

Festival Futures Seminar

2012 and all that: Addressing Policy Agendas

Held on 2nd May 2007 at University of East London Docklands Campus

Festivals can stimulate and support local development or regeneration through providing unique opportunities. This seminar examines the opportunities and challenges for festivals to link into wider policy agendas.

Chair: Iain MacRury

Speaker 1: Margaret Sheehy

What are festivals for?

Margaret shared findings from her research, a historical overview of festivals with a particular interest in participatory theatre forms. She began by posing the question of “do festivals matter?” Whilst Margaret recognises that art shouldn’t necessarily have to have a purpose, festivals should be for something, or about something.

Margaret outlined the ways in which the idea of “festival” has developed in the UK. Festivals are not always about what they are supposed to be about. The term ‘festival’ denotes a: Feast Day – Praise for an individual or a religious or mythical figure, Celebration – Rejoicing or Merry-making and or a Holiday (holy day)

Margaret’s interest in festivals began properly with a community play she was asked to devise by the Clerkenwell Green Community Play Association. The play was to take place in St James Church Clerkenwell and centred on the community around the church. In the Middle Ages the church had been the site of St Mary’s Convent, an important Benedictine order. It was also the site of the first recorded reference to theatre in England when the Abbess complained about the general rowdiness of the population at festival time – (see *The Clerkenwell Tales*, Peter Ackroyd). These Mystery Plays, ran from 12th to 16th century. Although the plays were suppressed at the Reformation they remerged in 20th century

Margaret touched on the themes of suppression and revival introducing images from Hastings’ May festival - the Green Man or Jack, as he’s called in Hastings, symbolising fertility and the coming of summer in May. Traditionally the Jack is ‘released’ and greeted by young girls who dance about him – he’s the Maypole as it once was, a phallic symbol. This event is typical in many ways of others we know. Now, over 3 days of celebrations there are as many as 1000 participants and 20,000 spectators including, on the Monday Bank Holiday, 15,000 bikers.

The first day of May has been celebrated by the Celts, Romans and Saxons. These pagan rituals were first adapted into more acceptable forms by the early Christians, firmly suppressed by the Puritans in the early 17th century and, where they survived in pockets, disneyfied by the Victorians. The revivals emerge in the context of a growing interest in folk traditions, including music and dance, early in the 20th century and more robustly in the 1960s/70s, when their re-emergence was tied to large-scale music

festivals, or driven by the interventions of community artists or activists and then finally supported by those interested in the rejuvenation of local economies.

Reflecting growing British self-confidence and expanding commerce the 19th century saw a series of major exhibitions, principally the Great Exhibition of 1851, which was itself to be revived as the Festival of Britain in 1951. For some, the only significant legacy of that is the Royal Festival Hall. Perhaps less well known but a vital part of the revival of British festival and a link to the participatory theatre forms of the Mystery Plays and Community Plays have been the large-scale productions that came to be known as the Parker Pageants, produced in the early 20th century by the wonderfully named Louis Napoleon Parker and then, later, his son. His grandson, Sir Michael Parker, produces military tattoos and, in 2002, the Queen's Jubilee Procession.

Parker pageants – beginning in 1905 in Sherborne and 1906 Warwick ran up to WWII. These were not plays as such but set pieces offering a not-too-topical account of English history up to the reign of Elizabeth I. They were huge, participatory events with large audiences. The key elements in these examples – theatre and participation – are still there in much of what we see in festivals today.

The 20th century, has been one of the revival of festival. Community Plays which are popularly associated with Ann Jellicoe but in fact date from the 1920s and the workers' theatre movements and union pageants of the post WW1 period (Margaretta D'Arcy and John Arden have also been significant practitioners) are large-scale performances – festivals in all but name - taking anything up to 2 years to produce and involving hundreds of people and professional artists. There were over 300 across England in the last two decades of the century.

The century also saw the establishment of significant artform festivals such as Glyndeborne and Aldeburgh. Obviously the war interrupted things a bit – contrary to ancient tradition there were no Olympics between 1936 and 1948 - and it was really only after the Festival of Britain that there was a significant development of festival, the beginnings of affirming ethnic cultural festivals such as Notting Hill which started as an indoor event at St Pancras Town Hall, big music-of-other sorts festivals such as Glastonbury that picked up on other counter-culture themes and so on. While some of these festivals made money from the beginning they didn't set out to be about that and mostly still aren't.

Margaret highlights that festivals come in and out of fashion with a useful example. The York festival in 1984 received £80,000, a significant amount then. But by 1990 the Arts Council had decided it 'didn't do festivals anymore'. The festival was told to apply art form by art form, officer by officer for funding – this approach could be seen as the antitheses of festival, where all forms merge together.

Margaret argued that inherent in the notion of festival is a tension between chaos and order. In the best festivals there's a balance of sorts but the reality is perhaps that festivals make some people nervous. The events in Tiananmen Square in May-June 1989 were part-political protest; part-festival¹. The image of the student facing down the tanks is famous of course. There's another way to read these images. Richard Schechner, a theatre director and academic who worked closely with anthropologist

Victor Turner, pointed up the distinctive differences between the polar opposites of festival and parade. The parade is represented in straight lines and squares, the festival in circles and whirls.

