

Voices and viewpoints in the arts

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Whether the future is bright for the arts remains to be seen. Cultural life, and the arts in particular, seldom succeed in determining the social agenda. Cultural activities and artistic expression tend to reposition themselves whenever new trends lead to major changes in society. Public recognition of works of art varies from one generation to the next; each, within its specific world view, defines certain art forms as conservative and others as avant-garde and each decides to preserve or to neglect art from previous periods and determines what proportion of public funds is invested in the arts and culture.

The government is today's Maecenas, at least in Europe. Yet in recent decades we have witnessed an immense upsurge of production in culture and the arts through the mass media and public-private partnerships. The worldwide distribution of music, film and literature and the near-infinite scope afforded by new technologies are creating an audience so wide as to defy definition. In addition, there is an alarming increase in the 'show' element, in order to meet today's criteria. To reach the public and to ensure future sales, ready-made artistic products are becoming the norm. Folkloristic clichés and cheap sentiment triumph over cultural and emotional authenticity. The arts sector, under siege, often responds by descending to the same level instead of upholding its real mission and position in society. Permanent institutions such as museums, theatres, opera houses and concert halls have to compete with the flood of publicity surrounding festivals, events and temporary exhibitions which are often presented in one package, with fireworks and acrobats and bands playing in the streets. All this creates the illusion that everyone can participate and have a good time, and that the money is well spent.

The point of investing in artistic research and development has become a topic of public debate. But it is essential. First, experimental work by young artists needs guidance, organisational help and feedback during the gestation period. Second, the road to international artistic recognition is long and labour-intensive, and requires an influx of capital. Once an artist has gained an international reputation and a market value, contracts will come his way.

Artists now have managers representing them, and the British speak of 'buyers' rather than 'programmers'. International organisers can go shopping at international art fairs, if they wish to put next season's programme together. Even so, the opportunities that festival directors provide to young and avant-garde talent – in the form of work placements or commissions – often fail to produce the desired result. Hidden in an alternative festival or fringe event, the work fails to attract a larger public, and press coverage too is often meagre. New talent should be developed and fostered locally. Institutions working on a permanent basis are better placed to create the conditions for this work to develop at its own pace. International festivals have to meet the high expectations of the public, which cannot be fulfilled by young and immature work. Most festivals cannot offer any guarantees for further support or production opportunities. Turnover and box office receipts for major events increasingly become the authorities' ultimate criteria. Yet the only true justification for artistic research and development lies in the arts themselves, not in figures or exact data. This once again underscores the false contrast between art production and cultural distribution.

The authorities seem increasingly unwilling to give a free hand to culture and the arts. The growing role accorded to social issues means that policy has to produce tangible results and sound statistics on the impact of the arts in terms of promoting democracy and minority rights. Economic arguments are gradually permeating the organisation of cultural life, and the economy, applying tried and tested marketing principles, has discovered culture and art as sources of employment and regional development and as a vehicle of city marketing. The authorities in their turn are developing the idea of an ambassador's role for the arts in a Europe of the regions. The urge to define the cultural identity of a community has nothing to do with the latest ideas about cultural action or a more prominent place for the arts, but is all too often a way of justifying political ambitions, to further nation-building. Some surveys set out to establish the relationship between economic prosperity and cultural patterns of behaviour in order to prove that a region with a 'hard-working' population offers a favourable climate for investment.

One might have expected a strong reaction from artistic circles. This has not yet materialised. We have seen some maverick responses from artists, to be sure, while organisers adopt the pragmatic attitude that goes with keeping one eye on feasibility. Either way, art, it seems, is at society's mercy.

Starting from the problems in the urban environment, notably the big cities that are at the top of the political agenda everywhere in Europe, and bearing in mind the social and economic colonisation of the cultural and artistic sectors, I would like to draw your attention to a number of crucial issues. I would also venture to criticise the failure of the arts to define and defend their social function.

