Valuing Arts & Culture in the Community

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Value, culture, community, urban planning.

Abstract
Despite the hype surrounding the mobilisation of the creative arts as a vehicle for social and physical regeneration, there are few systematic assessments of the success or otherwise of this agenda. This paper will present a framework for assessing the social, economic and cultural sustainability of a changing arts agenda in the regional city of Geelong, Australia. It will draw on general principles and local revaluations of the arts to present a historical account of why and how the value of the arts in this one community changed over time to produce a sustainable outcome.

Biography
Dr Louise Johnson is Associate Professor in Australian Studies at Deakin University. A human geographer, she has researched the gendered nature of suburban houses and shopping centre, changing manufacturing workplaces as well as the dynamics of Australian regional economies. Her most recent work has been examining Geelong, Bilbao, Singapore and Glasgow as Cultural Capitals (Ashgate 2009) looking at how the arts have been revalued and urban spaces remade by the creative economy. She is also currently researching the nature of master planned suburban communities, waterfront renewal and post-colonial planning.
Introduction

Today, when cities or regional communities confront the loss of population or employment and consider how to become more attractive to investors and tourists, a commonly pursued policy is to actively grow the arts (British American Arts Association 1989; Middleton 1991; Keams & Philo 1993; Zukin 1995; Evans 2005). The creative arts are seen as a way to both culturally enrich local populations and to offer them economic salvation. Carefully located, they can also reinvigorate derelict urban areas – offering not only economic and social alternatives but stimulating physical regeneration as well. Internationally, theorists such as Richard Florida (2002; 2003; 2005) and consultants like Charles Landry (2000, with Bianchini 1999), John Holden (2004) and Franco Bianchini (et al. 1988; Bianchini and Parkinson 1993 though Comedia) have offered advice and generated guidelines on how towns can become “cultural capitals”. Through their writing, talks and consultancies, they advise anxious governments on how creativity can be fostered, blighted urban environments regenerated, populations enlivened and economies boosted through the mobilisation of the arts. It is a heady and seemingly effective agenda which has spread across the world since the mid-1980s, creating iconic examples such as the “Guggenheim effect” in Bilbao and Glasgow as the 1990 EU “City of Culture”. A map of such Cultural Capitals indicates that these self-declared as well as externally designated centres can be large or small, in Western but also in non-industrial countries, from Europe to Asia, to the Middle East, across the United States (US) and Canada to South America. Accepting such an idea and pursuing the models on offer, hundreds of cities and towns have moved to consciously value, or in many cases, re-value and boost their art and cultural sectors (Johnson 2009).

Australia too has embraced such an agenda with a number of cities – including Adelaide, Melbourne, Sydney, Darwin and Brisbane – actively engaging the services of the international experts to assist them in becoming Cultural Capitals (see Atkinson & Easthope 2007; Luckman et al. 2007). Within the context of broader Federal and State arts policy, such moves were accompanied by a shift away from growing audiences and boosting community engagement in the 1970s and 80s towards valuing the arts as part of an emerging cultural economy in the 1990s (Cunningham 1992; Hawkins & Gibson 1994; Flew 1997; Stevenson 1999; Bennett & Carter 2001; Caust 2003; Craik 2007; Johanson 2008). This policy change echoed the wider international discursive movement for re-valuing the arts as an economic activity (Myerscough 1988; Frey and & Pommerrehre 1990; Hall & Hubbard 1998; Holden 2004). This in turn was related to an emergent symbolic economy which changed how the arts were defined and valued. What constituted “the arts” was thereby broadened beyond the visual, media and performing arts to embrace design, fashion, computer leisure software and, in some localities, cultural tourism and retailing (Nash 2000; Scott 2000; 2001; Zukin 1991; 1995; Throsby 2008).

How exactly such a broad agenda is realised in any one locality and its success or otherwise has not been rigorously evaluated. There is a great deal of hype around iconic buildings and the planning of creative futures which mobilise huge amounts of government and private sector funding, international experts and the hopes of many. But how all of this appears on the ground over an extended period of time remains without systematic assessment. As Graeme Evans notes: “there is a need for a comprehensive evaluation model of a major culture-led regeneration scheme …which would serve as a practical blueprint to others” (Evans 2005: p. 977). In setting out and applying such a schema here, I will accept Evans’ recommendation to not only assess such projects across a broad range of physical, economic and social indicators, but do so in a way that connects with the needs and aspirations of incumbent arts and cultural groups.

