

Report on
the Public Engagement Exercise on the
Recommendations of the Consultative Committee on the
Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the
West Kowloon Cultural District

Executive Summary

Submitted by Public Policy Research Institute
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In August 2007, the Government of the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (Government) commissioned the Public Policy Research Institute (PPRI) of The Hong Kong Polytechnic University to carry out a Consultancy to collect and analyze public views on the recommendations of the Consultative Committee on the Core Arts and Cultural Facilities of the West Kowloon Cultural District (WKCD). This Executive Summary presents the methodology and findings of the Consultancy.

METHODOLOGY

Under the Consultancy, the PPRI was required to conduct an analysis of public views collected from the two Telephone Polls, Wish Cards collected during the Public Engagement (PE) Exercise, records of specific meetings of relevant bodies and all written submissions, on-line discussion boards, letters, faxes and emails sent to the Government during the PE Exercise period from 12 September to 12 December 2007.

Data for this Study came from the following sources:

- responses to close-ended questions on 3,170 Wish Cards;
- 10,303 text units from comments made on Wish Cards, from on-line discussion boards on the WKCD website and the Public Affairs Forum website, from sector-specific focus group meetings, public forums, meetings of Legislative Council, relevant statutory bodies, advisory bodies, and District Councils, and written submissions from concern groups and individuals;
- 1,519 responses to the First Telephone Poll; and
- 1,152 responses to the Second Telephone Poll.

RESULTS

The following paragraphs integrate the findings from both the Qualitative and Quantitative Data analyses.

Overall Vision

There is overwhelming support for the overall vision from all sets of data:

- 87% of Wish Card respondents (close-ended question) agree or agree fully, with 55% agreeing fully;
- 74% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or agree fully; and
- 61% of the written comments from all sources are positive.

The Qualitative Data also indicate that there is strong support for early implementation. The respondents thought that the project would be beneficial

to Hong Kong as a whole economically and socially and should start as soon as possible, without further delay.

Optimal Mix of Arts and Cultural Facilities, Suitable Phasing, and Land Reserved for Organic Growth

The data sets indicate strong support for the concept of the facility mix, the phasing, and organic growth:

- 85% of Wish Card respondents (close-ended question) agree or agree fully ;
- 71% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or agree fully; and
- 63% of the written comments from various sources are positive (negative comments constitute only 4%, the rest being suggestions).

The Qualitative Data provide concrete suggestions on individual performance venues, the exhibition centre, the theatreland concept and the M+. A large number of electronic Wish Cards call for the establishment of a Leslie Cheung memorial hall. This appears to be a unique and single lobby whose views were not reflected in other data sources.

Synergetic Clustering and Integration with Retail, Dining and Entertainment (RDE) Facilities

There is considerable support for clustering arts and cultural facilities with retail, dining and entertainment facilities:

- 79% of Wish Card respondents (close-ended question) agree or agree fully;
- 75% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or agree fully; and
- 32% of the written comments from various sources are positive (negative comments constitute only 14%, the rest being suggestions).

Many expressed the wish of having arts and culture integrated into Hong Kong citizens' everyday lifestyle, including dining, retail etc., which could also add vibrancy to the district.

Low Density Development, Spacious, Open Harbour-front for All, and Connectivity with Neighbourhood Communities.

There is overwhelming support from all three data sets for low-density development, open space, and connectivity with neighbourhood communities:

- 86% of Wish Card respondents (close-ended question) agree or agree fully, with 60% agreeing fully;
- 84% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or agree fully; and
- 47% of the written comments from various sources are positive (negative comments constitute only 4%, the rest being suggestions).

Many written comments stressed the importance of integrating the facilities with the harbour-front promenade, as well as physical connectivity and ease of access to the district.

Prudent and Transparent Financing Approach

On the face of it, evidence does not appear to fully converge regarding the proposed financing approach:

- 75% of Wish Card respondents (close-ended question) agree or agree fully with the proposed overall financing approach;
- Only 45% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or agree fully with the proposed capital financing arrangement – an upfront government endowment roughly equivalent to the estimated land value of the residential, office and hotel sites of WKCD being granted;
- 76% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or fully agree with the proposed recurrent financing arrangement – rental proceeds of the commercial sites being used to subsidize WKCD’s operation costs; and
- 21% of the written comments from various sources were positive (negative comments constitute only 14%, the rest being suggestions).

On closer examination, there is considerable convergence of evidence. One possible explanation for the difference is that, unlike the question on the Wish Card which describes both the proposed capital and recurrent financing arrangements, Telephone Poll respondents might have been unaware of the proposed recurrent financing arrangement (because it is asked in a separate question), when the proposed capital financing arrangement question was put to them and might have thought that the upfront endowment would be the only form of government subsidy.

From the written comments, some of those expressed concerns about the capital financing approach were of the view that the endowment might not be adequate, while some were worried that it would make the WKCD Authority become too independent. Some recommended funding by stages. Some pointed out that the proposed financing arrangement did not promote the development of cultural software.

Governance: An Independent Statutory Body with Wide Representation

There is strong support for the proposed Governance structure:

- 79% of the Wish Card respondents (close-ended question) agree or agree fully;
- 76% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or agree fully; and

- 26% of the written comments from various sources are positive (negative comments constitute only 13%, the rest being suggestions).

Many written comments are on the composition, roles and function of the WKCD Authority, and on its autonomy in particular.

Strengthening Cultural Software

There is overwhelming support, from all three data sets, for the Government to put in place appropriate measures to strengthen cultural software and audience-building:

- 86% of Wish Card respondents (close-ended question) agree or agree fully, with 54% agreeing fully;
- 83% of the two Telephone Poll respondents agree or agree fully; and
- 26% of the written comments from various sources are positive (negative comments constitute only 1%, the rest being suggestions).

From the Qualitative Data set, the importance of education in sustaining WKCD is stressed by many.

Other Issues from the Qualitative Data Set

Other major issues derived from analysis of the Qualitative Data include the public engagement exercise and cultural policy for Hong Kong. Views on the public engagement exercise are, in general, positive. The importance of a cultural policy with a clear vision for Hong Kong is emphasized by many.

CONCLUSIONS

It is evident from all the findings that there is strong support for the Consultative Committee's vision, recommendations and early implementation of the project. There is also strong support for low density development, the proposed mode of governance and the need to strengthen cultural software. The only possible exception relates to the financing approach. While there is general support for the Government's overall financing approach, particularly on the recurrent financing arrangement, there are concerns over the extent and coverage of the upfront endowment .