All the major cities in the West face similar problems: the need to restore or strengthen the social fabric and the urgent need for a policy on economic regeneration. In international forums it has become generally accepted to look at culture within that framework as a regenerating factor. And it is. The city must once again become an attractive environment in which to live and work. Culture, as the binding agent of society and the chief gauge for all fields of policy-making, must be the main principle on which urban policy is based.

The report on deprivation published by the King Boudewijn Foundation in Belgium states explicitly that for the disadvantaged, cultural exclusion is the worst kind of exclusion. Culture stimulates disadvantaged groups, who often live in considerable cultural isolation, to develop self-confidence, express their personality and devise self-supporting activities. At present, disadvantaged groups tend to be approached in terms of their problems instead of being encouraged to participate in the general social and cultural life of the city. Social action that concentrates on target groups and defines individuals in terms of 'problem groups', and urban policies urging people to go to centres where community workers are eagerly waiting for them, have proved to be too fragmented an approach and ultimately a dead end. The people concerned are often not short of food, clothing or housing; they define exclusion from social and cultural life as their biggest problem. They don't have enough money, or do not want to be seen queuing for a ticket, poorly dressed and with some voucher in their hand. So social urban policy should not focus on specific target groups, but instead start from the idea that all citizens are equal and that everyone should be able to participate in social activities. Everyone needs mental space and free time to spend as he or she wishes; there is an urgent need for this need to be recognised and provided for.

Another important social element is communication. Urban policy should be based on a general, forward-looking and coherent strategy with which people can identify, and that is constantly open to evaluation. The public authorities should propose a contract to members of the public, not to try to create the illusion of a perfect society, but to clearly set out the measures that they have taken, or plan to take, and to indicate their positive impact on the overall plan. The authorities need a set of instruments that they do not yet possess. At present the measures they take are only partly effective, because of a lack of cooperation among municipal services and a lack of specific communication strategies for reaching local people, incidental visitors and tourists. It is therefore essential to bear in mind that social action should arise from overall needs and target full participation by the whole population, and that communication be organised effectively, especially in relation to a city's population.

The service industries and tourism account for a growing share of the economy. These are the sectors in which the largest category of the unemployed, unskilled workers, are increasingly finding jobs. Another trend is the growing interest among researchers in the impact of cultural elements on economic development. At the conference 'Maastricht revisited. European unity through diversity' held in May 1997, Professor Ann Markusen of the University of New York stated that 'innovative regions distinguish themselves from others by means of five cultural factors: the optimism and self-confidence of the population, tolerance, openness to change, a feeling for aesthetic beauty and ecological soundness'. Other reports prove that the market economy is driven by cultural elements and that culture accounts for 20-50% of differences in growth. So cultural considerations can make half of the difference. Clearly, research findings of this kind may be of considerable political importance, depending on how they are interpreted.

Cultural and artistic activities generate direct and indirect returns that are hard to calculate. Even the direct returns on large-scale cultural events are difficult to estimate. One socio-economic impact study of Antwerp '93, however, showed that the project had a strong impact on the city's development. The following figures emerged.

1. Infrastructural projects involved a total investment of 2 billion BF (49 million euros). Every billion (24.5 million euros) created about 600 new jobs, and another 200 indirectly. Investment continued after 1993. Not all investment can be related to Antwerp '93 but the initiative had a definite stimulating effect. In Keynesian terms, an increase in spending (investment and consumption) raises income by a multiple of the money spent. It boosts the economy and therefore also employment.
2. 18.6% more nights were spent in hotels in 1993 than in 1992, and the average occupation of guest rooms increased by 9.1%. The entire sector benefited equally from the increase in the number of guests. Conference tourism increased too, with Antwerp expanding its share of this market at the expense of other Belgian conference cities.
3. The project boosted the retail trade and catering industry enormously: to the tune of over 2 billion BF (49 million euros) for the retail trade and 200 million BF (4.9 million euros) for catering services. Consumption increased by 1.2 % in comparison with average growth in Flanders, which means the city sold goods worth at least 150 million BF (3 million euros), leaving black market activities out of consideration.

