Creative Cities: Structured Policy Dialogue Report

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Creative Cities: Structured Policy Dialogue Report

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1.0 Context and Purpose

As part of its Cities and Communities Research Program, Canadian Policy Research Networks (CPRN) has launched a series of Cities and Communities Structured Policy Dialogues under the direction of Research Fellow, Neil Bradford. The intent of the dialogues is to connect the users and producers of urban policy knowledge and bring community-based networks of urban expertise into the wider policy discussion. Each dialogue is designed to focus on complex urban policy challenges that demand new ideas or, at a minimum, better integration of existing knowledge, and innovative forms of partnership or collaboration if progress is to be made.

In planning and financing the dialogues, CPRN partners with urban policy stakeholders from government and/or civil society. To set the stage for a productive meeting, each dialogue is enabled by two specific research inputs: 1) at least one week before the date of the dialogue, Urban Nexus, CPRN’s monthly electronic research and conferencing digest, will publish a special issue on the relevant policy theme; 2) several short background papers, authored by leading experts, will take stock of existing knowledge, initiatives, and gaps or barriers in the policy domain. With these inputs structuring the discussion, the key outcome will be an enhanced understanding of how innovative thinking, derived from both practical experience and state of the art research, can inform the policy choices facing governments at all levels.

On June 14, 2004, the first Structured Policy Dialogue on creative cities was held in Ottawa. This topic was ideally suited to the format. It is now widely acknowledged that the place quality of our cities is crucial for economic prosperity and social well-being and, in turn, that only those cities tapping the creativity of all citizens and sectors will reach their full potential. Yet while the general features of the creative city are familiar enough, much less is known about the conditions that foster creativity in urban places and the mechanisms and resources that turn ideas into innovations. Dialogue can help bridge the gap, bringing together community practitioners, government officials, and policy researchers to share ideas about how to build creative cities across Canada.

In planning and executing the Creative Cities Structured Policy Dialogue, CPRN partnered with the Departments of Canadian Heritage and Industry Canada who contributed critical intellectual, logistical, and financial support throughout the process, beginning with the initial joint planning in February 2004.
This Dialogue Report highlights the key themes that emerged from the day’s discussions, including the major policy lessons and action priorities for governments and communities. It begins by situating these outcomes in relation to some central messages contained in the following three background discussion papers:


- *Creative Cities: What are They For, How Do They Work, and How Do We Build Them?* by Meric S. Gertler; and

2.0 Setting the Stage: Main Messages from the Background Papers

The discussion paper authors were all charged with three basic tasks: 1) to take stock of the existing research on creative cities and report key gaps; 2) to review case study experience with creative city approaches in Canada and/or elsewhere and report on the lessons; and 3) and to identify the outstanding public policy challenges facing governments at all levels in making our cities creative places. In taking up these common issues, each author also brought his or her own perspective and priorities to the creative cities agenda. As such, the package offered a discussion starter for the participants who came from a wide range of sectors and places.

Bradford’s paper begins with a helpful description of the key features distinguishing the creative city:

Creative cities are dynamic locales of experimentation and innovation, where new ideas flourish and people from all walks of life come together to make their communities better places to live, work, and play. They engage different kinds of knowledge, and encourage widespread public participation to deal imaginatively with complex issues. In their decision making they value holistic thinking, and act on the interdependence of economic, social, environmental, and cultural goals. While all cities are characterized by population density and organizational proximity, only in creative cities do these features become assets in collaborative efforts to solve the perennial urban problems of housing, congestion, inclusion, preservation, and development. As Sir Peter Hall puts it in his landmark book Cities in Civilization, such cities “have throughout history been the places that ignited the sacred flame of the human intelligence and the human imagination.”

Bradford goes on to note that in today’s knowledge-intensive global age, cities represent the ideal geographic scale and social space for the intensive, face-to-face interactions that generate new ideas and innovative practices. And it is the premium now placed on creativity in responding to the daunting social and economic challenges concentrated in our cities that reveals the value of the arts, culture and heritage activities. As Bradford puts it, the “lifeblood of the arts is creativity, imagination, experimentation, and appreciation of difference,” and “these are precisely the habits of mind and modes of expression” required across all sectors, from business and government to the community. Providing a comparative and historical perspective, Bradford catalogues major intellectual contributions to the contemporary understanding of creative cities, tracing ideas across a diverse group of urban cultural analysts spanning several decades: Jane Jacobs, Richard Florida, Mario Polèse, Richard Stren, Patsy Healey, Frank Fischer, and Charles Landry. He then reports on how some of these ideas have been successfully applied in selected creative cities in Canada, the United Kingdom, and Australia.

