<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Title</strong></th>
<th>Culture and Creativity: The case study from the West of Ireland</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author(s)</strong></td>
<td>Collins, Patrick; Fahy, Frances</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publication Date</strong></td>
<td>2010-01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Publisher</strong></td>
<td>CISC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Item record</strong></td>
<td><a href="http://hdl.handle.net/10379/2483">http://hdl.handle.net/10379/2483</a></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Centre for Innovation and Structural Change
Working Paper Series

Culture and Creativity:
The case study from the West of Ireland

CISC Working Paper No. 31
January 2010

Dr. Patrick Collins
Centre for Innovation and Structural Change
J.E. Cairnes School of Business and Economics
National University of Ireland, Galway
p.collins@nuigalway.ie

Dr. Frances Fahy
Department of Geography
School of Geography and Archaeology
National University of Ireland, Galway
frances.fahy@nuigalway.ie
The Centre for Innovation and Structural Change (CISC) is a national inter-disciplinary research institute, based at National University of Ireland, Galway, focused on building an internationally-recognised programme of research and education on innovation processes and policies that are fundamental to the development of a knowledge-based economy. CISC is one of the four major research institutes within NUI, Galway and it is aligned to the Applied Social Science and Public Policy thematic research priority. Established in 2002, CISC was initially awarded competitive funding under the third Irish Government’s Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLI 3). Since then CISC has been awarded significant additional competitive funding both nationally and internationally and has developed a distinguished record in scholarship and research innovation and structural change.

The core focus of CISC is providing multidisciplinary insights into innovative change. CISC is an umbrella research institute, offering a common ground where researchers from different disciplines and backgrounds can meet and debate, where they can consider processes and issues from different perspectives. Innovation happens at cross-over points whereby CISC provides a forum for the formal and informal interactions necessary to enable an interdisciplinary community of researchers to flourish. The exchange of ideas and the challenging of knowledge generate an intellectual energy and a spirit of enquiry. This collaborative environment fosters new approaches and the synergy generated aligns best practice in innovation research with current policy, business and management practice thinking. These new approaches and insights are disseminated and shared with a wide variety of national and international stakeholders.

Research at CISC can be divided into five key research areas, with some research initiatives spanning more than one area. The core research areas are:

- **Innovation Systems**
- **Industry Clustering**
- **Internationally traded services**
- **Inter-organisational systems**
- **High Performance Work Systems**

For further information on CISC please see our website: [www.nuigalway.ie/cisc](http://www.nuigalway.ie/cisc)

**Contact:**

Angela Sice  
Development Office  
Tel: +353 91 492817  
Email: angela.sice@nuigalway.ie

Dr. James Cunningham  
Director  
Tel: +353 91 493472  
Email: james.cunningham@nuigalway.ie
Culture and Creativity: A case study from the West of Ireland

Abstract

Recent years have shown a growing appreciation for the place of culture in sustaining economic and social prosperity. This paper explores this recognition through a case study of Galway City on the west coast of Ireland. It sets out to answer two simple and related questions: How important has culture been to the city’s economic and social development? And how integral is culture in maintaining the city’s economic and social sustainability? In order to provide answers we look at the city’s development in relation to an emerging body of literature concerning creative cities. The city itself is a dynamic second tier city that functions as the main economic hub serving the central west of the country. We focus on production of culture and gauge its assimilation into the economic life of the city by looking at various facets of the city’s economic structure including one of its most innovative sectors: the technology industry.

The aim of this paper is to analyze cultural policy in Ireland within the domains of Technology; Institutions; and Spatial Culture. The case study of Galway provides interesting insights for policy and practice as well as cultural/creative activity arising out of place specific circumstances. Throughout the paper the reaction of some of the city’s major arts groups and sponsors to the changing role of culture is explored and the paper concludes by drawing attention to the tensions surrounding the perceptions of ownership of culture and questions to what impact this will have regarding the city’s sustainability into the future.

