



8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Public Forum  
Creative Cities in Asia and Europe

# CITIES

## Living Labs for Culture?

#ASEFforum8

24 November 2015  
Gwangju, Korea

AT THE 2015 ASIA CULTURE FORUM

### PARTNERS



United Nations  
Educational, Scientific and  
Cultural Organization



**GWANGJU**

City of Media Arts  
Designated UNESCO  
Creative City in 2014



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## REPORT

Cities of today are becoming vibrant spaces for experimentation, a process in which culture has come to occupy a central place. 'Creative cities' and 'capitals of culture' that have emerged across Asia and Europe attest to the growing importance of these dynamic new centres of creativity and innovation. Cities are also emerging as epicentres for effective policymaking and development as they are often able to act quickly, inclusively, and offer more integrated responses.

The 8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Public Forum on Creative Cities in Asia and Europe, held at the sprawling new Asia Culture Center in Gwangju, Korea, brought together 15 experts from 13 countries to discuss how cities in Asia and Europe are indeed evolving into living labs for culture. Participants included government officials, researchers, educational institutions, and international civil society organisations, including Google's Cultural Institute. Key discussion topics included policymaking at the city level; the capital of culture model; the role of cultural institutions; and cultural leadership.

Speaking at the Opening Ceremony, Mr MUN In, Vice Mayor of Gwangju Metropolitan City, announced the hosting of the 7<sup>th</sup> ASEM<sup>1</sup> Culture Ministers' Meeting (ASEM CMM7) in Gwangju in 2016 and stressed the importance of the ASEF Public Forum in "support(ing) the success of the [Ministerial] meeting". Indeed, the topic of creative cities is of particular relevance for the bi-regional dialogue between Asia and Europe, and is high on the cultural agenda of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM), particularly in relation to discussions around the creative economy which will take place at next year's CMM. In this context, the Forum discussions hoped to explore the intersections of urban development with the creative economy, high technology and heritage management and seek concrete areas for Asia-Europe exchange and cooperation.

During the course of discussions, participants stressed the significant role of cities in brokering inter-regional, cross-sectorial, and inter-generational understanding. It was noted that ownership by local communities is a non-negotiable condition for success, and that cultural leaders must develop a greater appreciation of other sectors in order to facilitate partnerships that will drive demand for culture and the arts. Participants also encouraged the introduction of formal programmes to re-invigorate mid-career cultural leaders, and to create spaces for self-reflection and the testing of assumptions.

The Forum also marked the launch of *Cities: Living Labs for Culture? - Case Studies from Asia and Europe*<sup>2</sup>. The publication, comprising 27 case studies and 5 essays on themes reflected in the Forum, draws upon the experiences of 40 cities and was officially launched by Ambassador ZHANG Yan, Executive Director, ASEF.

The 8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Public Forum was organised in partnership with the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea; Gwangju Metropolitan City; and the Asia Culture Forum (ACF), with the support of the Asia Culture Center (ACC); Korea Tourism Organisation (KTO); Gwangju Convention & Visitors Bureau; International Conference on Cultural Policy Research (ICCP); Korea National Commission for UNESCO; the Association of Asian Culture Studies; and Chonnam National University (CNU).

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<sup>1</sup> The **Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM)** is an intergovernmental forum for dialogue and cooperation established in 1996 to deepen relations between Asia and Europe. ASEM brings together 53 members: Australia, Austria, Bangladesh, Belgium, Brunei Darussalam, Bulgaria, Cambodia, China, Croatia, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, India, Indonesia, Ireland, Italy, Japan, Kazakhstan, Korea, the Lao PDR, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malaysia, Malta, Mongolia, Myanmar, the Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, Pakistan, the Philippines, Poland, Portugal, Romania, the Russian Federation, Singapore, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Thailand, the United Kingdom, and Viet Nam plus the ASEAN Secretariat and the European Union.

<sup>2</sup> Download the e-publication at: <http://www.asef.org/pubs/asef-publications/3703-cities-living-labs-for-culture>.