From the scholarly literature and case studies, Bradford finds that creative cities contribute significantly to meeting local and national policy goals: economic innovation, social inclusion, democratic engagement, and environmental sustainability. Referencing the many challenges presently faced by Canadian cities, Bradford proposes a new place-sensitive urban policy paradigm. What’s crucial for creativity is collaboration among the many policy actors in the

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city: between government departments, across levels of government, and among governments, the private sector, community organizations, and engaged citizens including artists and cultural workers themselves.

Meric Gertler’s paper builds on Bradford’s overview, bringing a number of themes into focus. For Gertler, the critical issue “revolves around the fascinating interrelationships between three Cs: creativity, competitiveness and cohesion.” He emphasizes that the concept of “local place quality” not only enhances the dynamism, resilience, and overall competitiveness of the national economy, but equally, the quality of life and opportunity for a broad cross-section of Canadians. Here Gertler makes a bold call for active and critical adaptation of themes from international debates about creative cities to the Canadian context. If Canadian values inform the way we pursue creative cities, Gertler argues, the result will be socially inclusive creative places, distinguished by their “strong vibrant neighbourhoods, relative freedom from social deprivation, and access to employment and social services such as shelter, education, nutrition and health care.”

From this vantage point, Gertler details the most recent research demonstrating how creative activity enhances the vitality of a city-region by enhancing both its innovative capacity and quality of place. He reports on new studies that are beginning to provide “hard evidence” of the relationships. These studies document developments such as: the rapid growth of design activity within the economy and its contribution to a wide range of economic sectors; the positive impact of artistic workers in cities on the overall productivity and earnings in the urban and regional economy, and on regeneration of distressed urban neighbourhoods; and the value of unique, distinctive and original cultural products in affirming the authentic identity of cities and communities.

Gertler next asks how we build creative cities. For him, two factors are critical. First, investments must be made in the “soft” and “hard” infrastructures of urban creativity. Soft infrastructure – what Gertler also calls the city’s “connective tissue” – comprises the social networks and shared spaces facilitating interaction among creative people. The more familiar hard infrastructure refers to the physical environment of highways, public transit, sewer and water supply networks, and so forth. Second, Gertler underscores the pivotal public policy role in nurturing a city’s creative assets and infrastructures. Governments establish the institutional and regulatory context for private sector and non-profit organizations to make their own unique contributions. Gertler’s discussion outlines numerous specific proposals for each of the federal, provincial, and local levels of government. His examples constitute an inviting policy roadmap to the creative city.

Nancy Duxbury’s paper joins the discussion from a municipal cultural planning perspective, seeking a vision and framework in which artists and cultural organizations are fully recognized as central actors in the creative city. Indeed, she begins with a paradox: despite society’s growing preoccupation with creativity and innovation, the explicit cultural dimension is often missing. Here Duxbury points to an important Canadian difference. While American and European debates about the creative city have been driven mostly by economic concerns (American competitiveness or European regeneration), she argues that Canadian traditions have better
appreciated the intrinsic, multi-faceted value of urban cultural expressions. In a 1993 City of Vancouver report, Duxbury finds the Canadian vision of the creative city:

A city where: the arts are respected for their aesthetic importance and for their ability to foster understanding and communication; cultural diversity is embraced and the expression of creativity in all its forms is encouraged; people can enjoy creative activities in their everyday lives; the arts are viewed as an educational necessity and creativity is recognized as an invaluable skill in the Age of Information; the arts are valued for their important role in the economy as well as for their spiritual, intellectual and social benefits.²

From this perspective, Duxbury describes cultural planning activities in Vancouver, Toronto, Ottawa, and Halifax. Some key principles guide the process, principal among them: respect for the unique offerings of each city; support for public participation in the arts; and appreciation of a community’s cultural ecosystem and networks. Across these cities, Duxbury also identifies major challenges confronting cultural planners, notably: the lack of government resources and coordination; and the shortage of affordable studio space for artists and venues for community arts groups.