Margaret argues that festivals are for and contribute to a definition of community and are important to people who live there e.g. Spitalfields, restoration of a church; Baishakhi Mela, celebration of new community. At the heart of festival is celebration – anarchic although controlled. Festivals are about definition through celebration and through celebration, redefinition.

The UK has now agreed to hold the world's largest sporting festival, the Olympic Games, with culture 'on the side' and those who want to engage are finding it difficult to do so. The definitive moment of Olympics will be the opening ceremony which will be very carefully planned, carefully choreographed and well funded. It is likely that all other festivals around it will be less well funded although it is in these festivals we may well see 'the thing itself', that is, authentic cultural celebrations.

To end with, Margaret used a very useful metaphor - the eucalypt tree. These trees survive on poor soil, dry spells and fire and in fact they are so well adapted to fire, a bush fire encourages them to flourish. The tree fuels the fire. The oils in the tree feed the fire and force new buds. Within hours of the fire with the ground still smoking and tree blackening, apparently devastated, you start to see these green shoots coming up, regenerating the trees. The fire's hot winds can also help to distribute the eucalyptus seeds, so new trees develop providing homes for animals and the old trees are hollowed out and provide happy homes for termites. The fire is the festival. The art is in the fire. And the shoots are what festivals are for.

Margaret would like to thank Beatriz Garcia from University of Liverpool and Paul Mayal, the photographer of the image used in presentation.

Q. York 1990 – you didn't mention Glasgow City of Culture and the word you didn't want to use "Regeneration". Garden Festivals were something rolled out by the Thatcher government and used as a lead in city regeneration, in some ways I don't think you can forget the current circumstances with the use of culture to put the bud into an area and bring in the commercial stuff....

MS: I actually worked on the Glasgow City of Culture, and you're right, it was about regeneration. The idea was once you've shut down all the industrial reason for the city working, in that case, in Glasgow, the shipyards, you put something else back in place. I was flown in from London and the people I was using to cart my festival kit around the site for former shipyard workers[...] I think they're a bit like the fire, those garden festivals came and went very quickly and they did gentrify the arena and we'll see that with the Olympic village too [...] The Glasgow's Smiles Better Campaign, the Garden Festival and following that the City of Culture the energy that created changed the way people thought about the event [...] There were over 3,500 people dressed up and when we asked them why we did it they would say "we did it for Glasgow" which I think demonstrates the energised pride from this sequence of event and "we did it because you asked us" which I think is a great answer for why people participate in participatory arts and why it's important to engage people. I don't think they [festivals] on their own made a difference but they were a part of it, a way of making people think differently.

Margaret has been a festival and events manager, a theatre director and producer, and she now runs her own company providing project management and consultancy support for the cultural and creative industries. Her festival credits include writing and directing large-scale community plays in Clerkenwell, Banbury, Bedford and Birmingham, devising and managing small-scale community festivals with-a-purpose such as the 1996 Off Broadway Festival in Crouch End and the 1997 Tate Fete, the first of three Tate Modern events to engage directly with the community. She has also managed a number of large-scale festivals and was Associate Director of the Royal Opening Event of the Glasgow Garden Festival in 1989, Artistic Director of the York Festival in 1992 and Producer of the Tower Hamlets Millennium Festival between 1998 and 2001. She was an early advocate for a broad-based cultural programme for London 2012, convening the 2002 cultural consultations in the Lower Lea Valley that preceded the submission of the bid and, in 2006, devising the West London cultural offer for London 2012.

Speaker 2: Josephine Burns

Jo was heavily involved in the Manchester Commonwealth Games and describes Manchester as one of the best examples of a city that has reinvented itself through using culture. The Commonwealth Games was an opportunity for the city to re-organise its many aspects of its public realm as well cultural and sporting infrastructure e.g. transport, moving people through the romance and spaces of the city for both the residents and visitors.

Although in 1991 Manchester bid for the Olympics there was an understanding that it was unlikely to win. However it bought together a number of energies in the city. It was an engine, a driver to bring together the local authority and the commercial sector. This has given Manchester a confidence and skills in applying for other large scale regeneration and development projects.

Jo highlighted six different types of festivals including:

- High Profile Arts based – e.g. Brighton
- Location based – e.g. Brick Lane
- Art Form based – e.g. East End Film
- Community Interest based – e.g. Carnival del Pueblo
- Calendar cultural/religious based – e.g. Eid
- Commercially based – e.g. Spitz?, Glastonbury
- All based in local capacity and tradition

Jo presented a case study of festivals in Northern Ireland where festivals are often polarised around religious identity. Politicians became concerned about one particular festival because of fears it -was 'running away' with government money. However, it was important to explain the means of achieving objectives such as skills development and promotion of place through the festival. It was difficult to get the politicians and civil servants to understand the 'vehicle' that festivals offer for delivering key aspects of government policy.

