

Chapter 5

Implicit Cultural Policy - the role of Social Clubs in Communities

Intercultural Training Module for culture operators

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Introduction – training scope

Working men's clubs (WMCs)¹ were at the heart of many local communities in the UK for over a century. They arose in the second half of the 19th century and reached a peak of activities in the 1970s. In 1974, for example, there were 4033 clubs affiliated to the CIU², the main umbrella organization for clubs, with over four million members. Today with many clubs closing or struggling to stay open, we can question whether anything else has taken their place as communities themselves go through social and economic shifts. Throughout this training we will seek to draw parallels with European community centres with similar origins, functions, success and decline.

The module builds upon authentic research and is of interest to cultural managers in Europe and Latin America in particular. As further underlined in this paper there is a revival of interest in the citizen-based model of the club.

In the past, many countries witnessed the



PHOTO 1 – Canley Social club 2006, Coventry, R. Cherrington

appearance of reading societies in a similar fashion (e.g. France, Belgium, Greece, and Serbia). However there are important features that distinguish the WMCs. Unexpectedly perhaps we draw a parallel with the “chitalishte – community clubs” from Bulgaria in the work group tasks. That widespread network of communal spaces originated in 1880s and reached 4225 by 1995. Like WMCs they also experienced a decline in the 1990s with many closing down. It has been argued that the “chitalishte” *independent, self-managed and volunteer-based model* multiplied in the 20th Century via the “cultural house” concept spreading in Central and East Europe since the 1920s. (Savova 2007: 195)³.

The task of this training module is to highlight *key management principles and organisational features* of the clubs as a *heart to the cultural life of local communities*. Europe-wide we can note a revival of interest in the **decentralised governance of culture** which points at their organic origin and implicit culture policy again, resulting from a grass-roots principle of governance. While these two networks in Bulgaria and the UK have undergone transformations their “creativity venue” role remains important also in parallel with the concept of the “hubs” as a decentralised model based on local authorities implementing their policy for culture. On a global scale also, the phenomena of “community in culture/arts” (unlike “culture/arts in the community”) is of interest to Intercultura Consult trainers and our learners! Since the 1990s culture community clubs have appeared in Cuba, Brazil, Venezuela, and Colombia becoming of great importance to local community life. (Savova 2007) We will consider key characteristic features of the working men clubs and try to see if there are parallels to be made with community centres

today and whether they are redundant or still needed. We shall seek to identify change that is positive and proactive model of practice strengthening the initiative of communities in arts and culture activities.

WMCs and communities

My interest in social clubs arose from personal links with clubs from very early childhood. There was a social club just across the street from our family home, which was almost an extension of our living room. Most families on the post-war council estate I grew up on regularly used the club. They benefited from its facilities and services. The many **leisure, social, cultural and welfare provisions of the club** were clear to see. Our club, like many others, was at the centre of the community. Yet this has rarely been acknowledged outside the club movement. As a result, politicians, councillors and funding bodies find it hard to see that the repercussions of club closures have a wider relevance than simply being places of leisure. They have clear community links and contribute to community cohesion, as will be discussed here.

The members and the management committees of the clubs also find it hard to connect their local problem to that of other organisations in the country and in the wider European context.

This was my discovery when the personal research interest moved beyond the academic level exchange with the creation of a website - www.clubhistorians.co.uk. This online resource proved that there were key features of the **community clubs still in demand** and the



Image 2 – Clubhistorians website, June 2010

popularity and cultural history of these centres may still have a life to live. Visitors and content creators for this website has grown weekly since its establishment in May 2008.

On the site, any concerned club members or club managers as well as others interested in clubs such as journalists and students writing dissertations on working class culture and change, can share their questions, experiences, memories and concerns. They are encouraged to do so in order to help push for some recognition of what clubs have done and could still do for local communities. Researchers on clubs and cultural centres have found this site and sent in queries and requests for help. After only two years, it had received over 54,000 “hits”, some of them coming from unexpected places including Iran, Morocco, Japan and Brazil.⁴ This interest in the clubs is partly provoked by the **memory of the cultural space**. It is reasonably assumed, although research has yet to be done, that those viewing the site in Afghanistan, as we find several times each month, are serving British soldiers who want to read about their local club while they are away from home. The “*living human treasures*” concept – recognising culture as shared memories - was established in Japan in the 1950s and since then several national systems have introduced respective legislation to be preserve those by promoting social interaction in Korea, The Philippines, Thailand, Romania, France, Czech Republic and Bulgaria. (Savova 2007: 197) As mentioned earlier, in the course of training parallels can be drawn to other community clubs in Europe and beyond. In the **method of a study circle** we would seek to analyse the possibility for club's renaissance in view of their challenges and strongholds.⁵ We will discuss in groups the new communities

and professional networks that may rediscover the potential of citizen **initiative and the creative resources of informal training, arts creation and cultural practice**.

