, Chicago's *Artist Living/Work Housing* program offers some insights into this issue. Unlike Singapore's *Arts Housing Scheme*, Chicago's *Artist Living/Work Housing* program provides permanent purpose-built spaces for artists to use. Singapore can improve its scheme by undertaking the necessary refurbishment of old buildings to be converted for arts use and allocating these refurbished buildings to the arts community on a permanent

basis. This will hopefully improve the current *Arts Housing Scheme* and benefit the local arts community to a greater extent.

### ***Recommendations for Singapore***

- 5) In addition to the existing strategies to develop cultural hardware, place more emphasis on nurturing and supporting artistic software by:
  - a) establishing a mentorship program that pairs up young talent with experienced artists to create opportunities for young artists to refine their skills and techniques under the guidance of professional artists;
  - b) changing the current annual grant to a multi-year grant and breaking down the grant program into different levels;
  - c) establishing a peer review panel for assessing the artistic quality of grant applicants to facilitate a fairer distribution of grants to deserving arts organizations and artists;
  - d) setting up a system to provide technical assistance and facilitate networking and sharing of useful resources within the arts community;
  - e) streamlining the current license application process so that arts organizations can apply for all the necessary permits to stage a performance or an exhibition through a one-stop center; and
  - f) undertaking the necessary refurbishment of the old buildings to be converted for arts use and allocating these refurbished buildings to the arts community on a permanent basis.

### ***External versus Internal***

The second category of issues regarding development strategies is about the external-internal conflict. Critics of Glasgow's City of Culture event have pointed out that the dependence of the strategy on importing foreign mega-events to enhance Glasgow's international cultural profile overwhelmed smaller local cultural players. This strategy has also been accused of having detrimental effects on the local arts scene to the extent that audiences may become conditioned to believe that foreign productions are always superior to local ones. In contrast, Chicago's emphasis on capitalizing on the "local" has created many opportunities to showcase the local arts and cultural assets. It has also fostered the development of arts and culture that relate to Chicagoans.

Similar to Glasgow, Singapore's greater emphasis on externally-oriented strategies has seen it rely on the strategy of importing foreign artists and cultural

productions to enhance the appeal of its cultural calendar. Although some amount of foreign input may encourage cross-fertilization of creativity with the local art scene, many Singaporean arts practitioners have expressed concern that the extensive import of foreign mega-acts and famous international stars may crowd out smaller local arts groups and overshadow local artistic talent. To address this issue, I offer two proposals. First, instead of simply importing foreign productions wholesale, Singapore should encourage and facilitate greater artistic collaboration between foreign and local artists and arts groups. This approach is intended to stimulate creative tension between foreign and local arts without having the former overwhelm the latter. The second suggestion follows Chicago's example of looking for special cultural attributes within the city to showcase. Complementing the first suggestion, Singapore should capitalize on its unique blend of eastern and western cultures and take advantage of the emerging group of local artists adept at exploiting this cultural quality to develop a distinctive local artistic character.

The external-internal conflict raises other concerns. In Glasgow's experience, another critique of the strategy of importing foreign mega-events was that the high cost of imported foreign acts had priced out the majority of average Glaswegians, thus creating an arts scene that catered mostly to cultural elites. Chicago has shown that by making the arts widely and easily accessible, cultural development need not necessarily be elitist. Chicago has done this by programming an extensive schedule of free arts events featuring local works at easily accessible locations for the enjoyment of the general public.

The relevant lesson for Singapore is to avoid developing an arts scene that caters only to cultural elites who may have a penchant for mainly foreign productions. To do this, more extensive social outreach programs featuring the local arts should be carried out, similar to the way it is done in Chicago. As noted, there are already some social outreach attempts during selected months in Singapore. My proposal is to expand these attempts beyond the selected months

to undertake a more consistent and aggressive social outreach program that will fill the city with free and easily accessible cultural activities showcasing the local arts throughout the year. Not only is this strategy intended to stimulate public interest in the arts, it is also meant to generate more opportunities for local artists to present their works. With a more extensive program of cultural activities, proper publicity and information should also be made available to inform the public about the events. A simple suggestion that will go a long way is to publish a monthly or weekly cultural calendar to keep the public updated on the local cultural activities that are taking place everyday.