However, I will also depart from Evans’ call for a single model, opting instead for broad principles which are then given meaning and specificity within the locality under
consideration. Despite the expansive range of possible indicators, I will focus on just one – the sustainability of the arts. The first part of this paper will elaborate on this concept and draw out a set of indicators that can be used in Geelong, Victoria for assessing the economic, social, cultural and political sustainability of its many cultural initiatives. The second part will present an overview of Geelong’s recent history and cultural agendas. The third will assess its economic, social and cultural sustainability, drawing on the terms set by those within this place, both civic leaders and its arts community, to present an assessment of the value of the arts and cultural activity in this place.

Based on ARC funded research the following analysis is built upon ten years of assembling relevant policy documents, interviewing key decision-makers, conducting focus groups with artists, as well as participant observation in a number of fora established by the local State to elicit the views and needs of its artists. As a geographer, the following will highlight the importance of this place and its arts community – their embodied talents, their objective creations and their institutional contexts – as well as the political effectiveness of their leaders, as critical to explaining how this community re-valued the arts.

Measuring the success of an arts agenda
Graeme Evans (Evans 2005: pp. 971–972) has recently given an overview of some measures utilised across the globe to assess the contribution of the arts to physical, economic and social regeneration. They include:

- **Physical regeneration** – re-use of redundant buildings, increased quantity and use of public space, the presence of high density mixed-use developments, heritage recognition;
- **Economic regeneration** – increased property valuations, job creation, skill development, creative clusters and public/private partnerships;
- **Social regeneration** – via attendance and participation in the arts, new community networks, lessened anti-social behaviour and population growth.

Such a list raises questions about what is included in “the arts”, how the value of each indicator is appraised and who wants to know. The creative arts are increasingly seen as embracing a host of social, physical, cultural and economic agendas which vary across scale and interest group. These are measurement but also political and theoretical problems. For me, resolving the problem of measurement does not lie in the creation of a mega-model which can be applied across the globe, but can emerge from a set of ethical principles which are then related to local objectives. It is in these terms that the success or otherwise of a local arts and cultural agenda can be assessed.

Within Geelong or any other locality how success in the arts is measured is therefore a difficult question; but the answer should offer criteria which resonate with both key decision-makers and the arts community. The evaluation here of cultural objects and activity will be in terms already identified as important within the region and include: the fostering of sustainable relationships between the community, economy and environment; recognising and enhancing regional diversity; and growing community well-being and capability (G21 Region Strategic Plan 2006, p. 7). Public art, the redevelopment of an urban precinct, or the re-imagining of a city image can thereby be assessed in terms of its social, cultural, political and economic sustainability.

The notion of sustainability is fundamental to many discussions of urban and “natural” environments. Central to the sustainability movement is action to ensure that current generations do not use the environment in a way as to compromise that available to
future generations (Brundtland 1987; Low et al. 2005; McManus 2005). An early and ongoing ecological emphasis within the concept has been usefully extended to human populations, generating notions of social, cultural and economic sustainability (Throsby 2003: pp.183–185). In these terms, any city – such as Geelong – and its arts agenda should ensure that:

**Economically**, growth can be facilitated and ongoing without damaging the physical or social environment and ensuring a wide distribution of benefits. Indicators of relevance to Geelong would be employment in the cultural and service sectors, expansion of (cultural) tourism and a lessening of economic polarisation. All are relevant to those overseeing local government, but so too is the economic viability of individual artists, through a living wage, the provision of venues, marketing and recognition.

**Socially**, the city is a place of justice and care in which opportunities, services and risks are shared fairly, while action is taken to ameliorate current inequalities and benefit all. Relevant measures here would be accessibility and participation in the arts across social groups and the region, and recognition of artists’ work as well a lessening of social exclusion. These are indicators of relevance to Geelong cultural planners, artists and venue managers.

**Culturally** a city should ensure the maintenance and expression of its diverse and interconnected social identities, inter- and intra-generational equity and protect the quality of its built environment. Indicators here could include the expression of cultural diversity and the valuing of heritage, objectives eventually held by officials as well as citizens within the region.

A sustainable community must also arise from and ensure meaningful political participation in decisions that affect people’s lives and environments. Such an aim could best be achieved through the broad political engagement of those most affected by an arts policy to ensure its legitimacy and efficacy.

This broad notion of sustainability will form the basis of assessing Geelong’s various efforts to boost its arts and cultural economy from 1970 to 2009; to offer an ethic as well as a framework for their evaluation.

