

Creating a Global Cultural City Via Public Participation in the Arts: Conversations With Hong Kong's Leading Arts and Cultural Administrators

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Every city is a global city in its own way nowadays. Hong Kong has been recognized as a trading post and an international gateway to China but is less known as an island of arts and culture. The claim of the city as a cultural capital has, perhaps, followed the arrival of flagship galleries and the booming art market that has made Hong Kong the shopping capital of the Asian art world. The development of the cultural district and arts venues and the hiring of high-profile arts executives may also be among its wow factors.

Given the surveyed realities, this book reasonably portrays a world view of how arts and cultural institutions in Hong Kong operate and the strategic directions to be pursued. The idea of creating a global city is generally benchmarked against Hong Kong itself in the past decades rather than against major cultural cities around the world. Becoming a cultural metropolis may be a promising prospect. Most of the book's interviewees

point out that the city is witnessing the development of a diversified cultural ecosystem. There are signs of an increase in the number of local individual artists and arts organizations, the availability of government grants and subsidies, and even mega infrastructural projects. At the same time, the sector is plagued by issues found in other regions, such as those related to funding, performance venues, cultural competency and audience engagement. In reading this book, I took particular interest in how public participation in the arts has been regarded as a mechanism for creating a global cultural city.

The book is titled based on the focus on arts participation and could serve as a complementary text for introductory courses in arts administration and leadership. As remarked by one of the interviewees, Leanne Nicholls of City Chamber Orchestra of Hong Kong: "All the best arts administration courses and degrees in the world cannot breed a tenacious spirit and nothing compares with the real-life experience of creating something from nothing." The dialogic structure of the chapters helps to immerse the reader in the world of senior arts administration. I enjoyed reading most of the conversational narratives provided by senior arts administrators. Their first-hand knowledge of the institutions and their understanding of the subject matter are applicable elsewhere in the world.

In their conclusion, the authors try to make sense of the interviews included in the volume, yet not all of the executives interviewed actually touch on the issue of making arts relevant to local communities.

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