Key concepts

A very useful concept in this training module is “**implicit cultural policy**” because clubs involve *interactive recreation, leisure and arts practices at the local community level*.⁶ Ahearn's distinction between explicit and implicit cultural policy offers a useful way to analyse past and ongoing club trends.

Explicit cultural policy denotes policies actually labelled as “cultural”. What does that mean at the everyday level? Explicit cultural policy might be when a government decides to spend more, or less, on the Arts, to change the national curriculum to include more or less time studying music, or to open new museums or to close them down and not offer support. Explicit cultural policy can be found in a whole raft of various local, national and international programmes and priorities within the Arts and cultural sectors. For example, the European Commission will launch an online public consultation towards mid-September 2010 to gather the opinions of cultural stakeholders on the **next generation of the EU “Culture” programme after 2013**.⁷

“Implicit” cultural policies may not have this label but nevertheless work “**to prescribe or shape cultural attitudes and habits over given territories**” (Ahearn 2009: 141). The concept provides us with a way of including policies and practices which might not at first seem to



PHOTO 3 – Coombe Social club 2008, Coventry, R. Cherrington



Image 4 – Coombe Social club 2010, register online as a concert's venue at <http://www.ents24.com/web/venue/Coventry/Coombe-Social-Club-51220.html>

be about culture at all. Some areas of policy not labelled as “culture” nevertheless affect culture in no uncertain terms. This is implicit cultural policy. For example, we can consider the smoking ban, introduced into England and Wales in July 2007.

Explicitly, this appears to be about reducing or eliminating a perceived unhealthy practice but smoking is often linked to having a drink in company, in bars and clubs, watching sports or playing games such as snooker or darts with friends or family outside the home, having a meal and so on. In this sense, smoking takes on a broader cultural resonance. The smoking ban in some ways has a negative effect on culture especially if it leads to fewer people using clubs and their subsequent closure.

There are also positive examples, as we shall see later in this article.

The clubs should be viewed not only as **objects** but also as **agents** of implicit cultural policy because of issues of *power, patronage and management* not only within individual clubs but also with the overarching CIU organization. For example the WMCs transformed their key functions as recreational places and soon offered more than quiet relaxation to their members. Originally founded on the example of “gentlemen’s clubs”¹⁸ (Solly 1980, Milne- Smith 2006) they soon shaped their own role as local space. Apart from exploring implicit cultural policy as a function of the clubs we can analyse its implications for community creation.

Like the complex and contentious concept of culture itself, “community” is open to diverse interpretations. What do we mean, for example, by “traditional” communities, community cohesion, and online communities? How has “community” been mediated through radio, TV, film, the press and the internet?

These and other questions are posed here with some possible ways of addressing them. In the method of the “study circle” this module could easily be widened to include the reaction to similar community centres, clubs or local cultural institutions in the UK and other countries. The possibilities for cross-cultural comparisons are an integral part of this work and will be flagged up for further discussion.

Social Clubs Defining Characteristics

How did it all begin? Clubs were to be **not-for-profit** and to be “private members only.” This means that once established by the founder members, men had to be nominated for membership, to be formally accepted and to pay annual subscriptions. This immediately gave clubs a special status. They “**belonged**” **to the members, not to a company** (such as a brewery) as pubs were. Anyone can walk off the street into a pub but this was not the case with clubs.

As an overall organisation, the CIU initially helped clubs, sometimes financially and also with advice about how best to run a club. It encouraged self-management and the principle became a reality with many clubs subsequently choosing to affiliate to the CIU in the late 19th century and beyond. Some working men had already established clubs before the CIU or “Union” as it was popularly known was set up. The Coventry Working Men’s Club, for example, reputedly one of the oldest in the country, was *set up by a group of local workers* (weavers) after a particularly difficult strike.⁹ It was intended to be their own space to

go to in their time off which they **managed themselves**. They paid the rent and bills from the subscriptions.

Men wishing to establish clubs would get together to first **raise the money, find premises, make renovations and maybe even do some of the building work**. They were largely the results of their own efforts- not those of the State, neither local councils nor private enterprise.

WMCs were *not-for-profit organizations* before the term had even been invented!