## CONCLUSIONS OF THE FORUM

### THEME 1

#### Culture and policymaking in the city: how to make culture accessible to all?

##### Key conclusions

- There was general agreement that cities are more **adaptable and responsive** than countries when it comes to policymaking. However, several difficulties remain.
- First, while **political will** is critical to the success of any effort, convincing politicians and government officials of the importance of culture and its relevance to urban development has proven to be an extremely challenging and tedious process, particularly since political leaders who themselves are passionate about culture are few and far between.
- Second, cumbersome **administrative bureaucracy** poses negative consequences to the momentum of cultural efforts, often resulting in short-lived successes and disillusionment among the initiators of said efforts.
- Civil society and governments need to work together, playing on their respective strengths to maximise economies of cooperation and collaboration. This can begin in the form of (but not limited to) more **private-public partnerships** on city-level committees to effect holistic and inclusive policy improvements.
- Not only is **technology** unavoidable, it can also be very useful because of its ability to connect people and spaces, thereby promoting inclusiveness. While technology cannot replace the experience of physical interaction, it can and should be embraced as an **access point** for initiating interest in culture and the arts especially among the social media generation.
- Efforts in the area of integrating technology and culture are nascent and should be managed with patience as technology providers are still in the process of learning about their cultural partners' needs and developing the **appropriate technological solutions**.
- Culture and creativity should be assessed in a manner that reflects current realities. Existing **funding criteria**, which tends to be highly quantitative, may not be applicable or appropriate for specific projects that are more qualitative in nature.
- The topic of **sustainability** has become a growing focus for artists and cultural organisations as they increasingly engage their creative practice with social and environmental issues. *Creative Responses to Sustainability (Korea Guide)*<sup>3</sup>, authored by Yasmine OSTENDORF and published by ASEF, is meant to provide a tool for practitioners and policymakers to assess the situation of these organisations in Korea and their needs. In a more global context, the guide will also address the challenges of incorporating culture in sustainability at a local/city level.

##### Ideas for Asia-Europe collaboration

- The panel highlighted that while physical infrastructure (e.g. museums and concert halls) is important, it is what happens in the in-betweens (how people *make* culture) that defines whether culture is indeed pervasive and accessible to all. In this vein, the creation and maintenance of **networks and links** between Asia and Europe can only serve to improve dialogue and understanding between policymakers, local authorities and cultural practitioners.
- There has been a rise in independent art spaces, but Asia and Europe must develop ways to **bridge the gap between grassroots and policy**. A balance between flexibility and bureaucracy is essential in bringing together supply and demand for culture and the arts. Programmes aiming at doing so should be inclusive, involving as diverse an audience as possible. The

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<sup>3</sup> The guide will soon be available for free download on ASEF culture360. Download the Singapore guide at: [http://culture360.asef.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/11/Sustainability\\_SG\\_Guide\\_Web\\_151120.pdf](http://culture360.asef.org/wp-content/blogs.dir/1/files/2015/11/Sustainability_SG_Guide_Web_151120.pdf)

- collision of perspectives and ideas -- and the birth of new ones in the process -- is critical for long-term sustainability.
- Governments from Asia and Europe must work together to develop **local leaders** who are well-equipped with the skills necessary for sustaining and growing grassroots-level initiatives and navigating effectively through administrative bureaucracy.
- **Public-private partnership** through representation on city-level committees is useful for effecting inclusive policies. To this end, ASEM Members can set an example at the bi-regional level.