In Manchester, the key representation of culture was through the Games opening ceremony and closing ceremony. It was difficult to link with community in Manchester despite the willing cultural sector but in the end the need to deliver a 'slick', televised ceremony required the military precision of a professional events company. The company that was hired did engage with the community in Manchester however, for a number of reasons, they were unable to do the closing ceremony. The Games delivery authority turned to local artists and there was a successful lantern parade and has come to define the cultural success of the Commonwealth Games – although it happened by accident it expressed the right values. This demonstrates the ability of the local arts organisations to engage and deliver.

At the moment there is little measurement of the cultural impact of festivals and not a systematised rigorous method – this needs to be done better. We claim the transformational potential of festivals but the hard evidence is poor- current evidence is in the form of a few 'warm words'. At the top end the politicians are beginning to understand and this can be seen in money being invested for an international arts festival in Manchester.

However, it is important not to lose sight of the reason the festival was established. Festivals can be

Protean – capable, indeed always in a state, of change (government agendas)
Portable – have the ability to adapt (different needs, places, and venues)
Permeable – responsive to new markets and opportunities (international, commercial)

Q. There is research available from students and universities on Commonwealth Games

JB. The irony is that students have spotted the fact that this research hadn't been done and got in there. It wasn't set up as an official part and however we make this cultural Olympiad happen, the research basis is terribly important. There are massive amounts of research on the impact of the volunteering programme, the regeneration of East Manchester but the culture stuff is not there.

Q. [...] the last part of the presentation was about change and I saw friction with people who come to festivals and don't want changes, they want it to be the same all the time and they get really upset because they get pushed by the funders, by the councils to deliver this and that and there's a real friction about that and its turning me inside out [...] I just wanted to hear your thoughts. Is it because there hasn't been any mapping on the impact of culture? [...]

JB. I think that's a really important issue and I'm going to suggest we deal with it as a discussion point for the panel at the end because I think it's a really important discussion to have [...]

Q. One of the things about the bid we put in and it was successful [Olympics] was that there has to be a value in putting the thing together. And I just wonder if Manchester got the value by failing – and by not being lumbered with the Olympics, but bringing all those people together, Manchester was able to get a really strong infrastructure [...]

JB. There's two questions there: did Manchester win by failing? Yes. The ability to pull people together and do the right things, got so much publicity, got so many people excited, in engendered a sense of community of what matters [...] in the 80's it [Manchester] was pretty untransformed, un-regenerated. But it did create the right sort of engines and atmospheres. [...] The thing with London is its sort of fantastically good at everything it does in a sense, I'm always surprised, remember I'm a comparative newcomer and a number of you will probably tell me I'm wrong but London does, as a city, in a way that seems to defy any kind of logic, seem to do things, mostly, incredibly well [...] I sort of feel that all the bits aren't lined up properly, all the bits of infrastructure, particularly the soft bits, yet, we've still got a chance to do it because we know that the energy is there and the experience is there in the people, some of whom are in this room, to make something happen. What mustn't happen is that we buy it in from Las Vegas! That's the real fright [...] Manchester Commonwealth Games was almost entirely delivered by Australians and they have become the great event organisers.

Q. [...] If there is a lot of money going into this [...] the sort of thing we should be lobbying about [...] there's a lot of power there [...]

JB. How do we make ourselves heard in this? We have something to offer here. Can we please be heard, to at least have the debate?

Josephine is co-Director of Burns Owens Partnership and a highly experienced consultant and project manager with particular specialisms in strategic planning, *evaluation and regeneration*. She leads on a wide range of projects including recent work for DCMS, Arts Council England, the Council of Europe, the Scottish Parliament and North West Development Agency.

Speaker 3: Triston Wallace

Triston's presentation was the first public hearing of Skillset's framework to make sure the UK population can take advantage of the opportunities the Olympic Games will bring. Skillset works with the audio visual industry to increase competitiveness and productivity through skills. It primarily does this through research – identifying skills gaps and shortages and turning this into strategy – to inform and influence Government, Public Agencies, training and education and industry itself.

Triston outlined examples from previous Games. The Athens Games in 2004 had 40 billion viewers and inspired the creation of Olympic broadcast organisation. Four thousand hours of material goes to about 20 rights holders who sell it across the world. Alongside the television industry, London will need facilities for the world's press – the world will come to East London. This is important for a number of reasons but in particular, when one looks at Athens it is possible to see the cost. Athens generated US\$1,476,911,634 from the sale of the rights. However, it is difficult to come by figures of how many people work on the Olympic Games in the audio visual sector. But, Athens had more than 1,000 cameras and 450 video tape machines needed 3,700 people but it is unknown how many were local. The Beijing 2008 Games are expecting 5,600 accredited written and photographic press.

Increased tourism in Sydney and New South Wales has been attributed to the excellent facilities provided for the world's media in 2000 – opening the doors to the world, free

desk and free computers. Sydney had a venue for non-accredited press for 10,000. But there is not just the activity directly related to the Games – other industries will want new audio visual material, for example the hospitality sector may want new websites, new photographs etc. This demonstrates that it is not just about 4,000 hours of sports but there are other opportunities to capitalise on the increase in number of people visiting the host city. Skillset are interested in channelling people into the right places and delivering what the industry needs in particular, to engage new people.