Glasgow's experience, however, poses a warning not to simply program a large quantity of cultural events with questionable quality. Singapore should take caution to ensure that the quality of cultural events is not compromised just for the sake of having a greater quantity of activities. This would require the agency responsible for programming these social outreach events to undertake proper quality control. The earlier suggested public-private partnership organization comprising members of the arts community could act as a professional advisory panel in this respect.

#### ***Recommendations for Singapore***

- 6) Instead of the current strategy of simply importing foreign productions, concentrate more effort on developing local cultural capacities by:
  - a) encouraging and facilitating more artistic collaborations between foreign and local cultural groups and artists;
  - b) capitalizing on the city's unique blend of eastern and western cultures and taking advantage of the emerging group of local artists adept at exploiting this cultural quality to develop a distinctive local artistic character;
  - c) undertaking a more consistent and aggressive social outreach program that will fill the city with free and easily accessible cultural activities showcasing local artists and arts groups throughout the year;
  - d) publishing a monthly or weekly cultural calendar to inform the public of the local cultural activities that are taking place everyday; and
  - e) maintaining the quality of local cultural events presented by seeking input from a professional advisory panel.

#### **5.2.4 Areas of Precaution**

The final aspect in which Glasgow and Chicago have provided relevant learning points for Singapore is with respect to the pitfalls to avoid. As these are mainly warnings for Singapore to look out for, no specific recommendations will be made in this section. Rather, each precaution should be kept in mind when planning and implementing various cultural development strategies in Singapore.

##### ***Precaution 1: Find a Balance between Economic Objectives & Cultural Goals***

The first precaution concerns Singapore's attempt to juggle external and internal urban cultural policy orientations. As discussed, Singapore's urban cultural policy tries to simultaneously achieve both global economic objectives and local cultural goals. In the case of Glasgow, even though its urban cultural policy was intentionally focused on mainly global economic objectives, it was heavily criticized for failing to generate any local cultural benefits. In Singapore where local cultural goals have been explicated as one of the aims of the *Renaissance City Report*, placing economic objectives above cultural goals will certainly garner criticism. Singapore thus has to find a balance between fulfilling economic objectives and achieving artistic goals if it truly hopes to attain the aims it sets out for itself and gain the support of the community to realize the vision of becoming a "Renaissance City".

##### ***Precaution 2: Beware of Uneven Distribution of the Economic Impact of the Arts***

The second precaution deals with the distribution of economic impact of the arts. A problem that affected Glasgow's cultural development experience was the uneven distribution of the economic benefits from promoting the arts. Critics have thus decried the efforts of the City of Culture event organizers. They were accused of creating a dual city in which the distinction between the prosperous core and the poor periphery was perpetuated. Although such a problem may not affect Singapore because there is hardly any antecedent core-periphery tension,



the authorities should still be conscious of this potential issue. If arts development is perceived as privileging an overly selective group, support for the Renaissance City vision will quickly wither as it would not appear relevant to the majority of Singaporeans. The social outreach program stated above thus has an important part to play in countering this perception.

***Precaution 3: Avoid Promoting the Arts as a Diversion from Other Urban Issues***

Opponents of Glasgow's City of Culture event have felt that the extravagant amount of money directed at creating cultural spectacles could have been better used for addressing more pressing urban problems like the provision of low income housing. They have thus suggested that by focusing more effort on programming cultural spectacles, the authorities were attempting to divert attention away from such urban problems. Although this problem may not be directly relevant for Singapore, awareness of this potential criticism is still important, especially in light of the current economic downturn that Singapore is facing. The government has to be careful not to appear as masking other pressing problems with arts promotion as this will create adverse impact on the effort to create a "Renaissance City".

***Precaution 4: Adopt a Long-Term Perspective in Cultural Planning to Pace the Development of the Arts***

The need to adopt a long-term view of cultural planning is the fourth precaution for Singapore. The case of Glasgow has shown that economic gains from promoting the arts may be short-lived if there are no sustained plans to continuously inject new cultural attractions into the city. The warning for the Singapore government is that to develop Singapore as a "Renaissance City", the speed of development should be well-paced and guided by a cultural plan that adopts a long-term perspective to art development. Effort must be directed at building up the cultural capabilities of the city if it hopes to realize sustained benefits of arts development.