**The Geelong example – creating and assessing artistic value**

Located 75 kilometres south west of the Victorian capital city of Melbourne, Geelong began as a wool port and agricultural processing centre before becoming a major car and truck manufacturing city in the mid-20th century. With an array of related industrial operations – oil refining, aluminum smelting, car components and glass making – as well as a significant textile and clothing industry, the city was hard hit by the decline of Australian manufacturing from the 1970s (Fagan & Webber 1999). Partly offset by the growth of service sector employment in health, education, finance and community services, by the 1980s, the city was also looking to the arts, tourism and recreational industries for its future (Johnson 1990; 2003; 2006).

In this large regional city of 200,000, a crumbling manufacturing economy was met firstly by efforts to boost the city centre. But then policy and action in the 1980s and 90s moved to regenerate its image and waterfront through urban design and public art. Early in the new century, inspired by the example of Bilbao, energies shifted to attracting a cultural icon from outside the area. With the failure to lure a Guggenheim museum, Geelong adopted a Richard Florida-inspired agenda that located the arts within an overall package of boosting the city to its residents and investors. As a result,
attention moved to enhancing its Cultural Precinct. At each of these stages, the “value” of the arts to the community was reassessed, repackaged and altered. What was considered valuable in the arts shifted across scale and art form; shaping arts and cultural policy, investment levels, infrastructure and the status of artists and the arts in the city. It was a dynamic exercise that involved a highly politicised process of valuation and re-valuation.

In the 1970s, with few alternative models available, local policy reaction to manufacturing decline initially focused on trying to boost the central business district (CBD) and its related retail and business operations. Local government efforts were also devoted to developing industrial land and to “selling” the city as a good location for business. At this stage there was no cultural policy and while there were numerous artists practicing their craft across the region, they had virtually no official status, few venues, no arts officer and no local policy context in which to flourish. While there were major cultural institutions – such as the Geelong Regional Art Gallery – they dated from the 19th century gold rush round of investment in urban civility, which also gave the Australian capitals their major galleries, universities and libraries (Serle 1973).

In the early1980s Geelong remained over-reliant on declining manufacturing. Local planners hoped to attract new industries by developing land, offering incentive packages to relocating businesses and families, and by talking up the city. With limited success in attracting such investment, the City by the Bay plan was developed in 1981. The aim of the plan was to further boost central Geelong retailing and spatially re-orient the city down to the foreshore, using pedestrian promenades, retail developments and tourist attractions as a “catalyst for new investment and development” (City by the Bay 1981). By shifting the CBD towards Corio Bay, the planners hoped and projected that Geelong would capture the summer tourist traffic which journeyed from Melbourne towards the coastal resorts further west. This plan stimulated the redevelopment of two city blocks – Market Square in 1985 and Bay City Plaza in 1988 – which did indeed move the retail core towards the bay while also destroying part of the 19th century urban fabric in the process (Vrantsis 2008).

The arts were not integral to such a plan nor were the views of many in the community sought. Geelong’s artists and their cultural production were valued only in a highly localised way, with small private galleries and a few innovative performance spaces – such as the Mill Theatre within Deakin University – surviving only through their own initiatives or being part of larger operations. The Geelong Performing Arts Centre (GPAC) had been built in 1982 but, along with the Art Gallery, had a regular clientele of the local middle class, which was limited in size, scope, location and age (Beck 2003).