Since Atlanta there has been a “host broadcast training programme” in every summer and winter Games. This has mainly been local HE students getting training as pre-Games and then working as runners during. This, Skillset believes, is not enough. It is important to provide opportunities to those who are not in HE. The broadcasting industry is changing at such a high pace with Myspace, Youtube and CurrentTV as examples of opportunities to show new work and talent. Another challenge is diversity – the audio visual industry is almost representative on UK scale, but with 50% of the industry based in London it has a long way to go to be representative of the London population. This is a challenge that needs to be addressed.

Q. With the Olympics comes the Paralympics and I was just interested to know what Skillset are doing to involve people with disabilities. I think there is a great opportunity there to get out there to do something.

TW. For us there are some really interesting hidden statistics, a lot of the way we have captured disability has been through self nominated forms. There are not that many editors or camera people who want to admit dyslexia or colour blindness just in case their employer gets to hear about it. We've got to be a lot clearer about how we describe our workforce in terms of disability. In terms of equality of access, definitely, I think this is a real opportunity. A couple of months ago I was working with someone at the Big Issue – lets challenge, lets really challenge where we think we're going to get our talent from. The Big Issue has a filming department that makes short films, but people don't ever get jobs [...] we can definitely work within that.

Q. You are pioneering these courses but are you helping to facilitate people getting hands on practical experience where there is a huge gap?

TW. Yeah. We only accredit a course or institution when industry has given the criteria of what that is [...] the courses that went through Skillset Academy had to be 60% practice-based [...] we are also working with manufacturers to ensure that colleges and universities have access to the kind of kit that people are using when they come out. For so long universities were using second rate, second hand kit [...]

Q. Alongside emerging technology which is a really important thing, the way people are learning is changing considerably and one of the fears that I have is that FE and HE methods of learning have failed to adapt to the market need [...] what worries me is there are no progression routes [...] Skillset is brilliant of all the sector skills councils but I would still like to see Skillset working with those voluntary community organisations to a much greater degree and actually challenging FE and HE and the relevance of their courses [...]

TW. Yes, that's what I hope. It's not necessarily about creativity but also entrepreneurship, about how we start creating people who are willing to set up their own companies and take on risk. [...]

Q. I work for a visual arts organisation [...] I'm interested in the legacy and having that legacy now. I don't want to wait until the end of the Olympics. The people we're working with, 15, 16 year olds are going to be 20 [...] my fear is that, as you mention, people will fly in, visit the media centre, and fly out and what will happen then?

TW. In terms of legacy of the building, that's not skills [...] There has to be a lot behind the media centre and conversations are happening. In terms of our role in that I'm with you 100% [...] how do you encourage a big company that might take over the running of the media centre to start employing local talent? The flying people in part of it – it takes longer than 5 years for someone to become an international sports journalist so we're not going to be able to fill it with home grown talent. We have to be honest about that. There are many job roles within the whole pantheon of the Olympic Games – some people are doing them now and will do them then [...] if you want to be a carpenter, don't go and work on a building site, come and work in the TV industry, or corporate events because it will be a nice clean environment, and probably better paid. It's important to make sure people understand that.

Q. [...] I predict now, as what happened with the Millennium Dome, is the opportunity for the community to be engaged or involved will be limited. [...] I will be, in my role, advocating, protesting, making noises, don't get me wrong, I see it as a real opportunity, but we will be taking the Games into our own hands by how we define, how we participate, rather than being told. And that will be the challenge for all the people that are here [...]

Triston Wallace looks after the London region and the Facilities sector for Skillset, the Sector Skills Council for the Audio Visual Industries (broadcast, film, video, interactive media and photo imaging). Jointly funded by industry and government, their job is to make sure that the UK audio visual industries have the right people, with the right skills, in the right place, at the right time, so that the audio visual industries remain competitive.

Speaker 4: Louise Venn

The 2012 Games expect 11,000 athletes, 1.2 million visitors, 20,000 journalists, 70,000 volunteers. Newham Council and in particular, the 2012 Unit, are at the front end, working with the rest of the council to secure a local benefit and legacy. Louise presented images of the new Olympic stadium and park to help get a sense of the infrastructure that will be left in East London. She highlighted the importance about thinking about these spaces as a potential environment for festivals post-Games and how physical infrastructure can support creativity after the Games.

There were plans to regenerate East London with or without the Games – but this has sped up – the Games are a catalyst. However, the increase in the pace of regeneration presents challenges and opportunities – it is important to remember that the Olympics are part of a wider regeneration story.

The Games and regeneration in East London are expected to lead to 15,000 jobs in construction and 33,000 permanent jobs.

Louise highlights the positive ways in which the 2012 Games can be a catalyst for culture. The London bid was one of the first to put culture high up the agenda and is

thought to have helped London win the Games. This is reminiscent of the Olympic vision of mind, body and spirit, culture, sport and education. London will be a world stage – this makes us ask what the messages we would like to give are? What story do we want to tell?

However, there are some challenges for culture. Previous Games have had issues of sponsorship; cultural festivals are often dependent on their own sponsorship. There are also potential challenges for grass routes organisations regarding funding which has been redirected from the lottery, for example. Whilst it is important to work within the timeframe of 2012 and make sure the Olympics can be delivered on time, it is also challenging to ensure this doesn't clash with ideas of long-term legacy.