## THEME 2

### The Capital of Culture model: a catalyst for cultural development in the city?

#### Key conclusions

- 'Capitals of Culture' serve an important role in **brokering inter-regional, cross-sectorial, and inter-generational understanding**, bringing different stakeholders together to understand one another's priorities, histories, traditions, and concerns.
- In this vein, 'Capitals of Culture' models aim to discover what works and, more importantly, what does not (i.e. sensitive areas or 'pain points'). Administrators should be bold enough to acknowledge the **faultlines** troubling the communities under their care. They must also come to terms with the various **layers** that constitute their communities and refrain from force-fitting programmes and branding exercises.
- Capitals of culture can be particularly useful for helping **post-conflict areas** deal with isolation and their troubled past. They do so by acting as bridges, encouraging their inhabitants to make cultural connections -- with each other and with others -- within a shared space.
- Cities provide a **living laboratory for incubation**, not merely initiation. Passion and interest of political and community leaders play an important catalytic (and also sustaining) role in the success of capitals of culture, in order that cultural events can be translated into cultural programmes with deeper and longer-term impact.
- As cities are extremely territorial, both physically and psychologically, it may be argued that city life may in fact be more marginalising than inclusive. Therefore, a major challenge is that of forming and sustaining **engagement** with indifferent or disinterested segments of the public. Cities must develop diverse and differentiated means of reaching out to their publics.

#### Ideas for Asia-Europe collaboration

- Capitals of culture should not only create cultural platforms for their own peoples, but for others beyond their borders as well. Such **regional and global platforms** are an investment into a more vibrant and creative urban landscape.
- ASEM Members can engage indifferent or disinterested publics through **community curatorship** (where curators are situated within the community), characterised by visual engagement and the use of popular expression to directly involve their audiences.
- As it is difficult to measure the impact of cultural initiatives, ASEM Members should work together to develop an **assessment and evaluation metric** that is comprehensive, rigorous, and yet flexible.
- While doing so, it is conceivable that competing priorities (e.g. economics) are thrown into the fray. ASEM Members must always be careful in ensuring that culture does not become colonised by economics.
- Where governments are involved, they should be willing to put aside grand narratives so that the **aspirations and dreams** of the community can emerge organically. Cities in Asia should also study European capitals of culture and work towards a **communal vision** of what it means to be an Asian capital of culture.

### THEME 3

#### What role for cultural institutions in shaping creative cities?

##### Key conclusions

- The panel affirmed that **ownership and will** of the people within a community is a non-negotiable requirement for a sustainable programme or institution. Combined with passionate community leaders and the willingness of municipal governments to mobilise support, this can be a potent force for success.
- Cultural leaders must therefore develop the **understanding and skills** required to conduct effective relations with their various stakeholders. They must also choose their partners carefully and be clear in their objectives.
- One of the functions of the arts is to **challenge assumptions**; this is an essential skill in an ever-changing and increasingly uncertain global landscape. Cultural institutions thus play an important role in providing safe spaces for the testing of assumptions, in the process enabling the creation of innovative, hybrid solutions to complex problems.
- Cultural institutions may not be aware that they are constantly being looked to for **leadership**. However, they have a responsibility to provide leadership, direction and guidance to their stakeholders that is not to be taken lightly.
- Cultural practitioners need to be **self-reflective** (and even self-critical), and evaluate how their own practices relate to the broader context of their society. Cultural institutions must create safe spaces for cultural practitioners to do so without fear of judgement.
- The students of today must be involved in policy deliberations as they are the stewards of tomorrow. Educational institutions must develop ways to inculcate cross-cutting skills that **empower students** to create new platforms that we cannot yet imagine at the present time.
- **Public spaces** can themselves function as cultural institutions. Understanding them as such broadens the definition of the creative institution and the possibilities that ensue.

##### Ideas for Asia-Europe collaboration

- Several conditions are necessary for creativity to thrive; cultural institutions in Asia and Europe can play a role in creating such conditions. The first is **porosity**, where encounters between people of different backgrounds, interests, and expertise can occur freely (or with the right encouragement); the second is **intercultural understanding**, where people-to-people exchanges foster mutual respect and harmony.
- Asia and Europe can look to **existing models** for collaboration, such as the Asia-Europe Museum Network /ASEMUS (<http://asemus.museum>), for inspiration when initiating inter-regional, cross-sectorial, and inter-generational programmes.