While there was the Geelong 2010: A Preferred Future plan of 1985 – which extolled Geelong as an arts city – little came from it. With ongoing industrial contraction, active resistance by existing inner city businesses of a shift towards the bay, and a financial crisis engendered by the collapse of the local Pyramid Building Society in 1991, nothing came of proposals to regenerate the waterfront until1993. At this time, a de-regulating, neo-liberal government had been installed in Victoria. Jeff Kennett aimed to grow the State through massive investment into a few major projects and rationalisation of the public sector. Kennett forced local government amalgamation – to create the City of Greater Geelong (COGG) – and the privatisation of service provision onto Victoria. He also actively supported the development of the arts – in Melbourne but also in regional centres via his Arts 21 policy – as one way to increase the status of the metropolis and attract development dollars. In the context of a national policy agenda aiming to extend participation in the arts and with a pro-development orientation, Kennett funded the Court House Youth Theatre in an abandoned civic building (in 1996) and reactivated extant plans for waterfront renewal in Geelong.
The central feature was to be Steampacket Place – a multi-purpose pedestrian space linking the foreshore to the CBD. Tourism once again was the great economic hope and attracting more visitors the main objective. Every effort was put into attracting big events and, along the waterfront, pedestrian calming, public art and good urban design were to serve as catalysts for new retail and hotel developments. Proposals included a fisherman’s wharf dockside restaurant, making the old Customs House into a maritime museum, building a calm water harbour and waterfront plaza, restoring the shorefront woolstore buildings and building an underwater aquarium. The model explicitly invoked was Boston and its waterfront redevelopment. The ideal was to be spectacle and urban design, this time incorporating old buildings as heritage; all of which was expected to generate investment, retail activity, tourism and prosperity. Such a plan was developed with very little community involvement, a common situation under the “can do” Kennett regime. The final Waterfront Geelong concept plan (1994) was subsequently implemented in a scaled-down form by a quasi-independent – and therefore non-democratic – development board. When launched in 2001 Waterfront Geelong: the future is here (COGG 2000), had altered significantly from the original plan – with the aquarium gone and the waterfront pavilion now a plaza housing an old carousel. Geelong Major Events – established in 1995 – worked at generating activities within this space, successfully creating New Year’s Eve, sailing and auto events but unsuccessfully bidding to move the multicultural Pako Festa from its historical roots in West Geelong to this place of spectacle (Johnson 2009).

In the aftermath of Paul Keating’s Creative nation (1994), two major documents were produced in Geelong: one by the City – A culture vision and strategy (1995-6) – and the other by its major tourist organisation – Geelong Otway Tourism’s Cultural tourism development strategy (1996). Arguing in their own ways for re-valuing the creative arts across the region, the terms were now clearly economic – the arts could beautify but also attract tourists, they could stimulate local creativity but also render the city more attractive to investors and residents. Significantly, though, neither plan was ever implemented, with the cultural tourism strategy remaining in draft form and then disappearing altogether. Calls within the Culture Vision for an arts officer and policies, produced absolutely no action for another eight years. Clearly the political moment had not arrived for a broad ranging re-valuation of the arts in this region. However, the existence of such institutional statements did signal a shift towards its re-valuation. For the 1995 plan for Steampacket Place had public art as integral to the redesigned waterfront, as a way to beautify the space but also to add local distinctiveness.

Public art by a local artist was to be installed around Corio Bay. Jan Mitchell’s Bay Walk Bollards were to transform this space. Commissioned by the City of Greater Geelong and using wooden pillars from the demolished Yarra Street wharf, the 106 bollards variously represent the people, events, places, institutions and moments that have been important in making the city. Mitchell is excited about the history of Geelong and finds it personally rewarding to bring this to the public through appealing and accessible work (J Mitchell 2003, pers. Comm., 5 May). As but one element in the massive redevelopment of the Geelong waterfront, the bollards have become a key symbol, and they are widely reproduced on post cards and on city publications to become a centrepiece of its urban re-imagining.
There is a range of values to the city and its community of such work – in the generation of a successful new image, in the creation of a tourist attraction, but also in giving a sense of Geelong as a culturally sophisticated city which supports inventive, playful and real creative work. Here the creative arts have value primarily as a vehicle to represent, differentiate and add a symbolic quality to a regenerated part of this manufacturing city, struggling to change its image and economy.

Such public art along with urban design was central to the government led redesign of the Geelong waterfront. In 2000 COGG announced that Waterfront Geelong had attracted A$140 million in private sector investment (COGG 2000: p. 4), mostly in the form of up-market residential developments – including a waterfront hotel and apartments – as well as restaurants, walking trails and parks. Here then was a redevelopment for the rich to occupy and others to visit.

However, for others the city had not yet fully reinvented itself or rebuilt its economy. Manufacturing continued to languish and growth in the service sector was stalled. The image of “Sleepy Hollow” was remarkably persistent. By the late 1990s a new redevelopment model was sought by those in political power. Rather than the remodeled Boston waterfront, the example to be emulated was the Guggenheim in Bilbao. In this regional city, the creative arts thereby moved from initially being peripheral to retail redevelopment, to being integral to a refurbished waterfront, thence to being central to a re-imagining and economic redevelopment strategy.