***Precaution 5: Match the Level of Financial & Technical Support for the Arts with the Growth of the Local Arts & Cultural Scene***

The Chicago case highlighted problems in the CityArts Program as well as the *Artist Live/Work Housing* program because funding for the grant program and provision of artist live/work housing were not commensurate with the development of local arts and culture. This created discontent among the arts community and stymied the growth of the cultural scene to a certain extent. Singapore authorities have to be careful about matching the level of financial and technical support with the growth of the arts, lest they suffer the same criticism that Chicago received which the City is belatedly trying to correct now.

**5.3 LOOKING BACK & BEYOND**

I started off this thesis in search of answers to two main questions. First, why have cities that have not paid much attention to arts and cultural development before begun attempting to recreate themselves as “cities of art”? I discovered a variety of reasons for this. For Glasgow, the primary intention was to re-image itself as a post-industrial city so as to stimulate its declining economy by attracting foreign investment and international tourists. In the process, it also hoped to bring about physical regeneration of the city. In the case of Chicago which has a richer cultural tradition, the arts were developed and promoted more for cultural reasons. The purpose was to nurture more creative talent and generate greater public interest in the arts to reinforce the city’s cultural capacities and strengthen its status as one of America’s premiere arts capitals. In recent years, the arts were also promoted with the intention of helping the city advance its social and civic agenda. No doubt economic gains were one of the reasons for arts promotion, but they did not take priority over the cultural and social objectives. For Singapore, its reasons could be viewed as a combination of what both Glasgow and Chicago hoped to achieve by creating a “city of art”. On the one hand, arts promotion and development would be part of an attempt to develop a creative economy so that the city would remain competitive globally. The arts were also intended to help project a “soft” image for the city to

complement its “hard” economic success to attract tourists as well as foreign highly-skilled professionals. On the other hand, the arts and culture would serve social and cultural purposes. It was believed that the arts could facilitate nation building by fostering social cohesion in this multi-racial and multi-cultural country. The arts were even touted as a way to develop the social graces of the people although how successful this may be remains to be seen. Thus, cities have appropriated the arts for a variety of economic, physical, cultural, social and political reasons.

This then leads to the second main question: how do these cities do it? I have found three general approaches to urban cultural policy that tie in with the goals of each city. Glasgow, with a predominantly global objective, adopted a urban cultural policy that is strongly externally-oriented. Its specific strategies included aggressive place marketing campaigns, development of large scale cultural infrastructure and programming of imported high profile cultural spectacles with international appeal. In contrast, Chicago’s urban cultural policy has been more internally-oriented. The strategies employed included making the arts widely and easily accessible for residents, nurturing and supporting local artistic talent and celebrating local cultural assets. Singapore seems to have adopted a middle ground approach. Some strategies are obviously externally-oriented. These include grooming a handful of major arts companies to be of world class standards, promoting the local arts internationally, developing a cultural economy that attract cultural producers and consumers from worldwide and undertaking large scale capital investment to attract international cultural events to be staged in Singapore. Other strategies are, however, more internally-oriented such as providing cultural facilities for the local arts community, cultivating general public interest in the arts and facilitating local artistic growth.

Singapore’s attempt to address both policy orientations will, nevertheless, not be easy to achieve. I have found that although Singapore’s urban cultural policy attempts to address both external and internal orientations, the city has

directed more resources and energy to externally-oriented strategies. I have thus made recommendations on ways to improve its cultural strategies to help the city achieve both its global and local objectives.

Based on these findings, a third question to ask would be whether any one of the three approaches for creating a “city of art” is better than the other two. Having examined only three cities, it is perhaps premature to pass final judgment on this. For now, suffice it to say that it is important to evaluate the effectiveness of each approach against what the different cities set out to achieve. The appropriateness of each approach should also be set in the context of the antecedent arts and cultural conditions of each city. This conclusion, however, does not foreclose further research on the topic of “cities of art”. If anything, this thesis hopes to stimulate more interest in the field. Currently, there is a substantial academic literature on related topics like the development of downtown arts districts and the preservation of historic and cultural heritage in cities. More theoretical conceptualization and rigorous empirical research would be needed in the area of “cities of art” to see if there are any other models of development and whether there is indeed a best approach for creating such a city.