Other examples can be given. In a survey commissioned by the Flemish minister of Culture, Professor De Brabander of the University of Antwerp estimated that subsidies given to professional theatre yield returns of 50%, while the returns in the amateur arts sector are a staggering 95%. From the city's point of view, this means in most cases that subsidies are paid for by central government while the economic returns are felt at local level: employment, new infrastructure, public transport, catering and retail trade, suppliers etc. Then there is the preservation of monuments and historic buildings sector: direct returns are achieved through preservation, the creation of a genuine function for monuments and a general upgrading of the urban environment.

In Amsterdam, some 90% of the population questioned in 1995 had visited an arts location at least once in the previous few months. The economic impact of tourism is very significant: Amsterdam receives 2.5 million visitors a year, 64% of whom visit a museum or gallery etc. during their stay or even come for that specific purpose. The arts sector accounts for 10,800 jobs of at least 12 hours a week and contributes 1.4 billion BF (34 million euros) to the regional economy.

Professional arts and artists can help a city develop an arts policy that will improve its cultural image, present an attractive and varied supply of art and culture to the local population, attract tourists and generate both direct and indirect economic returns. These advantages have been demonstrated beyond all doubt.

City marketing originated by analogy with the marketing and communication strategies developed by industry. Culture is one of its major marketing tools. Curiously enough, cities have few effective instruments at their disposal in the cultural, social and tourist fields. The scope for generating increasing economic returns by organising big events and international promotion is not yet being exploited to the full. After Antwerp '93 it was concluded that the city had no effective arrangements for publicising culture to tourists. The lack of surveys of tourism and culture and of statistics on these issues is also frustrating. Without them, it is impossible to achieve real strategic planning based on the analysis of data. Many projects exceed local capacity. If we look around the world, we see empty Olympic villages and abandoned pavilions left over from past world exhibitions. Recently the city of Lisbon was left with a financial hangover that will be a drain on the city's budget for years to come.

City marketing is overly oriented towards visitor and tourists, and hardly takes the local population into account, let alone the disadvantaged and the younger generation. In my city there are children who have never visited the city centre. In my country, one in every three people never goes on holiday, not even for one day a year, because it is too expensive. But recreational tourism should not cost more than a bus or train ticket. And this brings us back to the subject of social action.

A city's social and cultural life is first and foremost the concern of its inhabitants and only secondarily for visiting tourists and businesspeople. Cultural projects developed with city marketing in mind often lack an organic relationship with the local population. These projects are devised for – and communicated to – comfortably-off families with a double income, who take at least two holidays a year and occasionally spend a weekend or short stay elsewhere. Yet recent events have shown that city marketing should first focus on communication with the local population and promoting local interaction before large budgets are spent on attracting an international public.

The single-mindedness of the social and economic sectors can only be corrected by cultural and artistic actors in the field. But to date they remain remarkably absent from the scene, since they lack the references, knowledge and authority to design a progressive cultural and artistic city life. Individualistically oriented artists feel that their artistic statements are misinterpreted or ignored. They feel no urge to climb onto a public platform to start a controversial debate. They speak a language that only a few understand or are prepared to learn. Schools include foreign language teaching as part of their syllabus, but the most universal and fascinating language of all – the language of the arts – is largely overlooked. The educational services of art institutions are no better: art historians and drama experts are incapable of translating their commitment to the arts, because the didactic spark is not there. The interaction between education and the artistic world is still woefully inadequate.

Forgive me if I make the following point: when there was still an Eastern bloc behind the Berlin wall, young and old, intellectuals and workers alike on the other side were well informed about world literature, listened to classical concerts and went to the theatre and the opera. At least this proves that art education is not such an impossible *tour de force* as is commonly believed.

Then we come to the arts managers who mediate between artists and the authorities. Ostensibly well-informed about the sensibilities of the parties involved, they speak the language of politics, economics, the arts and the public. In practice they are often hostages to pragmatism: the authorities are prepared to commit a certain budget, but generally link it to an agreement on results. Arts managers are expected to set up cultural projects such as to guarantee their public success and international impact. This means they often choose the safest option – a high quality artistic programme embedded in popular and traditional events.