Keywords: Creative Cities; Economic Development; Cultural Policy; Galway City; Ireland.
Introduction

The proliferation of academic research in the area of creative cities and the rate at which it has reached policy making tables is worthy of note. Indeed a number of recent issues of this journal have concerned themselves with this topic (see for example Vanolo, 2008; Long 2009). For many the literature of the creative cities rhetoric has been consumed as the panacea of urban woes (see Miles and Paddison, 2005). Recent research has elucidated a number of fundamental ways in which the presence of creative activity can contribute to the competitiveness of urban economies (Florida, 2002; Gertler 2004). Successful cities are no longer judged solely by their profitability or rate of economic growth, rather sustainability, quality of life, economic development and distributional issues rank as key factors for assessing success (Lever, 1999). The role of culture in creating lively cities and communities where people want to live, work, visit and its subsequent role in supporting social and economic health and development are amongst the central tenants of creative cities’ literature (see Florida, 2002; 2005).

Developments around the globe are re-defining media, arts and other related sectors as ‘creative industries’ which are being recognized for their potential impact on local and national economies. Cities are making more use of cultural events to attract investors as well as visitors. Through the use of a case study we contend that artistic and cultural activities are not simple by-products of a developed economy but essential elements of economic success and sustainability. Such activities represent alternate forms of expression of human creativity that encourage lateral thinking and thus complement scientific and technological innovation (Udo-Ernst, 2005). Additionally, artistic and cultural activities lie at the core of a number of growing industrial sectors (including tourism, publishing and entertainment), and contribute directly to employment growth. Indeed, creative activities are increasingly being viewed as alternative development paths for some second-tier cities (see for example; Markusen and King, 2003). Using Galway City, in the west of Ireland as our case study explore how the city’s economy and society have been impacted by culture/cultural policies in the past, and what role they have in the city’s economic and social sustainability.

In order to do this, we look firstly at the historical economic and social development of the city. From this it quickly becomes clear that the city and region’s cultural history is innately bound with its economic and social development over the past number of years. This
exploration also makes it clear that the city’s past economic and social success is bound with and dependant on the exploitation of the unique culture fostered in the city. In an attempt to explore this further we gauge the city’s cultural exposition and sustainability according to three pillars which have been identified by others (see Craik et al. 2000) as the critical domains of cultural policy: Technology; Institutions; and Spatial Culture.

The importance placed on technology and policies related to it are recognized worldwide. Indeed, technology is found to be at the core of creative cities rhetoric because it is the sector most easily related to constant change and high value returns to innovation (see Florida, 2002 and Peck, 2005). The role of arts, culture and their institutions forms our second pillar of analysis. Recognizing that creative activities have the potential to play a vital role in creating a unique image for a city there exists a huge value in producing distinctive and unique cultural products (Gertler, 2004). Stimulating urban development or the recycling of urban space is yet another way in which creative activities are seen to impact urban economies. Here, we investigate the role that the formation of local artistic institutions has played on the city’s creative development. Our final pillar of analysis is spatial culture and public performance. As explored in detail by Franklin (2004) public performance, and art festivals in particular, are an integral component of the creative city; (echoing Florida’s thesis that part of the environmental and cultural diversity the creative class thrive on includes institutions like arts festivals). Such festivals often provide an interesting lens to explore how culture is contested (Waterman 1998) and the relationship between art and governance. Notions of ‘ownership of culture’ and tensions between cultural and commercial pursuits are explored in line with what Waterman sees as the transformation of cultural to commercial interests.

**Methods**

From an economic perspective assessing culture and creativity in the city has been regarded as a move towards a positive revaluation of urban assets. However, within the creative cities discourse the methods used by the majority of studies to determine a city’s cultural assets and potential have been criticized for their attempts to quantitatively identify and value this potential. Landry and Woods note that the majority of evaluations on the economic impact of culture on a city to date are ‘largely quantitatively driven focusing on tourism figures and levels of participation’ (2003, 53). In the context of Ireland, culture and creativity are often too narrowly defined as ‘the Arts’ and, as is apparent from the case study of Galway City
presented below, the majority of evaluations of culture in the city have simply been analyses of tourist figures or numbers attending an event. A notable exception to this trend is Quinn’s (2005; 2006) qualitative research conducted on the Galway Arts Festival.

