

7. CREATIVE CLUSTERS CONFERENCE, SHEFFIELD

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The purpose of this report is to advise the Council on the recent Creative Clusters Conference, held in Sheffield, United Kingdom on 20-23 November 2002 on the First International Summit Conference on Creative Industries Regeneration.

In the United Kingdom, every local authority is mandated to draw up a cultural strategy that conforms with guidelines issued by the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, and which must include a development strategy for the creative industries.

The creative industries have emerged as one of the fastest growing sectors of the United Kingdom and the world economy. Each of the United Kingdom's ten Regional Development Agencies has identified the creative industries as a growth sector, and at the local level, towns and cities all over Western Europe are looking to the creative industries to bring them new wealth, to sharpen their city image, and to help address social inclusion issues.

Creative Industries are not proving easy to identify, to understand or to support. They are based on individual creativity, and successful development policies and must take account of both economic and artistic issues. This is the challenge for traditional arts administrators and mainstream economic development professionals, as well as local government.

The first international summit conference on Creative Industries Regeneration was held in Sheffield because Sheffield has been credited with initiating the creative industries format as we know it today and developed over the last twenty years by promoting partnerships between the arts and business sectors. Creating a critical mass of growth, collaboration, competition and opportunities for investment and knowledge sharing has maximised their contribution to their economy. An industrial city best known for its steel and cutlery, Sheffield has some years ago experienced a downturn in their economy, massive unemployment and a dying central city. A story typical of most cities globally. Sheffield is progressive and proactive in reinventing themselves from their steel heritage into contemporary industries which build on their past reputation in exciting and innovative ways. Sheffield is a city comparable in scale, size and population to Christchurch.

The story of their CIQ (Cultural Industries Quarter) is an amazing one. It covers an area of around ¼ of a square mile in the heart of Sheffield, and is home to the largest concentration of creative and digital production in the region. One of Europe's regeneration success stories, it is fast becoming an internationally renowned base for innovation and design.

At the gateway to the CIG is the Showroom Cinema where the conference was held. This complex consisted of four medium sized cinema theatres, which made great auditorium venues, together with an adjoining café/bar which catered for our morning and afternoon teas and lunches. There were some 300 delegates attending from 17 countries. (Full delegation list available).

In the opening plenary session the question of what is a Creative/Cultural Industry was immediately raised. Defined by the United Kingdom Government's Department of Culture, Media and Sport as *"...those activities which have their origin in individual creativity, skill and talent and which have a potential for wealth and job creation through the generation and exploitation of intellectual property"*, the Creative Industries include:

- Advertising,
- Architecture,
- Crafts and designer furniture,
- Fashion clothing,
- Film, video and other audiovisual production,
- Graphic design,
- Live and recorded music,
- Educational and leisure software,
- Performing arts and entertainments,
- Television, radio and internet broadcasting,
- Visual arts and antiques,
- Writing and publishing.

With the globalisation of communications networks and the rapid advance of digital economies these industries are the fastest growing in the world. This debate on definition and the philosophy behind Creative Industries threaded through the whole conference and supported by research as to this sector's economic growth.

Andy Pratt, (a.c.pratt@lse.ac.uk) Senior Lecturer in Human Geography, London School of Economics, has carried out international comparable research on cultural industries' production networks, social, spatial and economic dynamics of cultural/creative and new media clusters, the cultural sector, innovation, and, frameworks for cultural statistics. He saw partnerships and brokering with other clusters as essential so as not to set up in competition with, but be complementary to other creative clusters. This is particularly relevant in New Zealand where duplication could dissipate the industries.

An excellent session on 'Exporting Creativity' included speakers Andrew Senior, Head of Creative Industries, British Council, and Jonathan Webber, Senior International Trade Advisor, Birmingham Chamber of Commerce and Trade Partners United Kingdom. Andrew Senior focussed on the work of the British Council in supporting creative industries in the United Kingdom and the thinking behind it. Working internationally through seminars, exhibitions, trade fairs, and research he saw the British Council as a cultural relations agency. In other words he spoke of the British Council as promoter of creativity by showcasing UK innovation and creativity. He also talked about how non-export related work at the British Council – namely the creative industries within a knowledge-based economy – continues to fit in with the export agenda.

- <http://www.creativexport.co.uk>,
- Andrew.senior@britishcouncil.org,
- <http://www.britishcouncil.org/arts>.

Jonathan Webber also reinforced the point that creative clusters are only successful through trade and other partnerships.

Trade Partners worked through all British Embassies and Britain nationally with Creative Industries exporting 10.3 billion pounds in the last year.

- www.tradepartners.gov.uk,
- j.webber@birminghamchamber.org.uk.

In Brighton, England they have the Brighton Media Centre founded by Ian Elwick who is also co-founder of the Creative Industries partnership, Digital Content Forum, IntgerActionUK, and a number of other organisations. A strong theme running through his presentation is viability and sustainability for how can a cluster grow unless its inhabitants have an understanding that what they like about it will be there tomorrow. In Brighton, as with many other United Kingdom cities, there has been a strategy and a process. This can be copied, but not without partnerships and a high level of understanding and persistence.

In the Brighton 'story' creative industries in 1992 delivered less than 1% of the local economy. Ten years later in 2002 it was approximately 23% of the local economy, with 1,800 local companies in the Creative Industries cluster. Creative Industries is now the leading commercial sector and taken over from financial services.