Many of the members, the working men, were used to having a few drinks after work in the pub. In order to attract them, the clubs preferred to offer the chance to share a drink but they also provided **facilities and benefits - both recreational and educational**. Each club was able to decide for itself whether to sell beer or not. Most did and this then helped with their revenue. But attempts were made to avoid drunkenness in clubs and any members who repeatedly became drunk and disorderly were expelled. This was a form of **self-regulation** that clubs were extremely proud of and keen to keep up.

They preferred to police themselves and keep their own “law and order.”

The day-to-day management of the clubs was done by the committee, an elected body from within the membership, who gave their time freely with very few paid positions. Clubs had to have a properly constituted committee and work according to **democratic principles at this very local level**.

The CIU were helpful in this regard but many of the early club men were involved in Trade Unions as well so had this experience. The work was of a **voluntary nature**.

Their commitment to their club was the base



PHOTO 5 – Bentinck Miners Welfare club, Nottingham, 2010, R. Cherrington, listed on the Entertainer, describing evens and facilities for hire, <http://www.the-entertainer.biz>

for this with an occasional bonus for the active members such as trips to other clubs, free beers and attendance at special events.

The well-to-do gentlemen, among early funders and supporters, were welcome initially to help clubs get started but not so their interference in the running of the clubs. Patronage was eventually ruled out as clubs were to **raise their own funds** through *membership fees, beer sales, raffles and other methods* and also with the help of "the Union." Being part of the CIU made them stronger as a part of a growing nationwide network but this organization itself had to go through some changes in its own

structure to become more representative of those it worked for. The early years saw its own management body, the national council; consist only of upper class patrons and gentlemen, from the opposite end of the class hierarchy to the club members. After several internal struggles, this shifted with the council becoming an elected body of representatives from within the club movement. Once again, we see **local democracy in action** but also at higher levels which is further indication of **positive aspects of implicit cultural policy of clubs with their encouragement of self-management and control.**