Methodologically this research is a mix of both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The data contained within this paper was in part derived from an analysis of policy documents, programmes, and press releases from organizations in Galway; notably Galway City Council, Galway City Development Board and Galway Arts Festival Office. In addition, eight in-depth semi-structured interviews were conducted with individuals involved in key industries, arts’ organizations, and city councils. The interviews were conducted with commercial institutions between the period July 2002 until September 2004. More recently (June 2006 until September 2006) interviews with cultural actors in Galway-based institutions of arts and commerce were carried out. Qualitative interviews are often cited as a means of gaining greater insight into the respondents’ feelings, experiences and beliefs. Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that there are a number of instances when qualitative methods are crucial, such as enabling local grounding and substantial depth. These are key requirements when organizational and human processes are observed. Through these interviews, and an in-depth review of secondary material, we have attempted to build a robust picture of the city’s cultural make-up.

Context: The Case of Galway City

Ireland’s economic transformation over the period known as the ‘Celtic Tiger’ (circa 1993 – 2007) years had been widely noted by commentators on the Irish scene as well as the world’s international financial institutions. On a national scale, however, the dominance of Dublin was hard to refute (see O’Leary 2001; Collins 2007). Yet as one of Ireland’s second-tier cities Galway managed to reap the rewards of the national economic turnaround. We argue that the structural transformation of the city’s economy has enabled it to position itself well in terms of a culture-led development agenda. Its focus on culture from the perspective of consumption has, in the line of Florida (2002), seen it create a momentum in attracting a pool of creative people and, with it, the establishment of localized conventions and supporting institutions, facets deemed important by theorists like Pratt (1997) and Scott (2001).
In this section our broad theoretical aim is in line with some of the more recent work (Scott, 2001; Pratt, 2004) looking at localities functioning as economic-cultural entities and the role local culture plays. By making use of a qualitative methodology, we attempt to identify local milieu and the competitive advantages which exist in Galway, and, driven by a culture-led policy, future advantages which have yet to be exploited.

Galway’s economic success and failure owe much to its geographic location. Situated in the middle of Ireland’s west coast, Galway is the largest city of one of Europe’s most peripheral regions. Galway has acted as a nodal centre for the surrounding region since its establishment on the North East corner of Galway Bay over 500 years ago. To the west of the city, on the north shore of Galway Bay, lie the rugged desolate hills of Connemara with its ‘exceptional scenery’ and ‘rural, sleepy towns’, it has become one of the most popular destinations for tourists visiting Ireland (Failte Ireland 2006). In many ways its success as a tourist destination owes much to its economic and social failings in the past. Many of the tourists that sustain the regions most viable industry are descendants of those that were forced to leave due to the economic and social adversity in the past. As a ‘gateway’ to the west, Galway City has been quick to exploit the social and cultural attractions in terms of language and traditions of what is termed ‘real Ireland’ (www.visitthewest.ie), a significant factor in its claim to ‘cultural city status’.

The demographic profile of the city over the last two decades shows it to be a fast-growing, youthful city. Reaching a population of over 71,000 in 2007, it overtook Limerick city as Ireland’s third largest urban centre, behind Dublin and Cork. From 2002 to 2005 the city registered an increase of 15%, well above the national average of 9% (CSO 2008). The dynamic growth rate is reflected in the age profile of the city and county with nearly half the population under 24. This figure is skewed due to the presence of two higher education institutes in the city, the National University of Ireland, Galway, and the Galway Mayo Institute of Technology, from which 7,000 students graduate per annum (Galway Chamber of Commerce, 2005).

Galway’s comparative wealth vis-à-vis the rest of the western region is seen in a lower percentage of unemployed and a shifting of those at work towards more highly valued service activities. Works by theorists including Giblin (2008) have identified the emergence of clusters of international significance in both the technology and biomedical sectors. National
economic transformation alongside international organizational changes have seen Ireland, and Galway move up the value chain to what are deemed higher productivity activities (see Collins and Grimes, 2008).