Closer to home, Amanda Buckland, Co-ordinator of Cultural Services for the Wollongong City Council, New South Wales, Australia, made a presentation on the nuts and bolts guide to developing their Cultural Industry Strategy which positioned a declining steel city as an emerging cultural hub. This is a city actively reinventing itself and anticipating a future as a progressive centre of business, education, new technologies, tourism and culture. Wollongong is a city of similar size to Christchurch (population around 300,000) and is currently leading Australia with its Cultural Industry Strategy for city revitalisation and cultural renewal. She gave a review of the five year development process including practical steps, planning strategies, and project showcases. Wollongong City Council saw culture as an investment not a cost in their staged city revitalisation and urban design programme. They also are working on public art projects and formulating relevant policy. They also strongly support buying local and employing local. Their cultural industries audit showed that they produced a \$129.4M gross output.

An economist from the Greater London Authority, Alan Freeman, offered authoritative estimates of London's creative output, employment and productivity and found the sector was London's second largest and fastest growing, by offering measured data from his research. His basic data including:

- (a) How many work in the industry?
- (b) And how much money does it make?

Referring to Creative Industries as the new sunrise economy, he believes it is a growth led productivity revolution and his "Productivity Growth", "Output Growth" and "Job Growth" analyses showed that Creative Industries were:

- Second largest source of job growth,
- Third largest job source,
- Second largest source of output,
- Fastest output growth rate.

The focus of this growth in London and the South East, has shown that Creative Industries is the second largest source of new jobs in London, employing 525,000 workers, and in 2000 contributed 21 billion pounds to GDP.

On Saturday 23 November 2002 I did a full day tour taking in some of Yorkshire's leading creative industry products. Located in Huddersfield at the heart of West Yorkshire's excellent road and transport infrastructure, the **Media Centre** is just 25 minutes from both Manchester and Leeds. For incubating creativity it is now well established as an ideal location for creative and media businesses, providing high quality services at extremely competitive prices. Huddersfield was once a thriving textile town and now with a population of around 140,000 is reinventing itself as providing state of the art creative and media sector.

Its Chief Executive, Toby Hyam, gave his perspective on the strategic vision and he also explored how technology can contribute to the process and how infrastructure for the Creative Industries is as much about telephony and meeting spaces, as it is about managed office space in refurbished mills.

From its recently refurbished heritage warehouse buildings, providing 72 office spaces and 21 live/work loft units for over 80 companies employing 300 people, the **Media Centre** is central to the thriving community of innovative businesses and creative enterprises. It also provides internet access for the public, a Digital Research Unit and the medialounge, and an exhibition space to showcase the creative use of digital technologies.

In Bradford, the **Simula Project** is part of Media Tech, the Office of Innovation in the School of Informatics based at Bradford University. It is an incubation centre for media industries providing expertise in web design, graphics and animation. Around 250 small companies are nurtured through a not for profit company with a Board of Directors called *bmedi@* to create critical mass. This is a partnership between the university and local government. They keep the talent in Bradford through two projects.

1. All students enrolled at the university in media courses are invited to join *bmedi@*. They then gain mentoring and work experience from the 250 companies aligned with *bmedi@*.
2. A trading company has been formed consisting of 120 members from small companies who combine their talents to tender for specific large contracts. Different combinations for different contracts.

In conclusion I wish to emphasise the following points to reinforce the steps taken by other cities for the success of their creative industries:

- Local government providing leadership, direction and strategy,
- Available resources of creative people, as well as finance,
- Partnerships between the public and private sectors,
- Long term commitment,
- Production, ie making things.

The fact that such a conference was held, supported by a wide set of partners and sponsors, an international line up of speakers and delegates from 17 countries, indicates that creative industries is becoming increasingly mainstream. The excellent philosophy of creative industries is also backed up with realistic positive figures to support its rapid growth within the economy of every city, region and country that invests in culture.

Of course, every city wished to claim to be the 'Creative Capital' of their region and I was amazed at just how integral to so many cities worldwide the Creative Industries revolution has positively contributed to their success.

I would like to thank the Council for the opportunity to attend this conference. I have available the handbook from this conference which includes copies of many of the speakers' slides, should staff wish to borrow it. There was an excellent range of papers and sessions to attend, but unfortunately as the conference ran three papers per session, not all could be attended. Therefore, it was extremely beneficial for Councillor Paddy Austin to also attend the full conference for we were able to schedule the sessions so that we achieved double the coverage. We have also held preliminary talks with Simon Evans, Director, Creative Clusters Limited who organised this inaugural conference, for an International Creative Clusters Conference to be held in Christchurch in 2005.

- Recommendation:**
1. That the report be received and the Council show commitment to seeing Christchurch's creative/cultural industries develop by providing leadership and direction.
 2. That the Canterbury Development Corporation in conjunction with the Arts Culture and Heritage Committee be requested to develop a Creative/Cultural Industry Strategy.
 3. That the Canterbury Development Corporation be requested to report back early in 2003 on the mapping exercise currently being undertaken on Creative Industries in Christchurch.
 4. That the Council pursue an International Creative Clusters Conference to be held in Christchurch in 2005.