## THEME 4

### Cities: leadership and creativity incubators?

#### Key conclusions

- The definition of cultural leadership is very broad, and can range from artists to arts managers. However, **finding capable cultural leaders remains a challenge** in the absence of formal development programmes.
- Cultural leaders must possess vision, values, and spirit -- but this is easier said than done particularly in light of a **high rate of burnout**. Rather, it requires time and space for self-reflection and reorientation at suitable junctures along the career pathway.
- Cultural leaders must not base their actions on the presumption that other sectors are unreceptive to culture and the arts; instead, they must strive to **understand the needs of others and tailor their outreach appropriately**. Specifically, cultural leaders need to be able to articulate the value of their work in ways that the non-artistic community can relate to.
- **Diversity of models** is important. This means that cultural leaders need the space to experiment with different concepts and ideas, even if it means that some will fail. Intersectionality also necessitates a high level of sensitivity to the operating environment.
- Funders need to rethink traditional systems of **evaluation**, in order that cultural leaders can focus on fulfilling their programme objectives without fear of compromising artificially constructed standards.
- Cultural institutions must tap on **connectivity tools** to service cultural leaders. At present, that cultural leaders tend to work in silos presents a significant gap in the development of the culture sector.

#### Ideas for Asia-Europe collaboration

- Panellist agreed that a **well-curated programme** on the changing world order, involving participants drawn from various sectors including the culture and arts sector, will go a long way in fostering conversations and connections among community leaders. Such a programme will create valuable space for participants to test one another's assumptions and pick up transferable skills and best practices.
- Cultural leaders in Asia and Europe also need to develop the **skills to reach out to other sectors** such as those of business and science, in order to create partnerships that will drive demand for culture and the arts.
- Leaders of cultural institutions in Asia and Europe must **allow young people the opportunity** to lead projects of scale and significance. This will give them much needed time to build their confidence and prepare them to face challenging issues of the future. To this end, formal mentoring arrangements (both peer and inter-generational) can go a long way in transmitting valuable learning and in preserving oral histories.
- Asia and Europe must develop platforms for cultural leaders to develop **entrepreneurial skills**, so as to enable them to effectively manage the day-to-day operations of cultural institutions.
- Cultural institutions in Asia and Europe should work together to create a programme aimed at **re-invigorating mid-career cultural leaders**, offering them an opportunity to self-reflect and rethink how they approach their work. Such a programme will need to involve participants from the non-arts sectors and examine the social and economic impacts of culture and the arts.

This report is based on the presentations and discussions at the 8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Public Forum on *Creative Cities in Asia and Europe*. Participating experts included:

**Fionnuala CROKE**

Director, Chester Beatty Library, Dublin

**Catherine CULLEN**

Chair, United Cities and Local Governments' (UCLG) Committee on Culture

**Mark DUNHILL**

Dean, School of Arts, Central Saint Martins College of Arts, UK

**Arundhati GHOSH**

Director, India Foundation for the Arts (IFA)

**HONG Kiwon**

Associate Professor, Graduate School of Cultural Policy and Industry  
Sookmyung Women's University, Seoul

**Yusaku IMAMURA**

Director, Tokyo Wonder Site

**Hanna JEDRAS**

Chief Expert, Responsible for European Capital of Culture 2016 Wroclaw,  
Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Poland

**KIM Sungkyum**

Deputy Director, International Cultural Affairs Division  
Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism, Republic of Korea

**KIM Yoonkyung**

Support Specialist, Google Cultural Institute

**Yasmine OSTENDORF**

Author, *Creative Responses to Sustainability - Korea & Singapore Guides* (ASEF, 2015)

**Phloeun PRIM**

Executive Director, Cambodian Living Arts

**RYU Jae-Han**

Chairperson of Executive Committee, Asia Culture Forum

**Susanna SEIDL-FOX**

Program Director, Culture and the Arts, Salzburg Global Seminar

**Joe SIDEK**

Artistic Director, George Town Festival, Malaysia

**Karsten XUEREB**

Executive Director, Valletta 2018 Foundation

A special delegation from the City of Bandung (the newest member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network) participated in the Forum:

**Iming AHMAD**

Assistant, Economic and Development Administration

**Chairul ANWAR**

Head of Research Development and Statistic Division

**Lien HERLINA**

Head of Economic Planning and Financing Division

**Dwinita LARASATI**

Head of Creative Economy Committee

**Lusi LESMININGWATI**

Head of Economy Division

**Tris Avianti RATNAJATI**

Head of Sub Division of Potential Building and Competitiveness Development

ASEF was represented at the meeting by Ambassador ZHANG Yan, Executive Director, and members of the Culture Department, namely Anupama SEKHAR, Director, Stefania MANGANO, Project Executive and Benjamin JOUANNE, Project Executive.