The most significant elements of Galway’s economy during the boom years had been the construction and business services sectors. This reflected the Irish economy as a whole with both sectors seen as key drivers of the Celtic Tiger success (see Kirby 2002). Other growth sectors in Galway City were retail, as well as hotels and restaurants, sectors. The latter is reflected in the tourist numbers arriving in Galway over the last number of years. For the West region as a whole these passed the three quarters of a million mark in 2002 with Galway accounting for 12.2% of tourists to Ireland and 13.4% of the country’s revenue from tourism in 2004 (Failte Ireland 2006).

In highlighting the cultural aspects of a city, the last point is important. Cultural events and spaces attract tourists and, as in the case of cities across Europe more easily identified as cultural cities, a strong tourist base is a good indicator of cultural endowment (see Bianchini 1993). ‘Cultural Tourism’ as defined by the Irish Tourist Board is the largest form of tourism in the West. With nearly 6% of the workforce employed in the ‘tourist industry’ and expenditure on tourism at 7% of GVA for the region, a return of €1.9 billion per annum demonstrates the productivity of the sector.

The scale of governance here is also worth noting. The Irish Tourist Board works according to a national agenda though recent regional restructuring has occurred with the creation of regional bodies like Ireland West Tourism. Internationally, this is congruent to the devolution of policy concern and interest in the promotion of culture and heritage from the national to the regional level (Cunningham, 2002). The work of both bodies in promoting the city of Galway as a ‘vibrant and lively place’ with a ‘buzzing arts scene’ has benefited the city not solely in terms of tourism revenue but in terms of attracting workers to the city. One representative from a foreign investment services company that recently located in Galway explained it as the ‘cherry factor’:

‘The city has a quality of life second to none…when our CEO asked how we would be able to maintain a workforce of 500 from such a small city we persuaded him that we would have no problem attracting people here from the whole western seaboard
with a population of over 500,000. When he came here to open the plant, he agreed.’

(Company Representative US-owned MNC - Interview September 2006).

Examples such as this serve to lend credence to Florida’s notion of regional development being dependent on the quality of place (2004). Florida’s indicators are referred to as the three T’s (Technology, Talent and Tolerance) and the first two are seen as reciprocal in the case of Galway. The technology sector is differentiated from national trends. Unlike the rest of Ireland, the multinationals present in Galway are heavily involved in research and development; with a number of subsidiaries located there winning the global and regional research remits of their respective corporations (Collins and Grimes, 2008). A dynamic and creative sector attracts talent from beyond the city which itself attracts more companies to invest in the city.

The above analysis of the socio-economic make up of Galway City raises some interesting questions regarding cultural policy. Galway City promotes itself as the ‘cultural centre’ of the west and while qualitative insights into the nature of smaller urban agglomerations and their defining as cultural spaces is generally helpful, they are difficult to define quantitatively. The economy of the city is set apart from the region it serves. With a youthful population and a shifting of allegiances towards a more productive and sustainable economic base, the city shows a dynamic trajectory. In a time of economic malaise, it is more important now to focus on these areas of competitive advantage.

Related to this, is the policy dualism of the cultural agenda. The relationship of cultural production to commodity production and wealth creation by commercial means makes for a fuzzy overlap between cultural and economic policies. The significance of cultural policy to the development of the cultural industries or the creative industries has been widely noted, as has the need for cultural policy to engage more effectively with the wellsprings of commercial popular culture in order to be effective (Flew, 2004). In elaborating on the case of Galway we note the tension between cultural and commercial pursuits. Commercial validation of cultural pursuits can be seen in some cases as a paradox. In the case of Galway, the bringing together of commercial and cultural sectors has led to contested ownership. For both to succeed individually and in tandem, a coherent policy has to be put into place, which will appeal to the needs of both.
A Cultural Galway?

For the purposes of this paper we have adopted Craik et al.’s (2002:159), definition of cultural policies as ‘the range of cultural practices, products and forms of circulation and consumption that are organized and subject to domains of policy’. For Craik et al. (2002) there are a number of key domains of cultural policy which we have adapted into three ‘cultural pillars of investigation’ and outlined in Figure 1. In attempting to uncover the potential label of ‘cultural’ in the case of Galway city this section gauges the social and economic ramifications of assimilating these pillars into the life of the city. Two things become clear in this exposition: firstly, the cultural label can be applied to Galway; secondly, it can be seen as integral to the socio-economic development of the city. That said, the sustainability of such is far from guaranteed, an issue that will be explored in the concluding section.

