



CULTURE, IDENTITY & REGENERATION

WOOLWICH CONTEMPORARY PRINT FAIR

SEMINAR NOTES

This document reports on a debate about the ways that culture, class and identity collide in the context of regeneration. The event took place as part of the Woolwich Contemporary Print Fair. It brought together people from different disciplines - artists, politicians, residents, developers and community organisers - to explore how new development can help build a common sense of belonging, and what needs to change.

Convened and hosted by Matt Bell

7TH NOVEMBER 2019

Woolwich
Contemporary
Print Fair.

1 KEYNOTE SPEECH

CULTURE, IDENTITY AND SOCIAL CHANGE

CLLR DANNY THORPE, LEADER OF ROYAL BOROUGH OF GREENWICH

The keynote speech gave a personal and professional reflection on class, change and the dynamics of regeneration at a time when identity is a massive political question locally and nationally.

Charting the trajectory of Woolwich from a place of high unemployment and boarded up shop windows to the present, the speech examined the role of culture in the context of regeneration.

Acknowledging that regeneration can lead to “sourdough bread and pitted olives” and similar symbols of divisive gentrification, the speech looked at examples where culture has been used to integrate, break down barriers and create collective value.

At the heart of these examples was a commitment to embracing difference and allowing culture to be a crucible for interchange between these differences.

Celebrating the value that cultural institutions like Greenwich + Docklands Festival, homegrown organisations like ArtFix, and new arrivals such as Punchdrunk, the speech ended with praise for community-led culture exemplified by Greenwich’s bid to be London Borough of Culture 2021.

“It is important we have days like today to understand how culture can fuse different attitudes and ideas and bring them together”

2 PERSONAL IDENTITIES

Delegates were invited to browse the exhibition and take a picture of one print that speaks to them about their own personal identity. Each shared their photo with one other guest: each person explaining what it captures about who they are and where they come from.



KEYWORDS

HOME
FAMILY
HOPE
CHILDHOOD
MEMORY
JOURNEYS
BELONGING
MACHINERY
STORIES
MAKING
FOOD



3 HOW DO YOU CREATE A SHARED IDENTITY? WHAT WORKS?

EMBED FROM THE BEGINNING

Instead of seeing culture as an afterthought once all the major design decisions have been made, consider the impact you want a regeneration scheme to have on the identity of a place from the beginning and use that vision to inform decision-making throughout the process.



SHARED IDENTITY OR SHARING IDENTITIES?

Identities are plural, so is a 'shared identity' even desirable? Is it not instead about creating the conditions where people can 'share identities' without fear of exclusion or judgement? Shared spaces, market places and communal events that leave room for multiple cultural expressions and diversity can help achieve this.



DON'T OVERPRESCRIBE

Keeping buildings that allow for multiple identities is crucial. Developers should allow the identity and uses of spaces to evolve with the growing community instead of proscribing them beforehand. A space designated for retail might evolve into an events space, a community centre may become better suited to local needs as a social enterprise incubator. Facilitate that flexibility.

COLLECTIVE EXPERIENCES & UNIVERSAL STORIES

Don't be scared of heritage, both living and from the past, as the stories of a place can be common points for people to engage with in different ways. Reach deep to get the voices that tell these stories. Capture them in books, digital formats and performances and use them to connect people across ages, social demographics and new/existing residents.

4 THE CHANGING ROLE OF CULTURE

“The best art is the art communities create themselves”

TOMMY FLOWERS PUB, POPLAR

Created in an old florists on the Aberfeldy Estate in Poplar, the Tommy Flowers Pub offers a different perspective on how to co-create places for “community to be a community” in an area undergoing regeneration, social tension and the loss of social gathering spaces.

Aberfeldy Big Local, working with Poplar HARCA, and an artist/publican, sought to create a space where new people and the existing community could mix together. Their approach allowed room for disagreement and compromise over everything from interior design to the choice of drinks in the pub.