Duxbury concludes with a call for more robust reporting frameworks for evaluating the impact of cultural policies and investments in cities. Given the complexities of such measuring exercises, she notes the value of a “narrative” approach to capturing returns on investment. This approach is more attuned to important intangible outcomes such as resident observations of positive change in a neighbourhood, or heightened senses of community identity and pride.

2.1 Plenary Dialogue: Creative Cities: What, Why, How?

Jumping off from the three papers, the day’s plenary discussion proceeded in two parts. In the first part, the organizing theme was “Creative Cities: The State of the Art.” In the second part, it was “From Theory to Practice: Case Studies and Shared Experiences.” For both sessions, the participants were further guided by two specific questions. In the first part, they were asked: (1) What makes a city creative?; and (2) Why does it matter if a city is creative? In the second session, they responded to: (1) What do we know is working?; and (2) What can we learn from those cities making progress? Reported below are key ideas and conclusions emerging from the discussions.

² City of Vancouver. 1993. Toward the Creative City.
3.0 Plenary 1 – Creative Cities: The State of the Art

3.1 What Makes a Creative City?

The participants identified a number of features and factors distinguishing the creative city. Among these, two were viewed as especially important: uniqueness and authenticity. Creative cities have the ability to “tell their own story.” Asking “who we are, what are we proud of, and what can we become,” creative communities affirm their unique identity and build their own niches of excellence on national, even global stages. Participants recognized that there was a great range of ways in which such urban creativity could be substantively expressed. It was noted that Canada’s Cultural Capitals program, recognizing local cultural excellence, hears regularly from many cities and communities presenting very different conceptions of urban creativity. If a city is to be truly creative, it must recognize the value of the arts and culture, and go further to ensure opportunities for participation and expression are accessible to all residents. The connection between creativity and social inclusion is crucial. Participatory, community-based arts and cultural activity can help build social capital in neighbourhoods and enhance the cohesiveness of cities.

Some participants also suggested that the creative city may embody certain tensions, for example between the importance of authenticity “as a kind of fixed thing from the past” and the need for innovation and doing things that are novel or different. Creative cities are somewhat “unsettled” or dynamic places, where different visions, values, and cultures intersect and intermingle, leading to cross-fertilization of ideas.

The discussion drew the distinction between creativity and innovation. Creativity, it was agreed, was a necessary input to innovation. But creativity involved what one participant termed “utopian thinking,” while innovation was more pragmatic, bringing “discipline to imagination” for the practical application of new ideas. Artists and cultural producers may not be involved directly in innovation, but their work can steer the process in exciting and previously unimagined directions.

By way of summary, participants agreed that creative cities express their uniqueness and authenticity in three principal settings: the arts, commerce, and community. Further, it is the quality and intensity of the connections among the three that influence most strongly the city’s creative capacities and achievements. More broadly, there was consensus that the creative city excels in bringing together “place, people, and investment”:

- **Place** – Quality places feature a natural and built environment that is authentic and unique, preserves greenspace and artistic space, and offers imaginative streetscapes and landmarks. Such places nurture the creativity of residents while also attracting other creative people to them. Some business surveys show that “place quality” matters more to investment decisions than factors like proximity to an airport or taxation levels. As such, participants warned against urban development strategies that “ignored waterfronts or built skyscrapers everywhere.”
• **People** – It is crucial to nurture and attract “talented” people who bring ideas, inspiration, and passion to a place. The creative city is home to diversity: different talents are recognized and represented. As one participant put it, “everyone is welcome at the table.” City building becomes a “narrative art” where urban planners and civic leaders are the “story tellers,” listening to the community, mapping its assets, and helping to remove barriers to the full participation of all people.

• **Investment** – All participants emphasized that for “people and their places” to flourish, appropriate investments must be made to meet basic economic and social needs. Cities and communities that lack the resources to shape their own destiny are unlikely to aspire to, much less achieve, excellence. For Canada, this means new investments in the infrastructure of urban creativity, ranging from the physical environment to the social networks, cultural organizations, and knowledge institutions that together drive innovation. With appropriate people and place investments, one participant foresaw a dynamic continuum, or virtuous circle, of creativity from individuals, to communities and cities, and to nations.

### 3.2 Why Does Creativity Matter?

There was consensus around the table that participation in the arts and culture enhanced creative capacities, and that such capacities were more important than ever for Canadian cities. Participants went further to identify some of the key relationships between creativity and successful places:

• **Governance Innovation** – Creative places break from some elements of traditional municipal administration. Specifically, their planning processes are more inclusive and designed to forge new collaborations and find new ways of representing the community and its identity.