Insert Figure 1 around here

Technology, Communications and Media

Creative activities lie at the core of a number growing industrial sectors contributing directly to employment growth as well as representing a sizeable portion of the Irish national product and Galway more specifically. The opportunities presented by technology and emergent digital media are of particular relevance to both city and country; whether cogent, or indeed, coherent, policies in Ireland have reflected these developments.

Emerging from his seminal work (Porter 1998) the notion of the Porterian cluster has reached from theory into policy action in a relatively short time span. As already mentioned Galway is recognized for hosting international clusters in medical devices and software (Giblin, 2008). Another cluster of relevance is that brought about through the establishment of Ireland’s fourth television channel, TG4 on the outskirts of Galway. The channel broadcasts wholly through the medium of Irish (Gaeilge, the national language). Since its establishment in 1997 the station has acted as an anchor to a burgeoning digital media cluster in the Inverin region. This has seen the establishment of 40 companies in the audio visual sector employing 220 full time and 180 part time workers (see appendix A.1). Including the 75 employees working at the station, the cluster has had a significant impact on the local economy (the Gaeltacht), contributing up €7 million in 2005 (TG4, 2006).
The TG4 cluster is an interesting example of shifting scales in the cultural arena with a more anthropocentric notion of culture at play. The station is a national broadcaster with a specific remit of delivering ‘cultural and heritage programmes pertinent to Irish national identity’ (ibid). The formation of this station can be interpreted as a more traditional cultural policy associated with the principles of citizenship, participation and nationalismii (see Miller and Yudice, 2002). The fact that the station was located outside of Dublin is interesting with regard to the Irish tendency towards centralization (see Collins, 2007) and the choice of Galway is more interesting still, lending credence to the region’s ability to deliver on a national agenda.

Flew (2004) distinguishes between two approaches to cultural policy. The first is linked to the more anthropological use of the term and can be seen as geared towards establishing a national ‘common culture’. The second approach which has come to prominence more recently is what Flew terms the ‘software approach’. Its aim is to create the cultural infrastructure to promote a creative economy at all scales from the local to the national. We can see both approaches evident in the setting up of TG4 in the mid 1990s. With a remit of promoting the national language and tradition, there is an obvious connection to citizenship and participation on the one hand, and sovereignty and nationalism on the other. This reflects Miller and Yúdice’s understanding of cultural policy as ‘the institutional supports that channel both aesthetic creativity and collective ways of life – a bridge between the two registers’ (2002: 1).

Equally as interesting are the less traditional offshoots of this policy. More recent contributions to literature on creative industries have placed creativity at the core of the ‘new economy’, where wealth creation is increasingly driven by ideas, intangibles and the creative application of ICTs, presenting creativity as an ‘axial principle’ of the new economy, as labor, organization and information have been in previous epochs (Florida 2002; Flew 2002; Mitchell et. al. 2003).

**Institutions, Art and Culture**

Part of what Granger (2009) terms the ‘Upperground’ of the arts scene, institutions facilitate the arts at the local level and facilitate its consumption. For Galway, one of the main institutional actors is the City Development Board (CBD). Though ‘Creatives’ are somewhat
under-represented on the board, it has been quick to recognize the importance of culture to the city (Galway CBD, 2002). In so doing it has also pointed out the city’s cultural shortcomings, citing deficiencies in planning and funding and has been vocal in proposing new ventures. Without its own funding stream the board lacks the necessary bite to address shortcomings.

Another institution that is closely related to the CDB (sharing board members) is the City Council’s Arts Office. It is directly involved in Galway’s cultural fabric and, as part of the local authority, can address the problems of Galway’s social cultural infrastructure. Its primary goal is to ensure access to, and participation in, the arts, through development of models and approaches to working with individuals, artists and local communities, state and local agencies. Secondly, it developed an integrated and partnership approach to working with other sections of the local authority, (individuals, artists, organizations and local communities) to implement a comprehensive and cohesive approach to sustainable arts’ development in the community.