This report was prepared by Daniel HO Sheng.

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For more on the Forum (including the programme), go to: <http://tinyurl.com/ASEFforum8>

On social media: #ASEFforum8

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The *8<sup>th</sup> ASEF Public Forum* is part of a long-running dialogue series on cultural policy issues of common interest and mutual relevance for Asia and Europe. Past forums have taken place in Amsterdam, the Netherlands ([2014](#), [2010](#)), [Hanoi, Viet Nam](#) (2013), [Yangon, Myanmar](#) (2013), [Yogyakarta, Indonesia](#) (2012), [Melbourne, Australia](#) (2011) and [Seoul, Korea](#) (2011).

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Panel of experts discuss how public-private partnership through representation on city-level committees is important for inclusive policymaking. From L-R: Yasmine OSTENDORF, KIM Yoonkyung, Tita LARASATI, Catherine CULLEN, and Anupama SEKHAR.



Can Capitals of Culture in Europe & Asia truly help catalyse local cultural development? Hanna JEDRAS, Yusaka IMAMURA, HONG Kiwon, and Karsten XUEREB (from L-R) in discussion.



The role of museums, art schools & arts festivals in shaping creative cities being discussed by Fionnuala CROKE, Mark DUNHILL, Joe SIDEK, and RYU Jaehan (from L-R).



The importance of supporting mid-career cultural leaders by creating spaces for self-reflection was stressed in the panel on leadership in the arts. From L-R: Fionnuala CROKE, Phloem PRIM, Arundhati GHOSH and Susanna SEIDL-FOX.



Speakers and organisers of the Forum enjoyed lunch at a Buddhist temple kitchen in Gwangju

## About the Organisers

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The **Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF)** promotes understanding, strengthens relationships and facilitates cooperation among the people, institutions and organisations of Asia and Europe. ASEF enhances dialogue, enables exchanges and encourages collaboration across the thematic areas of culture, economy, education, governance, public health and sustainable development.

ASEF is an intergovernmental not-for-profit organisation located in Singapore. Founded in 1997, it is the only institution of the Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM).

Together with about 750 partner organisations ASEF has run more than 700 projects, mainly conferences, seminars and workshops. Over 20,000 Asians and Europeans have actively participated in its activities and it has reached much wider audiences through its networks, web-portals, publications, exhibitions and lectures.

For more information, please visit [www.asef.org](http://www.asef.org)

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## Partners

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The **Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism** of Korea works to make happy life through arts and culture. The vision of the Ministry is to establish a brand as a cultural country and to strengthen innovative capacity for cultural contents. It also wants citizens to enjoy culture in the daily life through diverse cultural spaces and content.

For more information, please visit <http://www.mcst.go.kr>

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Home to the Asia Culture Center, **Gwangju Metropolitan City** is developing into a place for the convergence, integration and re-creation of tangible and intangible heritage in Asia as a national project. The Gwangju Biennale is held every two years and Gwangju Metropolitan City proudly became a new member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network's media arts sector in 2014. The ASEM Culture Ministers Meeting and the FINA World Aquatics Championship are slated for 2016 and 2019, respectively.

For more information, please visit <http://www.mcst.go.kr>

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The **Asia Culture Forum** is where diverse Asian cultural discourses are formed and exchanged under the slogan "Solidarity of Diversity". Launched in 2006, the forum holds an annual conference with participation by renowned international figures. Participants share the latest information and issues on culture and arts, and discuss mutual cooperation in urban cultural development.

For more information, please visit <http://www.asiacultureforum.kr>

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## Supporters

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