• **Civic Innovation** – Contemporary urban challenges, ranging from managing growth and diversity in the large cities, to shifting from the natural resource to the knowledge economy in smaller communities, require new problem-solving skills and shared solutions. Creativity is the key to improving how we live together and solve pressing urban problems.

• **Economic Innovation** – Prosperity in the knowledge-based economy depends less on raw materials or transportation routes and more on ideas, design, and networking. Simply put, creativity is becoming a more valued input throughout the economy, and cities and communities can be the “innovative milieux.”

• **Social Innovation** – Broad citizen participation in a wide range of arts and cultural activities can transform the social contexts of cities, enabling marginalized or subaltern communities to express their identity and creativity, while also revitalizing declining neighbourhoods. The city becomes a more inclusive place.

• **Artistic and Cultural Innovation** – Creative cities embrace and support the arts and culture, recognizing their contribution to the kinds of innovations listed above. Creativity produces many forms of aesthetic expression that enable urban residents from different walks of life and backgrounds to live more respectfully with one another and with the natural environment.
4.0 Plenary 2 – From Theory to Practice: Case Studies and Shared Experiences

4.1 What Do We Know is Working?

The group exchanged examples of creative practices and projects in their cities, or from cities with which they were familiar. Among the cities referenced: Moose Jaw (a vibrant artistic community contributing to downtown regeneration); Halifax (Pier 21 waterfront development); Saskatoon (agri-science technology cluster and Meewasin Valley cultural projects); Kamloops (thriving local arts scene in a smaller city); Brampton (Indie Arts Festival and Music Roots Seminars); Quebec City (Quartier St-Roch revitalization and provincially supported municipal cultural planning); Oakville (natural environment and mainstreet heritage), Toronto (King-Spadina and King-Parliament cultural district regeneration); Moncton (Northrup Frye Literary Festival and initiatives to bridge the English and French cultural communities); and Vancouver (managing the pressures of rapid growth and population diversity).

As the group reflected on these many examples, five lessons emerged as most important for success:

1. Cities need to discover and tell their own story, but they also must be ready to learn from other places and, as one participant put it, to “steal” innovations and apply them locally. The circulation of ideas is critical to the creative process, and cities have long borrowed from one another. In Brampton, for example, cultural festivals and musical expressions unique to the locality were inspired by initiatives from cities in Canada and around the world.

2. While successful cities learn from elsewhere, they also avoid formulaic borrowing. The crucial step involves adapting “models” developed elsewhere to the particular local context. While the influential creative city model advanced by Richard Florida would seem to leave few options for smaller cities or more remote communities, one participant noted that a vital arts and cultural scene has developed in Kamloops. It is important to recognize that each municipality is at a different point in the creative process. Discussion of learning and assistance must be appropriately contextualized.

3. An important strategy for creative city advocates is what one participant termed “infiltration” within existing policies and programs. The point was to “get the arts and culture into the mindsets of every government department.” While cities and communities have long histories in supporting recreation and sports, the arts and culture are relatively recent developments. We need to imagine multiple points of entry for securing resources and advancing opportunities for the arts and culture. A municipal goal might be the creation of arts and cultural centers beside the arena or sports fields. The idea of exploring synergies between sports and culture was pursued further. Some participants noted that, especially in smaller communities, local sports teams or regional tournaments not only regularly draw thousands of spectators but often engage remarkable volunteer commitment and strengthen community confidence and identity. Opinion surveys also show that the public values equally arts and sports as fundamental aspects of the livable community, and that parents expect their children to participate in both activities. Another participant pointed out that the same infiltration strategy, or what was termed “piggybacking,” has worked well in linking the
cultural sector to downtown revitalization or waterfront development. For example, in London, Ontario, the new 10,000 seat arena was built in the downtown core (relocated from the city’s suburban edge) as part of an urban revitalization plan, and its building design reflected the city’s architectural heritage. In Halifax, similar cultural linkages were made in relation to the waterfront redevelopment. This discussion also underscored that “infiltration” was a two-way street – creative city advocates themselves had to be open to new alliances and relationships with actors well beyond the traditional arts and culture community.