Another significant node in Galway’s cultural network is the Galway Arts Centre. Established in 1982, the centre is a benefactor of significant grants from the Department of Arts. It is responsible for the city’s international literature festival, ‘Cuirt’, which attracts writers and visitors from many different countries and backgrounds. Organizers estimated that, in 2006, over 6,000 visitors came to Galway for the festival from the US and the Middle East as well as mainland Europe and the UK. The box-office sales for the 2006 represented a 60% increase in ticket sales on the previous year (Galway Arts Festival, 2006).

Spatial Culture and Public Performance

For many in the local community Spatial Culture and Public Performance is what has come to epitomize Galway’s creative development. Public performance through street festivals has not only become the city’s most inclusive art/cultural forum, but has formed an effective branding of how the city is seen (consumed) from the outside.

“The parade is probably the signature events in the arts in Galway. It is most likely what people think when they think of Galway [arts scene]……. We have Druid [Irish Theatre Company] as well but things like that aren’t consumed the way the parade is” (Interview with member of the Galway Arts Centre 2006).
The spatial culture associated with performance has come to re-define the lived urban experience in Galway. In this work we point to examples of how the spatial culture has had a real impact on the city’s urban morphology.

The signatory festival of Galway City is the Galway Arts Festival (GAF). Over its 30-year history the Festival has become a showcase for Irish arts and international arts and has now established itself as one of Ireland’s leading arts’ festivals (for an comprehensive review of the development of the Festival see Quinn, 2005). The colourful Festival collaborates with artists and companies throughout the world to initiate, commission and produce new work. The festival transforms the city (see Figure 2) and over 100,000 people attend it annually with hundreds of writers, artists, performers and musicians creating theatre, spectacle, street art, music, comedy, literature and music for the two-week long event (Galway Arts Festival, 2006). Funding for the festival comes from three main areas, public sector grants, ticket sales, and corporate sponsorship (Galway Arts Festival, 2006).

**Insert Figure 2 around here**

If the GAF acts as a cultural lynch pin for Galway, then Macnas act as a cultural lynch pin for the festival. This community-based arts and theatre company is responsible for the festival’s parade through the streets of Galway City. Formed over 20 years ago, Macnas relies on funding from the Council’s Arts Office and the national employment agency, FAS (Foras Aiseanna Saothair). From humble beginnings: ‘basically it was a case that you couldn’t get a job in Ireland at that time, and we just wanted to have some fun… that’s what the name Macnas actually means’ (Interview with Macnas representative 2006), the company has been awarded many national and international accolades and, in 1992, spun out the well-renowned production company, MacTeo.

Bianchini (1993) defines culture-led strategies employed by urban authorities to drive economic regeneration as production- or consumption-oriented models. Investment in ‘production’ is geared towards the growing ‘cultural’ or ‘creative’ industries. As we can see from the case of Macnas, it was born, not out of a ‘culture-led strategy’, but out of economic malaise. The (relatively) mass cultural production carried out by Macnas was the result of an organic evolution. Yet some comparisons can be made between the Galway cases and other...
better known examples, such as Manchester’s Northern Quarter (see Brown et al. 2000). In the case of the latter, cultural development strategies are hailed as the impetus behind the revitalisation of a de-industrialised urban quarter. Though on a different scale, the case of Galway is somewhat similar. The 1986 Arts Festival invited an open-air theatre company from Spain to perform on the streets of Galway. Their act not only inspired the formation of Macnas but the re-development of a lost quarter of the city.

‘The quays’ area of Galway was totally run down, that suited their show that was based around death, but what it also did was bring people’s attention to a forgotten part of the city… later that year the area was re-zoned for development, today it is seen as the arty segment of the city, and a number one destination for visitors’ (Interview with Macnas representative 2006).