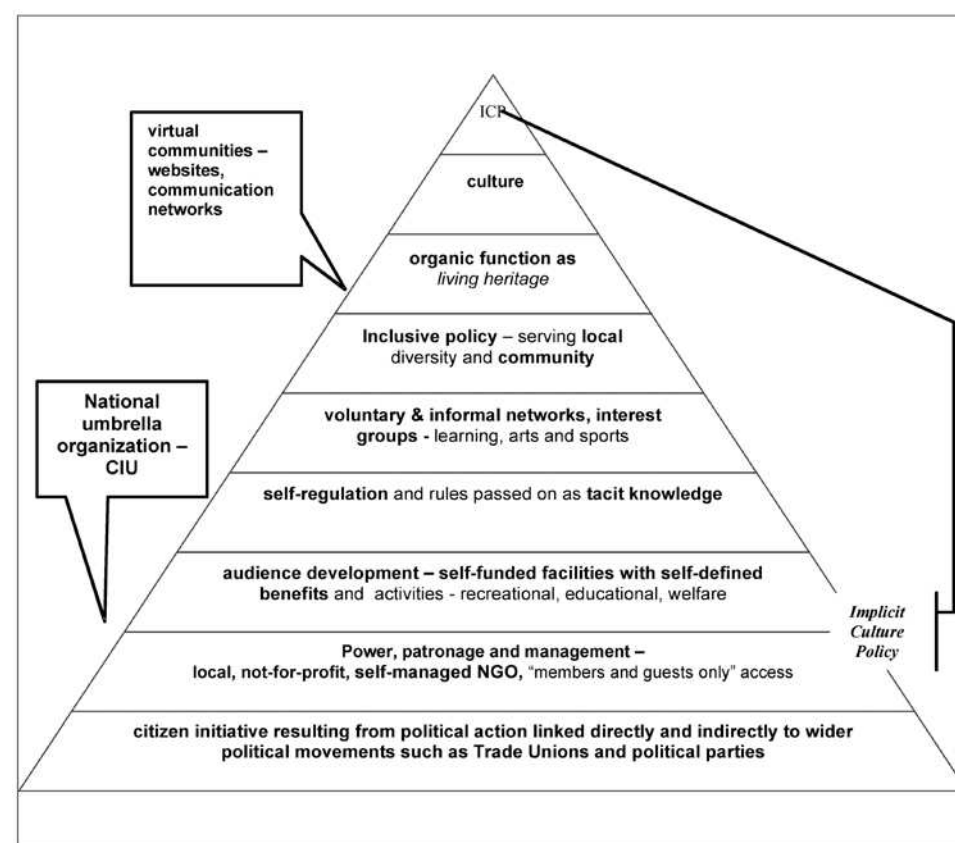


Image 6 – Community clubs - KEY FEATURES, Petya Koleva

Interest groups and informal networks in the club

Informal education was a key part of the early club movement as they were meant to help to improve the working men's lives.¹⁰ Many clubs had a *reading room* where members could read newspapers and borrow books, as well as *games room*. Clubs offered a place for *meetings* to be held. Mass Observation Studies of the late 1930s¹¹ claimed that the early *trade union movement* was greatly assisted by having such rooms available for free in pubs but clubs provided this service as well. There was also entertainment provided, often by the men themselves, in some clubs. The "free and easy" was where anyone who could sing a song or play the piano could do a rendition of their party piece. There were also plays performed so entertainment early on was very much of a "do it yourself" nature. Increasingly *debates* arose about the *balance between education and entertainment* in clubs and, indeed, what sort of entertainment was suitable. Not every club was the same and there soon developed *local diversity*. Some clubs wished to retain educational activities such as lectures and political talks whilst others wanted to bring in paid entertainers for concert parties. Lectures, talks and plays were popular but so were the type of acts found in the music halls of the late 19th century. Once again, it became practice for the clubs to decide for *themselves according to the majority view* of the membership. Even when professional acts were brought in, though, *members would pay for them through the clubs fund or tickets*. And they showed their dislike in no uncertain terms if the acts were not up to scratch.

Overall, educational activities did decline over the years but they never faded completely from club life and we see *strong links with clubs*



FOTO 7 – Children's concert at Canley Social club circa 1958, Coventry R. Cherrington

and *local schools*, for example. Clubs sometimes offered concert rooms as **free public venues** for school performances as well as outside grounds, if they had them, for sports days. This is a good place to make again the links of clubs as agents of **implicit cultural policy** and see the positive aspects.

We can briefly consider what clubs provided right into the present day, not just for their male members but their families and the wider community. Beginning with children and young people, we can see that clubs were generous with parties and outings, such as to the seaside. Every club child looked forward to the annual Christmas party, for example, when food and fizzy pop was provided along with a concert, games and presents at the end of it all.

Club's added value for the community

Clubs were also places to go with parents and grandparents, so that the *generations and groups were not separated* as they so often are today. Although "working men" feature prominently, clubs have mostly included women even from the early decades. Certainly clubs were places to go with the kids to meet other mothers and to "have a laugh" with friends away from home. It was a break from domesticity and women saw clubs as *safe spaces*, feeling more comfortable than in pubs. This remains the case today. There would be a communal "keeping an eye" on the kids in these places of leisure so no need to pay babysitters to look after the children at home. Women often went with

husbands or boyfriends but were able to have separate space and time with their female friends once in a club. The post-war clubs helped to *reduce the feeling of social isolation* of estate living, *when the family of origin is left behind* in another part of town or, indeed, in another town.

Children could meet other children, make new friends, fall out with others, learn social skills as well as about the social norms of the community and about "income groups" or the "class" they were from. Trust and respect as well as success and mistakes were part of **transferring tacit knowledge** in the "public" space. You learned how to take your turn to buy a round of drinks, for example, how to queue for your turn and not upset other people with unruly behaviour. You learnt the unspoken rules as you experienced club life from an early age and there were clear **socialisation aspects** to clubs.

Children also saw how adults enjoyed their leisure time and what happened if they went "too far", for example, with drunk and disorderly behaviour. It was a **controlled leisure environment with clear normative expectations** of behaviour to do with drinking and gambling which helped prepare them for adult life. Nowadays, young people, often separated from other generations, face problems such as underage "binge drinking" which is so often the subject of tabloid sensationalism as well as politician's speeches.¹³

When in a club, people from different age groups can "keep an eye" on the transitional ages such as that of teenagers who can more easily learn the skills of control and independence. *Under-age drinking was not allowed nor encouraged*. It was against the law to serve to under-18s but in some pubs,

underage drinking was allowed as the author knows from personal experience of being able to purchase alcohol at pubs in Coventry from the age of 15. I would never have been allowed to do this in a club.

The *inclusive policy of the community club* was an added value of its responsibility towards its local social structure.

Transfer of *power roles in the club management* was a key intergenerational model sustaining the community. Although much of club life appeared to be informal, there were clear link across the generations. It might have been younger men learning the intricacies of a particular game or sport or *about the running of the club if they were elected* onto the committee. The generations worked together with a view of passing the legacy on to the next generation.