4. For successful cities, leadership is key. In creative processes, leadership involves both risk taking and securing resources. Two further points were made: first, leaders may emerge from a range of sectors or backgrounds and they may be individual “champions” or more organized partnerships; and, second, for disadvantaged or subaltern communities within cities, the leaders must “come from within” to provide an authentic voice and legitimate representation.

5. Finally, participants raised the difficult but crucial question of how success is defined for creative cities. Many of the creative quarters or revitalized cultural districts celebrated as dynamic examples of urban regeneration often simultaneously displace both artists from affordable workspace, and less advantaged members of the city from affordable housing. The question remains: is this part of a creative city?

4.2 What Can We Learn from Creative Places?

In thinking about the lessons for cities and communities not yet realizing their creative potential, the group considered whether, in fact, it is possible for all urban centers to become creative cities. Is the vision one that really applies only to the largest cities already quite rich in the amenities, diversity, and talent that drive creativity?

To this question, one participant offered the “heretical” answer – not every city or community can be a creative place. Artists and cultural workers don’t stay in small towns or suburban settings. They move to Toronto and from there, often, to New York and London. Smaller places may not be able to maintain the necessary critical mass of creative people.

Not surprisingly, this view sparked considerable exchange. If creativity was understood as a “critical spirit” or learning process then the opportunities may extend well beyond the already acknowledged “big city hot spots.” The potential for smaller communities, if they were alert and engaged, to borrow or adapt innovations pioneered elsewhere was re-emphasized. Along the same lines, some argued that pursuit of the creative vision is more urgent and in many ways more feasible for smaller communities than for large cities. Its urgency arises from the fact that such places, typically facing the exhaustion of their traditional resource base, can survive only by making rapid transition to the information and knowledge-based economy. Its feasibility relates to the particular advantages and unique assets associated with modest size: collective action is easier as the bonds of familiarity and trust facilitate consensus and collaboration. Supporting this position, one participant added that in smaller places it is a given that no one actor can go it alone: progress always depends on partnerships combining resources across sectors and silos. Smaller communities – such as those in Newfoundland – often possess their own powerful sense of place and identity which helps in retaining or attracting creative talent.
Another aspect of the learning process focused on the way in which successful cities and communities take advantage of “crises” or even “accidents” to advance the cause. Several examples of this dynamic were brought forward. In the City of Ottawa, recent proposals for substantial funding cuts to the arts and culture triggered an unlikely alliance of creative interests, including the business community, making the case for the importance of investment in these areas. Some Ottawa residents felt that the cutback proposals were made possible by the recent municipal amalgamation that brought rural councilors to the table. Yet, at the same time, it has been recognized that the amalgamated structure presents new opportunities for urban-rural cultural linkages and regional forms of cultural mapping that include folk art, agricultural heritage, and so forth. Another example involved Toronto’s King Street cultural districts. These trace their origins to the economic crisis that hit the city in the early 1990s, which led the municipality to land use regulation changes enabling artists and other cultural activities to find new workspaces. The municipal zoning innovations were soon followed by provincial investment credits to support creative clustering. The result is a Canadian version of a dynamic more familiar in European cities: creative renewal of crisis-ridden urban spaces through cultural investments and arts production.

The point here is that “learning about what works” may not always involve rational, formal planning. On the contrary, such planning, if it is too rigid, can be counterproductive. Creativity depends, it seems, on a certain “messiness” or tension among visions and projects. Creative cities, as was noted earlier, are edgy, unsettled places. What may be needed most are spaces for dialogue that allow expression of differences while channeling the resultant synergies in constructive directions. This is creative urban planning: synthesizing different traditions and seizing unexpected opportunities.

The final aspect of the learning discussion concerned education. What innovative teaching/learning strategies and educational content might foster creativity? One participant offered a multi-dimensional conception of how creative capacities are reproduced or transmitted through families, formal education, and community settings. All participants agreed that education is a central component of the creative city. It was pointed out that exposure to the arts and culture can improve academic achievement: young people are better able to express themselves, think critically, and appreciate difference.

In closing the plenary, one participant remarked on the “gap” between the growing body of research about the drivers of urban creativity and the wide benefits accruing to those places that act strategically, and the still quite limited knowledge, or even awareness, of these relationships among many elected officials, urban planners, and policy makers. This gap between knowledge and practice provided a good bridge to the next part of the dialogue – identifying barriers and opportunities in building creative cities.
5.0 Small Group Discussions: Barriers and Opportunities

Following the plenary discussions, the participants were randomly assigned to three small groups to assess the barriers and opportunities as Canadians explore the creative cities agenda. Below are the major themes running across the three groups.