Louise outlines partnerships and bodies at national level (DCMS), London Level (Cultural Consortium, GLA, Thames Gateway Cultural Forum) and Local level (Local Authorities, Thames Gateway Partnership, CIDA, 5 host boroughs). She explains how the Olympics is an exciting opportunity for these different levels to begin talking to one another and a way to raise the profile of East London.

The cultural festivities of the Olympics can be used as an innovative way to engage communities with the regeneration process. The Olympics can be seen as a catalyst for cross cutting agendas such as education and training. Universities and colleges have a critical role and UEL's Mayfest can be seen as a good example of local groups working with students. This is something London's education sector is very good at.

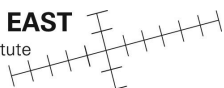
Newham have a 2012 Links Programme which gives grants to local schools to encourage them to work with other educational establishments internationally and can be used to engage with cultural and sports practitioners. There are also small Go For It grants to get smaller organisations going.

In her current role as Arts and Culture Legacy Advisor to the Newham Unit for the 2012 Games, Louise is looking at ways of developing and profiling East London's vibrant cultural scene in the lead up to 2012 and beyond. Louise has a long-standing interest in creative enterprises and their role in regenerating areas and strengthening communities. She has spent over eight years at Arts Council England, helping to develop national and regional policies and programmes to support the arts and creative industries.

Speaker 5: David Powell

David's presentation highlighted the difficult relationship between festival, celebration and the state and government which raises the question of how best to support something subversive, radical, popular, on the street, permeable and portable.

The Thames Gateway, from central London to the sea, can be seen as a way to make sense of a geographical and economic area. The Thames Gateway development will see huge amounts of investment into public transport changing the places in which people will congregate. There will be large new communities, raising questions of how they sit alongside existing communities. Many areas in the Thames Gateway have low educational levels - demographically and inspirationally, Thames Gateway faces a lot of challenges and while there are a lot of progression routes, it is aspiration that will help to realise these opportunities.



If you take Islington (a rich and dense cultural proposition and somewhere where we might like to live and visit) and drop it into the Thames Gateway its area only cover a small part of, say, Havering and Barking. The “cultural offer” that exists in the Thames Gateway is packaged very differently to elsewhere in London, has a lot of potential which needs to be refigured.

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We need to ask ourselves ‘how instrumental do we want to be?’ To what extent do we want to use culture and festivals to make sense of new place and existing places? What is the role of culture for helping government make places work better? Is this our job? The fundamental question is how much of the government agenda are we, in the cultural sector, at the service of?

Part of the job is to make sense of this all the bodies and strategies that exist. How do we negotiate our way through this? How do we prevent being ‘flattened’ by all this? David highlights ‘a need to reverse the flow’, for cultural strategy to be ‘less top down’. A lot of the cultural planning at the moment is very instrumental. However, people do not necessarily start festivals to serve governmental agendas - we need not to forget the reasons for setting up a festival. It is important to be awkward, be creative – there is a full circle. The challenge is to keep one foot in the cultural camp and one foot in the public policy camp.

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Using Margaret’s earlier metaphor of the eucalyptus tree, David suggests that we might fear that a lot of indigenous cultural activity will burn away, blow away and will be pushed out by the Olympic project, and by regeneration processes. . But the eucalyptus image shows us that this may not necessarily be the case. East Bank (running from Stratford to the Dome) will be the home of a fabulous new park in East London as well as the existing location of studios, cultural facilities etc. . So, ‘what will the post Olympic, post regeneration cultural experience be?’ The answer is ‘we don’t quite know yet’.

David Powell’s company, DPA provides research and development support for the arts and culture and in the wider creative economy. He is strategic advisor to Thames Gateway London Partnership and a Visiting Professor in Cultural Planning at UEL. Projects include the Thames Gateway Cultural Forum, the Joint Cultural Framework for the 5 Host Boroughs and mapping festivals for Celebrating Enterprise. He led the development of BALTIC, Gateshead and Stratford Circus.

Discussion:

Q: [...] its not because they made the houses pretty or put in proper transport [...] where’s the opportunity to allow them [people] to breathe and define their own culture. It’s the whole thing about the artists taking the lead, it really sparked something in me [...] and you were struggling to find a way. I dunno, what can we do? Focus people on giving people a voice [...]

DP: [...] part of what I was trying to say is there is a huge amount of locality and the life and times of communities in Greys and Southend are each very different to themselves let alone quite different from Hackney. I wouldn’t ever want to make the argument that less big public institutional investment in cultural things was a good thing but the truth is,



because culture is always on the margins of the budget even though there are some very big numbers attached to some things, the truth is, culture is going to come in three penny bits, it comes in tiny packages. And so the question about the space for local communities to breathe and grow seems to me not to be an argument – that’s just going to happen [...]

Q.[...] it makes me so angry – you think there’s that space, there’s so many people trying to fight to be seen then you’ve got Canary Wharf and they place where I grew up has disappeared. So that’s not a question, it just, y’know [...]