Thus in 1998, there occurred a dinner party with COGG CEO Geoff Whitbread, National (Melbourne) Art Gallery Director and Geelong businessman, Jim Cousins and former GPAC General Manager, Sue Hunt at Mayor Ken Jarvis’s house. “The discussion turned to the future of Geelong and what we could do to get the city going in the light of our maturing industry…We recognised that what was needed was a re-imagining of Geelong to become a world city, one that ranks alongside the likes of Edinburgh, Glasgow, Toronto and Bilbao” recalls Jarvis (GBN 2000, p. 11). To pursue this idea and with connections into the State government, in December 1998, Whitbread and Jarvis joined State Premier Steve Bracks to meet with Guggenheim Director, Thomas Krens in New York. With a cost to ratepayers of A$20,000, they also traveled to Bilbao to view and arrange the visit to Geelong of “Bilbao: Transformation of a City”, to inform and enthuse the local community. In New York, it was proposed that there be a A$1 million “joint” feasibility study – conducted by New York and Victorian experts, but funded by the Geelong bidders – which would demonstrate Geelong’s commitment to the project. At the time, Krens was pursuing a policy of franchising the Guggenheim name around the world in an effort to boost the reputation and coffers of the Foundation (GBN 2000). A realistic cost estimate for a Geelong building was around A$200-300 million and it was tentatively sited just west of the restored waterfront. As with Bilbao, the Guggenheim Foundation would not contribute to the cost of the building, with funding coming from local, state and federal governments as well as the private sector.

In 1999 the City of Geelong Council commissioned a pre-feasibility study while debate raged locally about the value of such a development. In the pages of the Geelong Advertiser locals expressed concern at the costs of the proposal and how it would necessarily drain resources from other more worthy – and usually non-artistic – claims. But others strongly supported the bid, with the mayor observing in October 2000:

What we have done is to create the biggest talking point in the Australian art world at the moment… That positive perception is crucial in today’s business climate. And if we succeed, we will have gained what amounts to a cultural icon, a brand name that will push Geelong onto the world scene (GBN 2000).
Such a view was echoed by Roger Grant, Head of Geelong Otway Tourism who was also a member of the "loose informal Geelong group driving the Guggenheim bid". He expected that such a building – to rival the Sydney Opera House – would have an "astonishing" impact on tourism in the region (GBN 2000).

The $600,000 appraisal of the project delivered in 2002 found that a major cultural landmark in Geelong would generate up to A$175 million in its first year and attract 5.3 million visitors. Noting that the Geelong waterfront and its carousel had already boosted visitor numbers, the report was also delivered to the Victorian Government which Geelong had asked to help fund a more detailed A$1.5 million feasibility study (Carr 2002). If the consultant’s study was upbeat, local and state level evaluation was becoming more critical – concerned at the costs as well as whether the promised benefits would be delivered. At the same time, developments at the Guggenheim Foundation in New York – which was severely overstretched financially – produced a notable cooling in the possibility of an Australian Guggenheim. Local doubts on the Geelong bid therefore emerged at the same time as the Guggenheim announced that it would not go ahead with its new $US1.7 billion branch in Manhattan, closed its Las Vegas branch and cut its staff and operating budget (The Australian, 2 January 200).

In Geelong, this bold agenda for an international art icon was being developed in a city which at the time had no coherent or published arts or cultural tourism strategy, no arts officer and had yet to compile its first arts directory (this was launched in 2002)! At the same time as politicians as well business people were extolling its virtues, real questions were being asked about the feasibility of the bid and of the capacity of Geelong to mount it. The question of who was to fund the initial construction, let alone its ongoing maintenance, was never resolved, nor were the competing claims for social and other services in Geelong, adequately addressed. But here was a city engaged with a global discourse which valued the creative arts as iconography, as tourist magnet and as a major driver for economic growth. In this, the value of the arts to this region was completely detached from local producers in the region and connected solely to a global brand. It was not sustainable politically or economically.

With the failure of the bid to secure a Guggenheim for the waterfront, the city shifted to a broadly based quest to value the creative arts as a key pillar of a newly developed regional lobby group – G21 - and through the redesign and expansion of its Cultural Precinct. In this it has been spectacularly successful, lobbying for this Lighthouse Project to be funded by state and local government. To date more than $500,000 has been devoted to its master planning and over $7 million committed by the Victorian government to extend and refurbish GPAC and the Court House Youth Theatre. Combined with the Geelong Art Gallery, the Historical Records Centre, Back to Back Theatre and Geelong Library all of these institutions are to be moulded into an integrated precinct (GPC Masterplan Project Update Vol 3 and 4). Located within a broader arts and cultural strategy to "increase appreciation of diversity, arts and culture", such inner city development is both absorbing the lion’s share of resources and providing "a vibrant heart of cultural activity in the G21 region". It also sits alongside other policy commitments to assist local music festivals, regional celebrations of food and wine and support for the Local Indigenous Network (G21 Region Plan 2007 64-5).