In this we see evidence of what is highlighted in figure 1 as spatial culture. The mission statement of MacTeo reflects this attitude to spatial transformation: ‘Give us the space and we’ll use it in a way that has never been used before’ (available at www.macteo.com/about.html). Macnas’s production of Alice in Wonderland in the early 1990s was based on an unused area less than a mile from the city centre: ‘again something similar happened there, people just needed to see it being used’ (Interview with Macnas representative 2006). The area is now home to a multiplex cinema and a multi-functional production space called the Black Box. This is the home of Macnas and it is also the venue for various types of artistic performances.

How well Macnas and other organizations like the Arts Centre are bound up in the city’s identity is another measure of the importance of culture to the city and the image it seeks to portray. O’Connor (1993) identified a number of common themes that continue to be reproduced for tourist consumption in the West of Ireland. These included the imagery of a picturesque, unspoiled, timeless countryside with a friendly and quaint people, a place where past traditions and ways of life still exist, a pre-modern society. This is a romantic image of a magical place contrasting industrial/urban life, a place where the traditional Irish culture and way of life survives (Kneafsey 1997).

The popular image of the west is being transformed in recognition of what it can offer in terms of cultural consumption for tourists. The images that tourists have of the west are
changing to images of modern art and music. Images of Macnas’ annual parade abound as Galway City markets its cultural attractiveness to visitors. This is, in part, a recognition of what is already in place in Galway and, in part, a reaction to the changing needs of travelers from within and outside Ireland. Ireland’s tourist market is changing. It is moving away from a dependence on the North-American market. This shift is influenced by the impact of budget airlines and the arrival of younger tourists from the rest of Ireland and Europe. The old images of quaint Irish pastures, with peasants huddled around turf fires in thatched cottages, are being replaced by vibrant arts scenes offering a wide variety of options in cultural pursuits.

Sustaining Culture?

Home to 99 cultural facilities including seven theatres, seven annual festivals, 19 Art galleries/exhibition spaces, six museums and writing groups, Galway can be viewed as relatively successful on the basis of its cultural status. However, the increasing professionalization of cultural policy is not without its drawbacks (Miles 2005). Galway’s multitude of arts venues count for little in the absence of decent funding and a willingness to nurture local talents for the future. The issue of local and international involvement in arts festivals is explored in detail by Quinn (2006) whose research on the Galway Arts Festival and the Wexford Opera Festival highlighted how the development of an external festival orientation (i.e. relying on international expertise) can threaten the established relationship between local populations and their festivals. Quinn noted that more than two-thirds of the artists participating in the Galway Arts Festival in the early 1980s originated in the Galway area. However, the festival programme became so international during the 1990s that, by 1996, only 23% of the total number of artists participating were Irish (ibid).

During the course of our research in 2006, the Galway Arts Festival was dealt a blow by the local artistic community who withdrew their support for the festival citing the lack of showcasing of local talent. The organizers of Galway’s alternative arts festival, Project ’06, accused the incumbents pandering to sponsors at the expense of local talent. In this sense, the festival has been a victim of its own success, as it grew in national and international scope the inevitability was that non-local acts hired.

The roots of these and other institutions and cultural actors in Galway go back to the 1980s. Conceived in a period of economic gloom, many of these organizations matured alongside the
city and the intermittent economic boom. In the midst if the current economic downturn, support for these institutions and the city’s cultural infrastructure has been highlighted as all too brittle (McGreevy, 2009). Cultural institutions have been integral in shaping the city’s development overtly and covertly. The ease with which these institutions are ignored in times of economic adversity is testament to short-sightedness of both the commercial and public sectors. The role that creative and cultural industries play in local and national innovation systems needs to be recognized, in times of adversity more than ever.

An underlying theme throughout this study of Galway is the notion of a contested ‘ownership’ of culture. This can be seen as a contest among local and state tourist boards, commercial actors involved in promoting the city generally, and artists involved in the city’s cultural development. Animosity is evident between the latter two as the following quote demonstrates: ‘You pick up the paper and there are jobs advertised by them [large multinational based in Galway] and half of their ad is a picture of our work, so you see our work being used by them to market themselves, yet we see no money for that’ (Interview with member of the Galway Arts Centre 2006). Contesting promotions of the city can involve mixed messages which can lead to a lack of coherency and consistency in the city’s development.