Embracing a collaborative approach and an all-encompassing cultural programme from karaoke to glassblowing has helped the pub flourish.



RADIO THAMESMEAD

A radio station where everything is made by local people, created by Taco! and operating out of an artist project space.

Participants receive training in radio production through Ravensbourne College before gaining the chance to run their own programme.

Deborah Frimpong spoke of creating 4 programmes, 2 live and 2 pre-recorded that allowed her to go into the community and tackle the topics of social isolation and inclusion.

Ian Tyson spoke of the project's ability to make unexpected connections between people such as a neighbour who shared the same tastes in music and interest in the guitar and harmonica, a discovery that led to Ian interviewing the neighbour for his show.

5 CAN WE TALK ABOUT CLASS?

“We need a revolution of representation that gives opportunity of voice through training, amplification and access in order to alter ownership and power about those who make choices about regeneration”

CLASS: STILL AN ISSUE?

There was broad consensus that class remains an issue in everything from the structure of our society to economic difference, education, healthcare and social mobility. As such we have to be unafraid to name it and talk about it if we are to address deep seated structural divisions.

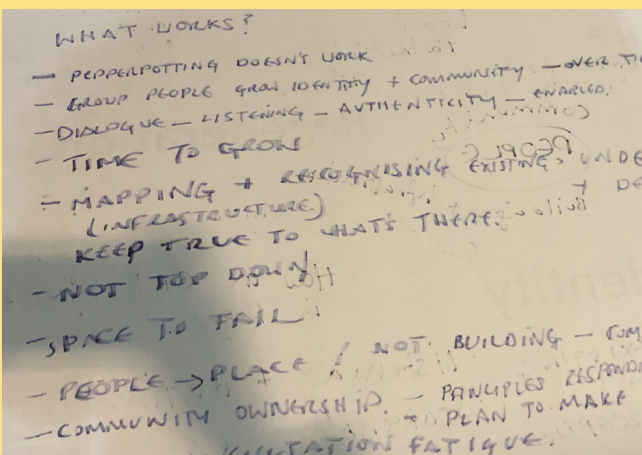


A QUESTION OF POWER

Class differences are polarised more by political and economic structures that create disparities of power and access. Addressing these disparities is not a question of creating a classless society but of celebrating class identity while challenging class entitlement and ownership.

PUT PLACE AT THE CENTRE

Place allows different identities to co-exist, appear and intersect in ways that national identities cannot. They are less beholden to a single 'official story' and therefore offer potential for complex identities, including class, to be celebrated.



GIVE BACK CONTROL

Holders of power in real estate need to be able to take risks and relinquish control of some aspects of what happens in their developments, allowing for new types of events and cultural activities to emerge that will bring new types of people to the table.

6 CLOSING PROVOCATIONS

BRITAIN'S CHANGING: ARE WE?

**ANGUS KNOWLES-CUTLER, DELOITTE,
CHAIR OF LONDON LEP**

1. Every year 500,000 people leave London and 500,000 people arrive, which is a huge amount of churn. We are a city where people move in and move out which brings vibrancy but can also bring challenges: Isolation, loneliness and lack of a sense of community.

2. We are increasingly living in a digital world more than a physical world. People spend 8 hours a day living in the digital world. Digitally you can place yourself in an echo chamber, making us dangerously isolated.

One possible future: development around the world skips bricks and mortar and everything is digital, bringing some advantages of convenience, but provides a whole new level of social control.

Another future: we use physical space to bring together cultures, identities and provide an antidote to living life in the digital realm. We use technology as a means to connect in the physical world.

3. Physical interaction is central to the human condition. Deloitte recently conducted a detailed report on the highest growth skill needs in employment for the last 15 years. Surprisingly the highest growth skills aren't STEM skills, they are counselling, coaching, psychology and creative industries. Machines can do accounting better than accountants, law better than lawyer, but creative and personal skills are our high ground.