5.1 Barriers

- A lack of clarity or specificity in defining “creativity” and its relevance to the urban setting.

- The lack of awareness among policy and planning communities, and the general public, about creative cities and their value. Awareness is strong within the arts and cultural communities, and among some urban analysts, but outreach is limited.

- The lack of resources for creative activity because of a general undervaluing of artistic and cultural contributions. This barrier is evident in shortages of affordable workspace for artists, the short-term and inadequate funding for cultural infrastructure, and gaps or imbalances in local services.

- The persistence of government silos makes it difficult for people or resources to work together in communities and neighbourhoods.

- The lack of creativity “champions” among the political, administrative, business, and community leadership.

- The distance – geographic and psychological – between the federal and municipal governments, and the jurisdictional obstacles to dialogue and mutual understanding. More generally, the failure of both upper level governments to align their resources with the needs of cities and communities, all of whom have different needs and capacities and enter the creativity cycle at different points.

- The shortage of resources, skills, and capacities at the local level makes it difficult for municipal staff to practice inclusive governance or become “community cultural animators.”

- In municipal cultural planning, the absence of a practical toolkit for planning and implementing creative cities.

- Important research gaps in Canada on how artistic and cultural activities contribute to economic innovation and quality of life in cities.

- The lack of clear and applicable indicators to capture the creativity of cities and the contributions of investment in the arts, culture, and heritage.

- The exclusion or marginalization of some people and cultures in cities. There remain systemic barriers (socio-economic, intellectual, and physical) to accessing creative opportunities in Canadian cities.
5.2 Opportunities

- The need for collective action and creative collaborations that share experiences, develop capacity, and spread the word. The existing Creative Cities Network is one good example at the national level.

- The potential benefits of focusing and flowing resources to neighbourhoods since the local scale may be where the creative synergies, knowledge, and networks are strongest and the possibilities for aligning interests the greatest.

- The national political debate, specifically the New Deal for Cities and Communities, presents an opportunity to make the case for creativity: the federal government has identified “culture” as one of the four cornerstones of vibrant urban settings, alongside the economic, social, and environmental dimensions. The case can also be made for devolution of decision making to local scale, accompanied by appropriate resources.

- As part of the New Deal opening, the creative cities agenda might be advanced along various policy paths, including: further tri-level urban-based partnerships as pioneered in certain Western Canadian cities; integration with the economic innovation agenda that emphasizes local development through urban and community-based creativity; connecting with policies and programs for urban Aboriginal peoples that celebrate their cultural traditions and community-building practices; making the case for cultural spaces where artists and the community can gather as part of public infrastructure policy; and joining debates about “healthy cities” and finding a place for the arts and culture in advancing citizen well-being.

- Canada’s multiculturalism provides opportunities for novel combinations and cultural syntheses. These could take the form of festivals that join indigenous traditions from different places around the world to enrich the Canadian “mainstream.” It was noted that Canadian cities and communities have not been at the forefront of cultural tourism and that much more could be done.

- The education sector represents an untapped strategic opportunity. There are a number of aspects to consider. How do we nurture the creative skills of the next generation and ensure that this is an integral part of the school curriculum? Are we making optimal use of public school facilities as community venues for the arts or youth cultural centers? How can we build for young people a “ladder of excellence” from the community to the global scale in the arts that inspires dreams and commitment similar to that so evident in sports such as hockey.

- Thinking about the arts and culture as a continuum from the avant-garde, amateur street scene to the more formal, professional institutions, and designing support across the continuum so as to enable both to thrive and “feed off “one another.

- The potential benefits from greater community involvement, in the form of third sector participation and citizen public engagement, with planning for arts and culture. The Ontario Ministry of Culture was offered as one example of this with its recent process for regional cultural planning; another example is through “cultural asset mapping,” which identifies the full range of creative resources throughout the city; another example is the Toronto City Summit Alliance, a voluntary network tackling immigrant settlement and social inclusion.
challenges. There are many opportunities to work with and through existing networks “on the streets” of our cities.