In retrospect, the way in which urban cultural policies for creating a “city of art” was conceptualized in this thesis may have some limitations. For instance, because the urban cultural policies of Glasgow and Chicago was characterized as being either strongly externally- or internally-oriented, it may have limited my ability to take an in depth examination of the initiatives of both cities that do not fall neatly into the two different policy orientations. Also, the definition of the middle ground approach may seem rather vague. Must the distribution of externally- and internally-oriented strategies be exactly equal for a policy to be considered as having a middle ground approach? Could a city that adopts an urban cultural policy with 60 percent external strategies and 40 percent internal strategies (or vice versa) still be considered as having a middle ground approach?

Based on the current conceptualization, these questions are not easy to answer. Hence, the middle ground approach could include any variety of cases that are not extremely externally- or internally-oriented. In some situations, an alternative conceptualization that offers a finer distinction of the middle ground approach may thus be useful.

Nevertheless, acknowledging these limitations does not undermine the contribution of this research. It is hoped that the findings of this thesis would stimulate more debates in this area. I look forward to seeing further academic discussion on alternative ways of conceptualizing urban cultural policies used to create “cities of art”. I also hope to see more empirical research that would highlight other examples of cities that have undertaken or will be undertaking similar attempts to create such a city. Additional information generated in the process would allow for a better understanding of and a more meaningful discussion on the topic of the “city of art”.



## APPENDIX A

### LIST OF INTERVIEWS IN CHICAGO

Interview Period: March 2003

Julie BURROS  
Director of Cultural Planning  
Department of Cultural Affairs

Cheryl HUGHES  
Director of Program Development  
Mayor's Office of Special Events

Pam MORRIS  
Festival Coordinator  
Mayor's Office of Special Events

Alison ZEHR  
Nonprofit Management Consultant  
Project Director, Advancing Chicago's Civic Agenda Through the Arts

Fred KLAUS  
Retired history teacher, Chicago resident for more than 50 years  
Volunteer Chicago Greeter who hosted my visit

## APPENDIX B

### LIST OF INTERVIEWS IN SINGAPORE

Interview Period: November 2002 – January 2003

CHONG Tze Chien  
Playwright  
The Necessary Stage

Joey CHUA  
Dancer, Choreographer  
Recipient of NAC Overseas Arts Bursary

Noor Effendy IBRAHIM  
Artistic Director  
Teater Ekamatra

Jamaludin JALIL  
Assistant Ballet Master, Dancer, Choreographer  
Singapore Dance Theatre

KHIEW Huey Chian  
Visual Arts Lecturer  
LASALLE-SIA College of the Arts

KWOK Kian Chow  
Director  
Singapore Arts Museum

Mohammed Noor SARMAN  
Assistant Ballet Master, Dancer, Choreographer  
Singapore Dance Theatre

ONG Keng Sen  
Artistic Director  
TheatreWorks (Singapore) Pte Ltd

Benson PUAH  
Chief Executive Officer  
The Esplanade Co Ltd

Ekachai UEKRONGTHAM  
Artistic Director  
ACTION Theatre



## APPENDIX C

### ARTS AND CULTURE CAPITAL PROJECTS ANTICIPATED AND UNDERTAKEN IN THE LAST FIVE YEARS IN CHICAGO (incomplete list)

(Source: Alison ZEHR)

#### The Theater District (downtown)

- The Ford Center for the Performing Arts – renovated for commercial use
- The Cadillac Palace – renovated for commercial use
- The Goodman Theater – Harris and Selwyn Theaters purchased by the City and renovated by a nonprofit theater group that leases space
- The Noble Fool (opened in Spring, 2002) –renovated (originally a restaurant) by nonprofit theater group; leased from developer
- The Storefront Theater – renovated by the City for use by local nonprofit theater groups; programmed by the DCA
- Gallery 37: Center for the Arts – renovated by the City; operated by DCA
- Gene Siskel Film Center – new construction; owned and operated by the School of the Art Institute