The weakness of the arts sector is not in the arts themselves but in their organisation and distribution, which is where they impinge on the life of society. Artists should be able to work in all possible freedom. They should not be under an obligation to achieve certain results. But cultural organisers who create opportunities for artists to work also have the task of introducing the work of art, the result of the creative process, to society. They must find a place to present it, to allow it to be seen and heard. Organisers must provide guidance as art 'goes public', and they need to find the best way of introducing it into the fabric of society. But they also have to take care of public relations, disseminating the essential advance publicity and inviting the public not only to reflect on the work but also to participate in dialogue and debate. I do not adhere to the notion that everybody is qualified to speak about the arts. Was it not Wittgenstein who suggested that we should not speak about things we know nothing about? Where lay policy-makers are involved, he was certainly right! Yet it is ludicrous to extend this argument to the general public, by devising projects that will automatically exclude some 90% of the population from the chance to participate and the arts, and to form their opinions.

Arts managers hardly ever raise this argument, yet it is one that can ultimately offer culture and the arts a prominent place in society and social credibility. The arts sector has a deep-seated fear of integration and assimilation. It has failed to develop a cogent position on the structural importance of culture as a basic condition for political decision-making and social organisation. This vacuum makes it even more difficult for the arts sector to make itself heard in debates on society.

I should like to illustrate my point by referring to a number of points made by Peter Sellars. I am a great admirer of the man and his artistic work. Sellars is convinced that a democratic society can emerge only from debate and controversy. I am happy to take up the challenge, by discussing a number of statements made by Sellars in his article on the Los Angeles Festival, published in translation in *City of Cultures. De interculturele dimensie in de podiumkunsten*, edited by the Flemish Theatre Institute.

If art is a way of dealing with excess luxury, as Sellars posits, I have lived a useless life up to now. No. I believe that the arts and culture are among the initial premises of every approach to building a society. For years I have been interrogating the notion of culture from every angle because intuitively I remain convinced of my own position.

Sellars states that the economy is not only a question of figures, but also – and especially – a question of how people feel and how personal and collective feelings about development should be dealt with. Failure to grasp this, in his view, is one of the reasons why things are going wrong in Europe. I consider this view mistaken, both in historical and in political terms. Human beings have learned to anticipate in order to survive. Under the pressure of circumstances, they have adopted a rational mode of thought which has less to do with individual interaction than with established needs.

Societies have developed methods of securing food, housing and safety for the entire group. This once went hand in hand with exploitation and the appropriation of other people's property. Colonialism brought Europe a wealth that it had – and still has – no right to claim. In the global economy new regions are developing, such as Japan, China and Korea, which will put our current affluence under pressure. Where the internal market is concerned, the economy keeps on turning cheerfully without a thought for the welfare of individuals. Mass unemployment is still a fact of life in Europe, although more and more people realise that this could prove a time bomb. Another point is that every society fights to retain its status and wealth: trade unions oppose relocation and pay scant regard to the rights of third-world countries to share in our prosperity. At the same time the organisation of our economy has produced a need for mindless tasks, while new technological developments are leading to a two-tier society. Individuals do not feel responsible for the growing abuses elsewhere in the world – and are indeed scarcely in a position to do anything about them – but regard themselves as victims of the way work is organised, an area over which they have no influence. While the champions of economic progress tell us how well we are doing, offices and factories are closing and an entire generation is threatened by deprivation.

Sellars confuses the arts with culture, and the different roles they play in our society. In my view, culture has to do with raising ethical and moral standards in society. Each society achieves a certain shared quality of life, for instance in social interaction, in housing, in the organisation of labour, in leisure and free time, in the initiation and training of the younger generation and in communication with the elderly, in using natural resources and protecting the global environment. Science and philosophy have always interacted: in days gone by, progress was not defined merely in terms of material advancement but was closely linked to spiritual enrichment.