- Most importantly, there are ways to transform the barriers into opportunities. Municipal budgeting offers one example. Fiscal pressures typically lead municipalities to cut arts and cultural funding in the struggle to preserve what are seen as more essential services in the social or health fields. The potential to reframe these choices emerges as empirical evidence begins to clarify how participation in the arts and culture contributes to better outcomes across a range of urban fronts: economic growth, resident health, cross-cultural understanding, democratic participation, and community safety. At present, much of this research comes from the United States and Europe, presenting an important opportunity for Canadian urban researchers.
6.0 Moving Forward

6.1 Priorities for Communities and Governments

The final plenary focused on priorities for moving forward and specific actions that might be undertaken by the participants in their particular sectors and communities. The session began with a spokesperson from each of the three groups identifying its top action priorities:

- Nurturing and supporting the arts. Recognizing the potential for making progress through a neighbourhood focus, valuing local devolution and community-based networking;

- Access for all residents to creative opportunities in their city. A new creative city strategy that would: 1) build national awareness; 2) forge policy consensus; and 3) build local capacity; and

- Formation of strategic partnerships within the cultural sector, and between that sector and other creative actors across the city. The supply of adequate revenue streams for creative people and organizations.

The dialogue closed with participants agreeing on one overarching point to frame all the specific priorities. The new emphasis on local places as the most promising scale for creativity and innovation must be accompanied by adequate and sustained support from upper level governments. Creative cities are built through multi-level and cross-sectoral collaboration. As one participant put it, “we cannot let anyone off the hook.” Underscoring the importance of extra-local support for communities, another participant challenged the Prime Minister to lead the “revolution for a creative Canada led by its creative cities.”

6.2 Priorities for Policy Research

The background papers and the dialogue generated many ideas and insights about how to build more creative cities in Canada. Indeed, the broad questions structuring the dialogue acquired sharper focus over the course of the day’s discussions. An agenda for further research and study would include the following questions:

- Many have observed that different cities begin from different starting points in the “creativity process.” Can we better describe what this creativity process is for cities? What are some potential targets? How do we evaluate where a community sits on the continuum?

- How do we balance efforts to strengthen local “authenticity” (rooted in identity of place) with methods to encourage openness, inclusion and new perspectives and solutions? Are these interests competing? Should the balance play out differently as a result of community size, demographic composition, and/or local history?

- What are the creative advantages of size and scale? How do these vary for small communities, medium-sized communities, and for large communities?
• If small communities face more protracted challenges in retaining creative talent, why are some places defying this trend? What can be learned from the creative clusters of people in communities such as St. John’s, Newfoundland, Flesherton, Ontario, Victoria, B.C, and others? Are the gains translating into economic and social benefits for these communities?

• If creativity is a separate but necessary precondition for innovation, what must happen in a community to permit the one to optimally feed the other? To what extent do cultural and artistic activities currently nourish local innovation in Canada? How do we know it is happening (what are the indicators)? What do current instances of innovation catalyzed by cultural creativity reveal about the relationship – the opportunities for success and the challenges?

• If local leadership is central to more creative places, what makes the difference in a community that is able to produce and support local leaders and their visions? Can any of these factors be supported by upper levels of government and, if so, how? How can Canada generate more of these “champions”?

• If community residents regard culture and recreation similarly, in what ways can policies and approaches be better aligned to reflect this connection, and where should distinctions continue to be drawn (if at all)? What lessons can be applied from success in one aspect of local culture or recreation to other dimensions of cultural/creative development? What can the sport model tell us, for instance, about participatory development in communities?

• Given that creative development is messy and often organic, is there a role for governments or should the process simply be left to evolve naturally? When might the natural evolution, left to its own devices, tend to result in inequity or unsustainability? Have government interventions prevented such pitfalls in the past, and what other opportunities might exist in Canada?

• Why is there a gap in political will? Is the inconsistent commitment among decision-makers a result of lack of interest, lack of awareness, mis-information, lack of capacity to relate investments with results, and/or different views or priorities regarding the public role in culture? What explains the gap and what strategies might address it?
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International Development Research Centre
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Law Commission of Canada
National Roundtable on the Environment and the Economy
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Statistics Canada
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Provincial Governments:

Alberta
- Human Resources and Employment

British Columbia
- Ministries of Health
- Ministry of Children and Family Development

Ontario
- Ministry of Community and Social Services

Newfoundland and Labrador
- Royal Commission on Renewing and Strengthening Our Place in Canada
- Newfoundland and Labrador Statistics Agency

Nova Scotia
- Department of Health

Saskatchewan
- Saskatchewan Social Services

Municipal Governments:

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