Invoking Richard Florida’s Rise of the Creative Class (2002) the G21 Geelong Region Plan encourages “an open, dynamic, personal and professional environment which in turn attracts more creative people, businesses and capital” (G21 Region Plan 2007, p. 64). The plan does not concentrate on the cultural industries but argues for the expansion of other economic sectors. In this "sustainable growth strategy", the creative arts play a relatively small part. But the artists in this city are now significant numerically, institutionally and objectively through public art, new performance spaces and a lively outreach program from all of the major institutions. Indeed the arts now are deemed by most of the population and city planners to be integral to the region’s
sustained economic as well as social and cultural life. As a result they are broadly sustainable.

**Evaluating the sustainability of Geelong arts**

The value of the arts in this regional community has therefore moved, over the last thirty years, from:

- being highly localised and idiosyncratic, confined to small coteries of “high” art aficionados and local producers (1970s); to
- being integral to the redevelopment and re-imagining of the city's waterfront through major public art works (1980s); thence
- to being the driver of an urban redevelopment strategy modeled on Bilbao which involved massive investment, global players in the art market and the connection of art to urban renewal, marketing and tourism via the Guggenheim bid in the late 1990s; and finally
- to the arts as part of a broader cultural development strategy linked to other investments and a boosting of its central Cultural Precinct. In the new century, this redevelopment sits alongside planning recognition of the Arts and Cultural Heritage as a Pillar Group within G21 and support for broad ranging arts activity – via policies, spaces, grants and officers within the City Of Greater Geelong Plan – to offer the city as a Creative City into the competitive world theorised by Richard Florida.

In assessing just how sustainable such a strategy has been in Geelong, it is appropriate to consider both the objectives of the policy-makers and the Geelong arts community. For those overseeing this regional city in the 1970s, the biggest challenge was economic development; in particular the collapse in manufacturing employment and a successful transition to a service economy via the growth of the CBD and related retailing. Subsequent planning agendas have continued the emphasis on service sector development but shifted the focus to tourism and, briefly, to the cultural industries via the Guggenheim. Subsequent emphasis has been on the attraction of the “creative class” through enhanced infrastructure and high end manufacturing. If one of the key indicators of economic sustainability is the proportion and numbers employed in the services and in arts, tourism and related retail, there has indeed been a major change in the economic foundation of the city. But while there had been solid employment growth in retailing and recreational services, they have not become large sectors within the city. Rather most employment growth has been within property and personal services. The place of the creative arts in the service economy has been relatively modest, increasing from a low base to ultimately employ around 2.1% of the workforce in 2006. Table 1 summarises changes in key economic sectors for the city.
If there has been a sectoral shift towards services and a small expansion in those employed in Cultural and Recreational Services, then one of the major political objectives of the cultural agenda has been realised, with some hope of attaining economic sustainability.

If this is one quantitative assessment of the arts in this region, one emerging from the household census, the city council has also been active in tabulating the number and range of artists in the region. Thus in December 2002 the city produced its first Arts Directory which itemised 148 practicing artists, illustrators, photographers, musicians, designers, performers, dancers and writers. In addition, the Directory noted over 100 organisations, networks, venues and companies connected to the arts industry (Geelong Arts Directory 2002). Significantly, as the Directory relied on self-selection in its compilation, there were no architects, librarians, museum workers or journalists included. Artists in Geelong, therefore, retain a narrow definition of their field, with this Directory not including those other activities which comprise, at government level and in other countries, the cultural or creative industries.

There has, therefore been an increase in the numbers involved in the creative arts in this city, both as recorded officially and as self-defined. The economic viability of this occupation was gauged through a series of focus groups conducted over 2002 with writers, visual artists, photographers and librarians. Those who were variously attached to larger organisations – such as art schools, newspapers or municipal libraries – all reported earning a living from their art. But those who were self-employed or who pursued their art alongside other paid work, all reported that their art was not a viable source of income. Consistent with findings across the nation (such as Throsby and Thompson 1994), being a full-time artist was not a way to earn a living, though people like Jan Mitchell were exceptions, which pointed to at least some economic sustainability for the solo producer in this city.