Education is critical for both our economic and social future. Work on the GLA's Outcomes for Londoners £31.1m fund for adult education has included things like employability, but it has also supported French and philosophy courses for elderly people, helping keep them stay out of the healthcare system.

4. What do we do in our day jobs that can make a difference? We need to remember that our work deals with real lives and real people, not an abstract.



CULTURE, IDENTITY AND REGENERATION

DELEGATES

Liam Harney, Community Organiser, Aberfeldy Big Local
Jimmy Watters, Board member and local resident, Aberfeldy Big Local
Sharon Davies, Senior Project Manager, Arcadis
David Brown, Land Director, Berkeley Group
Julian Evans, Development Director, Berkeley Group
Marcel Baettig, Chief Executive, Bow Arts
Kathy McArdle, Director England and Cities, British Council
Claire Barber, Head of Retail Development, British Land
Nicolas Bosetti, Research Manager, Centre for London
Jason Sayer, Assistant Editor, Citizen Magazine
Tammy Tawadros, Facilitator, Coach and Organisational Development Specialist
Chris Murray, Director, Core Cities
Angus Knowles-Cutler, UK Vice Chairman, & Managing Partner, Deloitte LLP
Dr Abreen Shah, Director of Policy & Research, Design Council
Maria Adebawale-Schwarte, Executive Director, Foundation for Future London
Sherry Dobbin, Managing & Cultural Director, Futurecity
Chris Murphy, Assistant Strategist, Futurecity
Andy Robinson, Head of Strategy, Futurecity
Lauren Bouillot-Gindre, Placemaking Officer, Culture and Creative Industries, GLA
Christina Reynolds, Greenwich Partnerships Development Lead, Greenwich Co-operative Development
Bradley Hemming, Artistic Director, Greenwich Festival
Fiona Brenner, Area Manager, Groundwork London & London Green Space Commission
Emily Crookshank, Artist, Lakeside Studios Thamesmead
Cannon Ivers, Director, LDA Design
Toni Ainge, Assistant Director for Communities and Culture, London Borough of Bexley
Jane Richardson, Assistant Chief Executive, Growth and Regeneration, London Borough of Bexley
Sofia Dawe, Senior Associate, Mark London
David King, Senior Policy Advisor, Cities and Local Growth, MHCLG
Paul Augarde, Director of Placemaking, Poplar HARCA
Danny Tompkins, Project Producer, Poplar HARCA
John Lewis, Executive Director, Thamesmead, Peabody
Adriana Marques, Head of Cultural Strategy for Thamesmead, Peabody
Rachel Lockwood, Artist, Pinkfoot Gallery
Pete Higgin, Director of Enrichment, Punchdrunk
Deborah Frimpong, Project Member and Local Resident, Radio Thamesmead
Ian Tyson, Project Member and Local Resident, Radio Thamesmead
Sarah Whittle, Publisher & Curator, Red Hare
Takki Sulaiman, Assistant Director Communities, Culture and Leisure, Royal Borough of Greenwich
Cllr Danny Thorpe, Leader, Royal Borough of Greenwich
Cllr Miranda Williams, Cabinet Member, Royal Borough of Greenwich
Jett Glozier, Senior Consultant, Sound Diplomacy
Mat Jenner, Director, TACO!
Donald Hyslop, Head of Regeneration and Partnerships, Tate Modern
Nadia Broccado, Chief Executive, Team London Bridge
Hala El-Akl, Chair, Urban Art Forum
Catherine Ince, Lead Curator, V&A East
Barrie Kelly, Chief Executive, Visit Greenwich
Sam Hunt, Artistic Director, Waltham Forest
Matt Bell, Chairman, Woolwich Contemporary Print Fair
Jack Bullen, Director, Woolwich Contemporary Print Fair
James Heaton, Chief Executive, Woolwich Works Trust

REPORT COMPILED BY **FUTURECITY**

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