DP: Those are exactly the questions and we have to worry about those. Whether we’re administering public policy, trying to influence public policy or we’re doing something else all together as researchers or as cultural practitioners, we’re grinding at the same hard set of questions there

Q: I’m representing the Latin American Community in Hackney. My concern is [...] the Latin American community is not recognised in this community. But look at this, carnival del pueblo, its funny; it’s the same people [...] but what about the communities? Ethnic communities? We need to integrate. How do people engage, not just business?

[Applause]

MS: one of the things I was trying to say about the big festival, the millennium for example and the Olympics for example, they do offer opportunities for all different sorts of celebrations. One of the things with big events is if they’re charismatic enough, people want to participate. If there are resources, and it was very heartening to hear of small grants in Newham, it would be very good to see those resources spread more widely, to actually start things at a lower level, to engage individuals at different levels of competence to enable them to participate by 2012 in the big event. And this is Fiona’s point about the “legacy now” agenda which if that investment is there, your small community will be able to participate in 2012. [...] on the West London cultural offer – wonderful terms, these ‘offers’ as though they’re being put out and hopefully someone will take them – but one of the significant issues about West London is its actually focusing itself to address what they see as the threat of the developments in East London in economic and cultural terms. One of the assets they’ve got in the context of the Olympics is that they are there on the main route [...] most of them [visitors for the Games] will stay in West and Central London. So in actual fact the audience, or the participants, are not being considered in this – who are the audience? [...] the opportunity is the big event itself and the resources to enable you to take part in that is another question.

Q. I think what’s come up time and again from all these sorts of meetings about the Olympics and so on and so forth is that there isn’t really a strategy for engaging local community at any sort of level. Obviously the local councils are more in touch with that and they’ll know the local theatres in their borough. There’s a five borough thing, that’s quite cool but as you get into the higher government where real strategy and money is going to come from there doesn’t appear to be even an acknowledgment that this is something that might happen at all. I was wondering – is there a strategy to deal with this and recognises this as a problem? If so, who is responsible? And do they have any power to argue their case to the relevant authorities so people make a difference?

LV: Yes, I think it's interesting that we have all these strategies and I think it's been helpful that the work has been done. And David's kind of dark moments when you've almost got too many strategies and they're not helping. I think the challenge is translating that into the day to day nitty-gritty of what's happening on the ground where individual community groups might be located because the Olympics, where there might be an arts organisation loosing its lease, where a carnival group being led by local community looking for a new space – there's all this building going on but they're just looking for a new space where they can do their event. A lot of these cultural organisations are social enterprise, they are working on the ground and they are the connection – one of the most effective connections because artists tend to be communicators – art is about communication, festivals are about giving people a voice, and can link very strongly to political agendas and to voice what peoples feelings are about the change process. I think you're right, it's a huge challenge and its very difficult getting those strategies and that recognition of the place of culture translated into action on the ground. But its something we kind of have to keep 'chipping away' at and I think its very important to have enough people recognising that and translating that on the ground. Current strategies include the 5 Borough Cultural Framework for 2012, the Arts Council's strategy for the Thames Gateway and there is a body of work from LOCOG on the cultural festival. There are also cultural bid projects under Chapter 17 of the bid - we are expecting further announcements in June on this.

Q. Obviously you have this ground view – but it's that stepping-touch with people who are in the decision making process. Do you think personally, working for Newham as I understand you do, do you feel like you have that power, and if not is there a way so its not all here and everyone here knows its happening although with no possible solution to allow others to understand that [...]

LV: I think it's a two way power. I think the community and the cultural groups on the ground need to make the case themselves, need to keep shouting and talking bout the importance of culture. [...] its bringing people together in cultural activities that can actually give local communities a voice about other issues so culture itself can help to make sure the regeneration process, new city in Stratford, the Olympic park and sop on are done in a way that going to last, support diversity [...] One of the ways we do this is through the Stratford Cultural Forum which is an excellent way to engage a number of stakeholders who are tapped into activities on the ground.

Q [...] would it not be wise to have a strategy in place perhaps rather than wait for culture to get to this magical place where its recognised

MS: My argument would be, and this is running through all the presentations and Louise has just made the point again, there has to be a 'ground-up' thing - there has to be a demand that others have to meet. Louise used the example of the Sydney Games about the street activity – I'm sorry but that was a negative. The street activity came about because the budget was cut at a significant point early on in the cultural festival. What they cut was all the participatory stuff at the eleventh hour [...] I'm hearing that now in London from all different sorts of cultural groups. But I think the difference here is going to be that we have the infrastructure and this infrastructure is beginning to make its voice heard about why it wants to participate in this big event. And it comes down to the question I posed in the beginning – what do you want this to be for? Is it identity? Visibility of your particular cultural group? Is it to take a project up a notch? Is it to make money?