### Table 1 Economic structure of the City of Greater Geelong, 1991-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Economic Sector — Census Year</th>
<th>1991</th>
<th>2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extractive — mining, agriculture, forestry and fishing</td>
<td>632</td>
<td>1.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>12,605</td>
<td>22.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Construction</td>
<td>3,507</td>
<td>6.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Retail and Wholesale trade</td>
<td>11,580</td>
<td>20.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>2,240</td>
<td>3.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications</td>
<td>887</td>
<td>1.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Finance and Insurance</td>
<td>4,730</td>
<td>8.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gov’t admin and defence</td>
<td>2,288</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Property and Business Services</td>
<td>2,707</td>
<td>4.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>4,654</td>
<td>8.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Community Services</td>
<td>10,766</td>
<td>18.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural and Recreational Services</td>
<td>688</td>
<td>1.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal services</td>
<td>1,062</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Accommodation, cafes and restaurants</td>
<td>1,973</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals (includes sectors not shown)</td>
<td>57,270</td>
<td>100.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: G21 Region Community Profile 2006; ABS 1991 Census Expanded Community Profile
Another indicator of the success of the arts agenda is registered in tourist numbers. Geelong has certainly increased the number of tourists who have visited the city – numbering 229,000 in 1991, visitors grew to 311,000 in 2001 (COGG Indicators 2001/2) – though the number attracted to particular cultural icons or to the waterfront is not recorded. Nor is this growth rate of around 8% higher than the national average. However, it is related to a significant expansion in the numbers and proportions employed in Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants – from 1,773 or 3.4% in 1991 to 3,824 or 4.5% of the city’s workforce in 2006 (see Table 1). As great store has been put on attracting tourists to ensure the economic sustainability of this city, its impact in terms of numbers and employment is modest but important.

Other indicators of economic viability for the arts include the development of venues, recognition of the arts, and marketing. With the former there has indeed been significant additions to the city, especially in the performing arts, but also in the number of art schools and music venues. The growing recognition of the contribution the arts make to the city was apparent in the constitution of the Arts and Cultural Heritage Pillar Group within G21 and its conducting of a number of well attended planning fora over 2003 (Authors Field Notes 1998-2007). It was from these gatherings and related ones conducted by the City Council as it prepared its own cultural strategy, that the local arts community found its voice. This is a crucial element in the political sustainability of the subsequent cultural policy and its arts agenda.

Alongside the G21 regional grouping and its Arts and Cultural Heritage Pillar Group, the City of Greater Geelong commissioned Robert Edwards – an earlier director of the National Wool Museum – to develop an arts policy. In 2003 he recommended an accreditation system to enable projects and organisations to be evaluated for funding, support for community based arts organisations and encouraged participation in the arts, especially amongst young people. Intriguingly this report on the state of the region’s arts was delivered at the same time as the G21 Arts and Cultural Heritage Pillar Group document was released. So in a city that had long lacked official policy and debate on cultural matters, there were now two policy documents vying for public attention and official endorsement.

Alongside the Edwards document then was another, which had the input from the G21 Pillar Group and modelled on the Victorian state level policy, called Creativity + (2003). The focus of this document, which had grown out of a very broad consultation process with the regional arts community, was on cultural infrastructure, nurturing creativity via showing local artists on the Council webpage, culture for all through a better strategy for allocating community arts grants and designating major events, the cultural economy (by promoting cultural enterprises and facilitating the development of creative clusters and promoting Geelong as a film and multimedia friendly region) and cultural leadership (through a Council department and work with G21) (Creativity+ 2003: p. 7). The first comprehensive arts and cultural strategy for the region then, did not pursue the idea of a cultural icon or return to the notion of boosting the waterfront, but rather focussed on existing institutions, individuals and organisations to facilitate their development. In short this arts policy, emerging from consultation with the arts community of the region, was about growing extant cultural capital in a way that was socially and culturally sustainable.

At the 2003 launch of Creativity+ and the second edition of the Arts Directory, Di Shaw, COGG Manager for Arts and Culture, said that “for the first time, Council was clearly committed to playing a leading and active role in the development and growth of the regional arts industry into the future” (Author’s field notes 1998-2007). She indicated that as a result of consultations, local artists had a need for assistance with legal issues, marketing and better networking. Most of these recommendations have now come to pass, supporting the growth of local artistic activity and its social and cultural sustainability.
If the economic sustainability of the arts in this region is limited but modestly successful, its cultural, political and social sustainability has been strongly enhanced over the last ten years. Through its quest for larger audiences and heightened participation, GPAC has developed a highly successful schools program as well as regularly sold out subscription seasons (Beck 2002). The Court House Youth Theatre (established in 1996), Back to Back Theatre and The Potato Shed have significantly broadened the numbers and social groupings who have engaged in performance art in the region, capturing youth, rural and regional audiences. The regional art gallery, as well as a number of smaller art galleries, has also maintained strong attendances over these years. Both the Geelong Gallery and the National Wool Museum regularly mount special exhibitions in an effort to broaden their appeal and audiences with, for example, the Gallery celebrating the 150th anniversary of the local AFL club with a special exhibition in August 2009.