In his quest for other ways of living, Sellars refers to the aboriginals and the Tibetan mountain people. To me this expresses a nostalgic desire for an idealised, virginal state, for a lost past. It brings to mind the nineteenth-century Romantics, the Brothers Grimm and all the others whose nostalgia sent them on a quest for traditional tales in societies that have remained outside modern developments. In the meantime one industrial revolution follows close on the heels of another. Today's Romantics

seem to me very blinkered: they somehow overlook the circumcision of women in Ethiopia, the Indian custom of giving away children to the village priest and the slavery that still exists today in Senegal and Gabon. Are these cultures not based on age-old traditions and as legitimate as our own? Certainly we should be open to the good things in other cultures and what they can teach us, but our first obligation is to create our own society. Rather than a regressive move, this may be a proactive response to a situation in which our overpopulated, technology-dependent society is threatened with decline. Our culture is being transformed. Once again the question arises of how cultural processes can structurally enhance the quality of life in tomorrow's society. For instance, culture can help prevent the erosion of the fabric of society.

Peter Sellars regrets that art has become a product rather than a process. Culture is by definition a process, as it assumes the inherent involvement of every member of a particular society. Today's art, in its multiple manifestations, is not necessarily a process. For instance, nobody doubts the value of preserving art products from the past. We have built a cultural infrastructure to preserve art – our museums – and to reproduce it – theatres, opera houses, cinemas and so on.

The tension between the preservation and reproduction of art and artistic creation and cultural processes has to do with today's dominant culture. Our society tends to revere art from the past and underrate art being created in our own time. The notion of 'process' is not an intrinsic feature of art, at least not in terms of social interaction. It is rather an aspect of cultural distribution and artistic projects that are based on social interaction or have this as their ultimate aim.

We can further refine this theory. Many visual artists are rocketed to fame by market mechanisms that treat their work as a product. Huge sums of money are paid to film actors who produce box-office hits. Benjamin's predictions about art in the era of technical reproduction did not in fact come true. Of course they did in the purely material sense: the distribution of artistic and cultural products has increased exponentially, and new technologies and multimedia applications will reinforce this trend. But no research has yet been done to discover whether the intrinsic qualities of a work of art are respected when it undergoes mass distribution.

Although Sellars is opposed to institutionalising the arts, especially through the cultural infrastructure that constrains artists, he has to admit that the lack of a cultural apparatus deprives a nation or a community of a voice in global current affairs. He refers to the existence of opera houses and a film industry in the West and their absence in third-world countries. Yet paradoxically he is one of the exponents of the large-scale cultural apparatus whose mammoth organisation and shrewd promotional techniques magnify the artist to mythical dimensions.

Let us consider the role of the artist. According to Sellars, artists should focus their activities on people whose interests no one defends. The example he gives is Beckett, who wrote about the homeless and the elderly and thus involved them in public debate, although this point of view will not be well received in certain circles.

But in the meantime, art has gained its autonomy in Western society. Artists have many faces. It has been said that though everybody is creative, the artist is somebody who continues longer than the rest to claim that he is an artist, and who lets his life depend on this statement. Indeed, someone who manages to stay alive and who concentrates on artistic creation may one day be recognised as an artist by society, while someone who fails in this regard will become a car salesman or live on social security. We are caught up in an endless debate about the value of, and the interaction between, the amateur and the professional practice of art, between arts and crafts, between the socio-cultural field and the arts sector.

Is an artist duty bound to give a voice to socially deprived target groups? No. He may choose to do so. Alternatively, he may feel compelled to create a completely hermetic piece of art, without sparing a thought for the world around him. He may wrestle with himself throughout his life while his public has no idea what his work is about. He may express numerous archetypes or commonly shared traditions. He may start a philosophical discussion or actively participate in social debate, through his work, and improve social interaction.