Q: Well it's more an observation. I know coca cola isn't written on any of these slides but subliminally is there all the time for me. This is a festival for coca cola and what worries me more than ever, well 2008 is the beginning of the cultural Olympiad, not 2012. Now I'm working with all sorts of groups and they are saying, 'why isn't anybody talking to us'. The LSC, Newham 2012 and all that say they're talking to all these people but they seem to be talking to the big guys all the time. And the people that I'm working with in terms of enterprise are saying there's a huge opportunity – I'd like to sell a coffee cup to everyone who come to the Olympic Games – how can I get involved, how can I contribute? And the same is happening with cultural and creative groups – they want to contribute. It's not something that they should earn the right to contribute. We demand diversity. And we want it NOW! And we don't want to be dominated by coca cola and everybody else. We want this to be a genuine demonstration of creativity in London – that makes London the city it is because you wouldn't have the finance here if it wasn't for the creativity, you wouldn't have people coming to the city if it wasn't for the fantastic fashion, the music industry. [...] Those kids who are the next generation of entrepreneurs want to know where they fit into this [...]

Q: A very simple question. First of all, I am gypsy; probably the most discriminated against of all the ethnic groups. And my question is, the panel is all white. Is there any reason for this [...] simple question, simple answer?

IM: I think this is a very good point. Given that this is a rolling programme I think we need to take that into account

Q: I stopped asking that question about ten years ago!

JB: No, you must never stop asking that question! [...]

Q: [...] my question is how do you see artists engaging and taking the lead?

DP: Artists taking the lead has been one of the main programme themes that London 2012 ran with. [...] there's an issue in the middle of that about trying to understand how to differentiate between artists and artistic institutions which are not necessarily the same thing. The big institutions and big museums are not necessarily the same as artists taking the lead. We're trying to do one fairly modest thing which is run a modest series of events under the title of Thames Gateway Cultural Forum which is a moment at which small scale East London based cultural practitioners can come together. The last one of these invited LOCOG to come and talk to us [...] we talked precisely about how people can take control of this evolving uncertainty. [...] we can't wait for LOCOG to give us the instructions because they won't and they weren't set up to do that. They're going to build a few things and there'll be a huge framework and we're going to have to rush in and fill the gap [...] There are a number of mechanisms which we're encouraging local authorities and others to use in terms of a broader planning process in which the role of artists [...] all of that is the stuff we need to insist on. We have to have it both ways. We have to do what we can to bang on the door [...] we have to run it from the bottom up. There's a lot of space out there – physical space, mental space, programmatic space – there's a lot of space out there that can be filled. We have to work out how best to fill it.

MS: The Olympics isn't just the Olympic fortnight, but the whole event spans a much longer period. One of the concentrations of effort seems to be, 'give us some money'. Another approach is to actually pitch what they want – there is an awful lot of money in this. What could you do to service it? A very simple example, they used street performers as a crowd control mechanism for the crowds moving into the arenas [...] its about positioning yourself to deliver what they want for this event [...] issues about sponsorship will lock out a lot of activity [...] once the rings go you'll have lot more opportunity – its about looking more broadly I think.

Q: I'd just like to respond to the question about artists in referring to Notting Hill Carnival. In terms of our business plan, our five year vision – I can assure you that over the past year there has been a significant concentration of minds. The issue of us, because the canvas is so huge, the only way it can make sense is if we develop critical mass and that means partnerships. That means events such as Notting Hill need to be talking to the Mela, Thames Fest, Gay Pride. Quite frankly sitting down and say we are going to be talking for ourselves, for our community, as a consortium, as a collective is the only way. We're not going to be able to do it as individual communities or individual artists. It's a partnership and the way to move forward.

LV: I think you're exactly right. There is a real strength in numbers. And I want to give an example of the coming together of the cultural sector in Stratford and then getting them linked officially to the Stratford renaissance partnership. As a collective you can push those issues up the agenda and make a difference.

Q: [...] it was much easier when there were actually leisure services and officers [...] the erosion of a lot of old relationships which used to be there

DP: I think the point you made about partnerships is crucial. The Olympics, with a very precise date, so there's kind of no escape from it [...] at one point during the bid process was the five rings exhibition which was all at the national galleries and museums [...] if we're working in the carnival and festival zone, whatever fractured politics there might be out there, even locally in relation to a particular community in Hackney. Our incapacity to create serious strategic partnerships that really through our weight around is going to chop us into small pieces and be ignored. That's quite a difficult call [...] I'm interested in this big spike of activity because it's going to do extraordinary things for better and worse in East London. We're sixty years into deciding what happens to this area of London next. Sixty years ago, pretty much, was when the docks fell to pieces and it hit the bottom. And here we are twenty years later and you could say not much has changed. It's a monumentally slow process. Good practice gets lost because governments change, influential people change but the truth is, the kind of work that still will need to be done, making East London be the vibrant and healthy place that everyone wants it to be all of that stuff will continue. The question is how we can negotiate in and around the Olympic moment [...] for me the long game is the important one.

Q: I have got a lot say. One of the things we have to do in our business planning process, we've thrown away arts development. We've fundamentally developed a

commercial business plan in terms of generating income to sustain the groups who participate responding to the fact the arts council national strategy resulted in the removal of arts funding! So what I would call quite sincere and quite good community arts activity – the challenge for community groups is to look at finance as a major design parameter of what you do – when I talk about finance I'm talking about sustainability. Young kids have got it sussed. They understand about community entrepreneurship and they will not compromise their ability to produce their art. There's a new art form and it's about sustainable art. That's the language we need to talk about. Commerciality is a bad thing but we have an ethical policy so we couldn't use coca cola but if they wanna give the carnival a couple of million quid which it deserves according to the LDA impact study in 2003 then ill take the money. But we have an ethical policy.