#### In a planning stage

- The Music and Dance Theater (in Millennium Park, opens 2003) – new construction on Chicago Park District land; built and operated by nonprofit
- Music shell designed by Frank Gehry (in Millennium Park, opens 2003) – new construction on Chicago Park District land; programmed by the Department of Cultural Affairs (DCA)

#### Other downtown projects

- Looking Glass Theater –pumping station owned by the City; Looking Glass responded to an RFP for renovation and operation
- Shakespeare Chicago – on quasi-governmental property; built and operated by nonprofit
- Symphony Center – expansion and renovation by non-profit
- Lyric Opera – expansion and renovation by non-profit
- Expansion of Columbia College – dorms and classrooms on and near South Wabash
- Museum of Contemporary Art – new construction by nonprofit on City land
- Shedd Aquarium – expansion by nonprofit on Chicago Park District land
- Adler Planetarium – expansion by nonprofit on Chicago Park District land
- Field Museum – expansion by nonprofit on Chicago Park District land
- Columbia College Dance Center – relocated from Uptown to South Loop
- Sherwood Conservatory – new construction, relocation in South Loop, owned and operated by non-profit
- Chicago Center For Performing Arts – renovated, owned and operated by for-profit organization

In a planning stage:

- Conversion of McClurg Cinema to theater complex – for commercial use
- Spertus Museum – expansion; possible relocation by nonprofit
- Renovation of Fine Arts Building theaters
- Joffrey Ballet Center – to be renovated by nonprofit
- New wing for the Art Institute – new construction on Chicago Park District land
- Corner of Wabash and Roosevelt – City purchased property and issued RFP; accepted gallery concept but development has stalled

### **South Side**

- The Vietnam Veterans Art Museum – building donated by the City; renovated and operated by nonprofit
- Woman's Garden – owned by the City, programmed by the Department of Cultural Affairs in conjunction with Clark House Museum (oldest house in Chicago, owned by the City, operated by DCA)
- Beverly Arts Center – property purchased by the City and given to nonprofit for new construction and operation
- Museum of Science and Industry – expansion by nonprofit on Chicago Park District land
- Ping Tom Park – creation of a new park dedicated to Chinese culture

In a planning stage:

- Little Black Pearl – to be renovated by nonprofit
- Muntu Dance – City purchase of land for new construction by nonprofit group
- 47<sup>th</sup> and King Drive Performing Arts Center (formerly Lou Rawls Center) – City project to be operated by nonprofit
- Hyde Park Arts Center – University of Chicago property to be renovated and operated by nonprofit
- ETA – expansion by nonprofit
- DuSable Museum of African American History expansion
- A center for horticulture on an historic property on Vincennes – would require the City to purchase several land parcels; to be renovated and operated by nonprofit

### **West Side**

- Hubbard Street Dance Chicago – purchased and renovated studio, rehearsal and office space in West Loop – owned and operated by non-profit
- Roentgen School – City purchased school from Board of Education and transferred to nonprofit developer for artists live/work space
- Renovation of the Garfield Park Conservatory – owned and operated by Chicago Park District
- Mexican Fine Arts Museum – expansion by nonprofit on Chicago Park District land

In a planning stage:

- Institute for Puerto Rican Arts and Culture – raising funds to renovate the former horse stables building in Humboldt Park – operated by a private nonprofit in Chicago Park District building
- New home for Redmoon Theater – City assistance for nonprofit
- Renovation of historic Central Park theater on Roosevelt Road (feasibility study stage)

### **North Side**

- Raven Theater – renovated by nonprofit through TIF district financing
- Peggy Notebeart Nature Museum – new construction by nonprofit on Chicago Park District land
- Portage Park Cultural Center – City purchase of old church for use by new nonprofit

In a planning stage:

- Biograph Theater – Victory Gardens wants to purchase and relocate there.
- Pierce School Cultural Center – to be owned and operated by non-profit
- The Uptown Arts District
- The Lawrence Ave theater in Albany Park to be renovated
- Wisdom Bridge – redevelopment of theater
- The Center for the Arts, Environment and the Community in North Park Village – on City property



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