Let us take Sellars' exemplar, Samuel Beckett. Few drama experts would describe Beckett's work as a plea on behalf of 'the poor and homeless'. Beckett is part of the existentialist movement, the desperate search for the meaning of life, the idea of 'l'enfer, c'est les autres'. Of course, his plays offer various interpretative possibilities, ranging from the anecdotal-realistic to the moralistic. Beckett was not just writing about the homeless, as Sellars suggests. To see a performance of *Waiting for Godot* as 'a day in the life of' is to reduce Beckett's work to the commonplace.

How do today's artists express their social commitment or fulfil what Sellars calls their 'social role'? First, I would note that some artists thought it was important to go to Sarajevo, and they deserve our appreciation for the solidarity they showed through their work. Still, their gesture was no more – nor less – important than a consignment of food, which was so desperately needed at that moment. Second, an arts institution may proclaim a political stand in a newspaper. But its views will

have little impact if the institution does not position itself in everyday life. Its role will generally be confined to presenting shows that criticise society. Few institutions are real meeting places or refuges that foster a lively culture of debate. And third, the relationship between art and social commitment is anything but simple. During the first Time Festival in Ghent I saw a performance by LAPD, the Los Angeles Poverty Department. It featured a group of homeless people acting out their own lives: they quarrelled, drank, talked nonsense etc. Outside the theatre, no one knew how to deal with these people. They could not stay in a regular hotel, and one ran away to sleep under his regular bridge. The announcement of the performance attracted a big audience of people who came to watch an hour of reality. Yet we can see the same thing in any big city, on any day of the week, if we keep our eyes open.

Another example is the story of Ron Vawter, an actor in the Wooster Group, who nearly died on stage when performing at the Kaaitheater. He was in the terminal phase of AIDS but badly wanted to continue acting. Each performance hung in the balance, depending on his state of health. The Kaaitheater group understandably wanted to grant Vawter's request because of their long-standing relationship with him. But such conditions are bound to foster a voyeuristic atmosphere. I am aware that these are dangerous grounds. But let us discuss the relationship between artist, programmer and public, and not only if current events force us to do so.

Peter Sellars was asked to come and work in Los Angeles when the city was burning and daily life there had become incompatible with the organisation of a festival with large-scale productions. The city council decided that the festival should be based in the most explosive part of L.A. They saw culture and the arts as an instrument, as the only solution.

The techniques Sellars applied in Los Angeles come straight from social work. They involve people actively describing their problems; the conclusions of the discussions are then used as the basis for a performance in which the working process is all-important. Equally important is the moment of presentation: the neighbourhood and the city are confronted with a stirring reflection of their own lives, forging solidarity between players and public. There was a lot of laughing and crying, says Sellars. Catharsis still exists in the theatre!

The Los Angeles Festival comprised three hundred activities invented by city-dwellers. I do not know how to respond to such an event. What Sellars did is valuable, but it is worlds apart from anything most arts managers would be able or willing to present. Sellars is often quoted here in Europe but hardly anyone follows his example. Should the arts sector emulate Sellars or should we wait until our cities are burning before doing so?

Let us consider for a moment the 'Cultural Capital of Europe' projects. The artistic statements invariably invoke two goals: a) the entire population must be involved and b) there must be a permanent impact on the life of the city. In Antwerp, the organisers spent a whole year consulting all the local cultural actors and the people of Antwerp. And then they disregarded most of what they had heard and opted wholesale for the arts instead of local cultural activities. As an example of city marketing versus a city's own population this was an unparalleled case of arrogance. Antwerp was already smouldering at that time. Now Brussels is going the same way. Presiding over an informal meeting preparing for Brussels 2000, Bernard Focroule, director of De Munt opera house, presented a number of guidelines. His team initially espoused a radical local and social set of premises, their top priorities being to recognise the multicultural society and to improve the quality of life in the city. The conclusions of Focroule's plan led to heated debate between programmers and project managers; as a result, Brussels 2000 became enmeshed in such mountainous indecision that planning and programming were delayed for another twelve months, making it impossible to plan large-scale, socially inspired urban projects. Yet it is remarkable how many artists started looking for projects that would give the people of Brussels a voice. The programme is full of initiatives designed for this purpose: texts written by local people, portraits, videos on everyday life in the city, and neighbourhood festivities. Meanwhile, the Brussels 2000 project managers are still dithering about whether to focus on local impact or on international image building.