Q: I run a network called the 2012 arts network trying to start from the bottom up talking about what they would like to do for the Olympics. If anyone wants to know more come and see me at the end. www.2012artsnetwork.org.uk it's a voluntary organisation.

Q: [...] please don't take this the wrong way. There's a lot of host country white people talking about what we're going to be. What you need to do is actually engage the very people that you're advocating on behalf. One of the things that we felt you should be doing is dragging up them kids, let them shadow you. One of the things we're thinking about is mentoring – effective mentoring. I'm guilty; I should've bought a youngster with me today. We got to start dragging young people to these kinds of forums

Q: With Kings Cross launching in November, that's going to be a transport communication creative hub. We've got the Olympics; there are a whole series of unique opportunities that offer communities in London. There's a lot of potential there that needs to be realised. I think when we have these kind of forum it would be useful if the panel and audience could consider, in concrete and tangible ways, how things can be made to work. There's no point hearing all these strategies again and again and again. I've been to all series of different forum [...] now of course, most of the sector is populated by small micro businesses and of course they are not going to have the resources or capacity to respond at the last minute. Of course, that means it is going to be the large, commercially orientated organisations and professionals that are going to be able to respond. So ok, you may not be the ultimate decision makers so to speak, but I think it is key that somehow the message is communicated both by ourselves and people like yourselves. Really this is just turning into a bit of a farce. It's becoming a bit of a joke really. I just think there's an awful lot of potential that isn't going to be realised. I'm not saying it's going to be a total disaster. But this is a unique set of opportunities for London and the UK as a whole [...] you have countries like Brazil with carnival it has a great cultural and creative significance and very commercially viable. I'd like to speak about a point that was made earlier about the composition of the panel. I don't think it wasn't being said that the people on the panel weren't experts, it just there are other voices and that needs to be considered and reflected.

Q: I'm from the Arts Council. People have to start realising some of the realities, especially around funding, is being made clear that budgets are being slashed not

particularly because of the Olympics but it will affect the Olympics there will be a lot less money around for small festivals. There are strategies in place but when people come to exit these strategies there is no money for them [...] the Arts Council didn't take the money away, the money was taken away from them [...] the cultural Olympiad does start next year. You can't keep going 'what are you going to do about it' because you better get out there and start doing something about it! Sorry! Part of the bid was about cultural Olympiad with carnival in it, an international youth festival, international Shakespeare festival a number of things. We still don't know, even at the Arts Council. All we have is headed points [...]

DP: Whatever you think about the maths of the ever expanding budget of the Olympics, when it comes down to it [...] what was always in the books was a budget like £60 million for quite a tight definition of the cultural ceremonies but I don't think that figures gone up I suspect.

JB: there's one other fund that's been created called the Legacy Trust. Are you aware of this? It only has £26million in it, it's tiny.

MS: Money having been cut from the arts budget should at least be put back into ensuring a cultural programme. I understand it was £91 million, £55 of which would go on the opening and closing ceremonies – what's happened to the other £40million? I think that's gone. We have to make the point that there is money for the broader cultural programme as well as the core cultural programme. That must expand to fit the desires of all who want to participate [...] I see that there is the energy in London to make that happen [...] there are structures, its about coalescing these structures, making sense of them [...] fitting your offer to the need [...] how can we pitch something that they can't refuse

JB: The problem we have here is it's focused on the DCMS on one, not very high profile, not terribly well resourced, department of government. That's where the row is going on. And what's happening is that they have cut lottery money – they've had to, the treasury has told them. You got the figures wrong so they're forced to take it from the lottery funding. Now we all know we want the Olympics to happen, we know they got the sums wrong, that's water under the bridge. It has to happen. The choices that the Arts Council had to make about cutting the lottery money or cutting something else – they weren't told to cut the lottery money, it was a choice, and I think that's a strategic choice. I think they are taking a bet that at some point there will be an opportunity that some bit of government will recognise that not to have this development money is going to imperil what we actually think is good about what you guys [arts organisations] do. [...] I think that you guys have got a great deal to deliver to this and its getting that visible. Not 'we're going to die if you don't give us some money' or 'we're not properly represented' – those are important. But I think we've got to work with them and say 'we CAN DO this stuff better than anyone else'

LV: My last thoughts on this are almost that flipped around. We have to also remember what the Olympics is and remember that we, the cultural sector, other players, we are

going to continue afterwards. I think it would a shame for any organisation or community group to divert itself from its main mission too far because of some illusory prize. The Olympics is a huge opportunity but it's not going to get you a huge slot on television, you'll be speaking to the same audiences, you'll have the same challenges in terms of your business model. What it does offer, as I tried to sum up in the presentation, is you've got opportunities – potentially more interest from business sponsors, from cross cutting partners and regeneration partners. [...] this is about an ongoing story about the redevelopment of London and if you've got a role to play, you should be doing it.