**Concluding Reflections and Future Research**

There is a danger that research can romanticize creative industries. Consequently it is imperative that more detailed empirical investigations be carried out, so that an informed body of knowledge will be available upon which political practices and policies can be formulated. The central tension between creativity/culture and capital accumulation must be accommodated and striving to maintain a balance between these two forces will require a more nuanced and grounded understanding of creative industries and cultural spaces.

The unique urban form of Galway city has been central to its promotion as a centre of cultural activity. The cause and effect of city space in the case of Galway has been an interesting one. We have cited examples of urban renewal inspired by cultural performance. The involvement of community-led cultural organizations in the allocation of new cultural spaces in the city is imperative for future sustainability of a cultural Galway.
Throughout the case study of Galway we have highlighted how the ‘ownership’ of culture has been contested. This contestation manifested itself in several ways: in the example of local businesses withdrawing their financial support of the Galway Arts Festival citing the failure to showcase of local artists, writers etc.; in the example of the establishment of a new alternative arts festival ‘Project 06’; and in relation to the use of Macnas as a marketing tool by commercial actors and the state at national and local level.

The above will serve to inform further work on the exploration of the place of culture and creativity in the development of Galway and other second tier European cities. We do not claim to have done more than scratch the surface of a number of questions have emerged during the course of this enquiry. Yet this work has served to raise questions that warrant further investigation. For example, we question whether the new vocabulary of creative industries reflects real changes in the economy, or whether it is simply new cloak in which to wrap traditional goals? Related to this is the question of how much policies on creative cities differ from traditional urban policies. We note from work carried out on the community based arts organization Macnas and Ireland’s fourth television channel, very different evolutionary trajectories. With the former demonstrative of an organic evolution out of economic deprivation and the latter the result of a concerted cultural/language policy we question the difference between constructed and non-constructed institutional actors and their relative impacts on their locale. This area requires more research with impacts not only for Galway and Ireland, but for the development of second tier cities across Europe.

References


McGreevy, R (2009) Toibin says proposed cuts are cynical Irish Times 11th August


Miles, M and Huberman, M (1994) Qualitative Data Analysis. California: Sage


Scott, A. (2001) Global City regions, trends, theory and policy. OUP


Vanolo A (2008) *The image of the creative city: Some reflections on urban branding in Turin* *Cities* 25 (6), 370-382


Interviews

Collins, P. Tech 1 2002 Interview with MD of indigenous technology company August
Collins, P. Tech 2 2002 Interview with CEO of indigenous technology company August
Collins, P. Tech 3 2005 Interview with founder of indigenous technology company May
Collins, P. Tech 4 2004 Interview with HR manager US owned Multinational Corporation September
Collins, P. Tech 5 2006 Interview with MD of US owned MNC September
Collins, P. and Fahy, F. Cult 1 2006 Interview with Macnas representative June
Collins, P. 2006 Interview with Druid representative September
Collins, P. 2006 Interview with member of the Galway Arts Centre October
Figure 1 Cultural Pillars of Investigation (Adapted from Craik et al, 2002)

**CULTURAL PILLARS**

- **Technology, Communications and Media**: i.e. tech sector, broadcast media, multimedia, etc
- **Institutions, Arts and Culture**: funding of cultural institutions – arts centres, museums, theatres, cultural fabric
- **Spatial Culture and public performance**: heritage, urban regeneration, festivals, identity and citizenship

Figure 2 Scenes from the 2007 festival parade including preparations
A recent report by a regional development agency located in the west of Ireland has attempted to quantify the contribution of the creative industries. In it, it shows how well represented these types of activities are and the potential for future exploitation (Western Development Commission, 2009).

Understood in this way, cultural policy becomes central to an understanding of culture as it has developed historically, as well as flagging practical means of intervening in the cultural field, by recognizing, and working with, the discursive and institutional force-fields through which cultural policy and administration provides a means of acting upon the social (c.f. Bennett 1992, 1998).

Organisers of the arts festival parade often use the display as an opportunity for political satire. In this year’s festival one of the main themes was the green monster seen here called ‘Crypto’. This is an obvious reference to the outbreak of cryptosporidium which infected the city’s water supply in 2007.