If there are quantifiable improvements in the economic base and attendances associated with the arts in this region, there are also observable changes in its image and appreciation of its built and cultural heritage, thus further enhancing its cultural sustainability. Increased levels of consultation with the arts community has also enhanced the policy context in which they are operating and grown the formal networks. Thus the G21 Arts and Cultural Heritage Pillar group as well as consultations for the City's cultural plan developed over 2003 involved large gatherings or local artists, performers and others interested in heritage in the region. From such gatherings, not only did new policies emerge but so too did decisions occur to appoint cultural officers, regularly update the Arts Directory and put in place web-based mechanisms to grow networking amongst local artists. As a result there are more local gatherings and networks of artists – such as the Geelong Writers Group, the Art House Collective and the Geelong Arts Alliance. Operating in very different institutionalised settings compared to the large externally-orientated and funded arts institutions, these are created by and for those working in Geelong. Their primary purpose is one of support – social, economic and political – for those who are writing, painting, sculpting, performing or otherwise making art in the region. Such networks heighten the cultural sustainability of their participants.
Conclusion

It is therefore possible to assess the value of the arts and cultural activities within one regional centre. The place of the arts have altered significantly in this city over the last few years from being peripheral to being re-valued as part of an economic and urban redevelopment strategy by the city. Within a changing policy context of viewing the arts as increasingly about economic value, planners in Geelong firstly considered public art and urban design as critical elements in re-imagining the city and its physical re-orientation towards its bay front. With a range of economic development policies aiming to boost the service sector, the objective then shifted toward attracting an iconic Guggenheim gallery to the Geelong waterfront. Perhaps never an economically viable option and certainly one lacking cultural and social support across the region, this proposal floundered on both its huge costs but also on the changing fortunes of the Guggenheim Foundation in New York. From this point though, the arts community of this city had found political champions and finally were accorded serious policy attention – by the City Council, by a newly created regional lobby group (G21) and the regional tourist authority. In the new century then, despite the failure of the Guggenheim bid, the arts were highly visible in the city and G21 regional plans, with the designation of the central Cultural Precinct as a Lighthouse Project widely endorsed by that community and successful in its funding and realisation.

The arts and cultural agenda in this regional city has therefore changed significantly over time but has, in the course of the last ten years, become not only economically sustainable but also politically more engaged and more inclusive of diversity and heritage. In short, for this community, the arts have become more economically, socially, culturally and politically sustainable and in the process more valuable.

To summarise, the sustainability measures for the arts in Geelong are as follows:

Table 2 Sustainability principles, indicators and measures for Geelong 1970-2006

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sustainability dimension</th>
<th>Local Indicators</th>
<th>Geelong measures 1970-90</th>
<th>Geelong measures 2006</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Economic sustainability</td>
<td>Proportion employed in the Service Sector</td>
<td>1981 69%</td>
<td>2001 81.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Numbers employed in the arts</td>
<td>1991 688</td>
<td>2006 1780</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tourist numbers</td>
<td>1991 229 000</td>
<td>2001 3111 000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social sustainability</td>
<td>Accessibility of cultural venues</td>
<td>Growth in the number of venues and their outreach programs. Active involvement of practitioners in planning, web presence, marketing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Recognition of artists</td>
<td>Pako Festa supported Cultural diversity affirmed in planning documents National Wool Museum, Court House and Customs House restored</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural sustainability</td>
<td>Recognition of cultural diversity Valuing of heritage buildings</td>
<td>Limited recognition Mass destruction of heritage buildings</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Policy development with limited if any consultation eg Steampacket Place Authority, Guggenheim Bid Ltd.</td>
<td>Extensive consultations for G21 Strategic Plan and COGG Cultural Policy. Positive measures implemented</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political sustainability</td>
<td>Political participation by artists and meaningful impact on policy development and resource allocation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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**NOTE**

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