I have referred to the false contradiction between culture and the arts. Arts managers tend to encourage this schism instead of nuancing it. Socio-cultural organisations in their turn try harder still to sustain the division. Social workers tend to simplify in the name of the democratic distribution of culture: 'the fruit basket made by the woman next door is a work of art and she should be encouraged because autonomous activity is so much more important than artistic quality'. Cultural workers can foster creativity, artists can broaden it. So what is the problem?

Art can encourage and help people to find their own voice, says Sellars. We should ask ourselves how art, as part of the broad spectrum of cultural expression and cultural patterns, can be used to enhance the quality of life throughout a community. Artists can stimulate interaction between art and culture, but are not under an obligation to do so.

In relation to current events this means that the arts sector should use its tools to be active in the cultural and hence the social field. All too often we see the opposite happening: the arts sector takes up social issues and incorporates them into artistic

products that never go beyond the circuit of its own already committed public. A socially committed arts sector should ask itself how artistic tools can be useful to society rather than looking at the world from behind its own fences. Artist wanting to participate in social debate should not do so, as Sellars proposes, through individual ties and alternative or marginal structures. Laughter and tears may bring emotional relief, but they do not emancipate. If the arts sector wants to be active in society, it needs permanent measures aiming at democratising existing structures to give everyone a voice. Working in marginal structures that do not influence existing social relations will never activate processes of social change. Still, it is fun: it is easier to get the attention of the converted than to influence the thinking of those who have always excluded certain groups from the decision-making process. So I do not believe in the catharsis Sellars provided within the new concept of the Los Angeles Festival. I would say the same about social and cultural workers. It is the individualised approach that is to blame for the fact that arguments presented by the arts sector are not taken seriously as part of a wider social debate. No community can be organised on this basis. Relationships between individuals improve communication but not organisation. The impact of culture should be structurally anchored and cannot be dependent on goodwill in communication. In every society you will always have people who carry on practising deception until their falsehoods are exposed. I want to be optimistic, but not naive.

One last but not unimportant remark on Sellars' theories: he sees art as the driving force behind economic revival because, he says, wherever art is established, renovation projects follow. But money goes where the authorities invest in the social fabric: Greenwich Village in New York, Carnaby Street in London, Les Halles in Paris and the southern quarter of Antwerp, to name but a few examples.

In truth the social fabric is torn apart by the power of money. Yuppies and investors buy what art makes attractive. What better example of the unproductive nature of art in relation to the life of society today! The cities are being regenerated by moving the worst areas of deprivation to the urban fringe. We refuse to accept that it is not the people who live there who have neglected their houses. Dilapidation and deprivation go hand in hand, but it is the landlords who are responsible for the dilapidation, making profits at the expense of the tenants. The new owners in their turn receive grants for renovation. In fact, areas that are being regenerated present profitable opportunities for investors. Art and culture may be powerful tools for improving and restoring the social fabric, but not in the form of emergency relief or luxury goods, as Sellars would have it.

Culture, like education, is necessary to the self-esteem and self-realisation of every individual. If we regard the arts as a mere luxury within our society, we diminish the ethical awareness of communities and accept the utilitarian way of thinking with all its fatal consequences. This is not progress.

The art of management does not result in art. Certainly the substructure of the arts sector needs appropriate management. The role of the cultural and artistic sector in urban regeneration policies is at the top of today's agenda. More artists and arts managers need to think, like Sellars, about the limits of art, economics and social organisation, so that art and culture are no longer afflicted by a business ethos driven solely by economic considerations. Art and culture should define future standards of policy-making. Art will never save the world, but it can have far more influence on policy-making than it has had up to now. It needs actors whose voices are heard in the social debate. Art must have a voice of its own before it can give others a voice.

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