For older members, their club loyalty was rewarded by parties, outings and other benefits such as gifts and some money for a few beers now and then. They were respected and their *company and advice sought* by younger members. Clubs provided a place to go, to meet friends and participate in activities. More *social involvement* clearly means less social isolation which is frequently pointed out by organizations helping the elderly as a key problem to European societies today, as many agencies working with the elderly remind us.¹⁴ When a club member died, there would usually be a minute's silence all over the club, often on a Sunday morning, to pay respect to them. Clubs are also *usually local places* with not very far to travel, which is another important factor. Older and younger people travel less, so local places are better for them. A well known medical fact is that social involvement and interaction and playing games, even bingo, are all highly beneficial for both



PHOTO 8 – Community Pantomime Performance¹² at Bentinck Miners Welfare Club, Kirkby in Ashfield, Nottinghamshire, April 11th 2010 R. Cherrington



PHOTO 9 – Certificates to members of the Coombe Social club 2008, Coventry, R. Cherrington

mental and physical health of kids as well as the elderly. When a local club closes down, links with the community and the outside world are lost. It could be argued that the lack of support by official bodies such as local councils to revitalise the role of clubs is implicit cultural policy. Letting the clubs die has negative social consequences.

Implicit Cultural Policy and the club

In the example already introduced, the changes in behaviour due to the ban on smoking in places such as clubs are still unfolding and still to be properly assessed. More generally the rules observed by individuals are here seen as affecting not only their social life but also the clubs and other leisure spaces that rely on the members' or on the public's custom. It is clear that what might have appeared to be a straightforward health related policy is, in fact, implicitly cultural. The change in the cultural practices of others may offer subtle but nevertheless effective ways to influence the economy and the community. This has certainly been the case with WMCs because clashes of opinion about ideals, aims and practices frequently occurred from the start. Those related to power struggles both within and outside the club movement. Clubs came to play a significant role in cultural-shaping activities. When using the explicit/implicit distinction, various forms of legislative and non-legislative action not labelled as culture can be dealt with. Taxation is a good example here as it would seem to be purely economics and revenue at local and national levels. Clubs

can be negatively effected, as they have been by changes in the gaming and gambling taxes but it could work the other way if they were exempted from these due to their community status. There have been a few examples of local councils reducing property taxes on clubs in order to assist their dire financial circumstances and help them to keep their doors open to their members and the community. Such tax breaks, in fact, have been recommended as a part of a package of assistance to community pubs also as much under threat as clubs in the current economic climate, after a detailed study. Muir's points about community cohesion, the "pub in the hub" and social networks, could be similarly applied to clubs. (Muir 2009) This would be a positive example of implicit cultural policy. An exemption from the smoking ban would have also have been implicit cultural policy. Clubs were originally meant to be exempt but the former Labour government changed their minds at the last minute thus causing dismay for clubs. The opponents of WMCs can also be seen here as agents of cultural policy. The change of leisure habits of the working classes was not always welcome. We could cite, for example, the "anti-drink brigade", or temperance reform who wanted to stop people drinking in pubs or clubs. There were grassroots protests against this movement from within the club movement (though some members didn't drink!) as well as some that were in favour from within the church and the Salvation Army. Whether for and against drinking, these movements prove that cultural policy is not to be viewed simply from a top-down perspective, especially when there is resistance to explicit as well as implicit cultural policies. (Cherrington 2009) In the late 19th century, there were some unlikely alliances between working class groups in favour or

against drinking with groups from higher up the social scale.

The explicit/implicit cultural policy distinction offers great potential, to broaden the scope of cultural policy studies by placing it beyond its more usual historically legitimate expertise in arts subsidy and regulation. Wider definitions of *culture as a way of life* go far beyond state policies on the arts and music.

The links of clubs with local schools has already been mentioned but in many places they also provided a shared social space, a *free or relatively cheap venue for meetings, concerts and get together events*. These locations for the members of the community have *facilitated local activities in many informal ways*. It also provided a place for identity building for the local residents. The clubs also provided some paid jobs such as the bar staff that would aid both the local and national economy. Bennett observed that "a significant broadening of the field" has already led to increasing acceptance that, "the state and the institutions it funds are not the only- nor necessarily the most significant- game in town."¹⁵

The view here is that a restrictive use of the term "cultural policy" has excluded social institutions such as WMCs from serious analysis. The implicit role of the CIU as a cultural policy agent can be observed in its *promotion of charity work* from very early on. First of all, clubs engaged with fundraising for its own convalescence homes where CIU club members could spend time recuperating from illness and operations, then for other "good causes." Often they would choose a local charity to support or to raise money for a member's sick child who needed special surgery. Plus they participated in national fund raising events such as "Red Nose Day", which



PHOTO 10 – Hen Social club trophies 2008, Coventry, R. Cherrington



PHOTO 11 – Children's Christmas party Canley Social club circa 1958, Coventry, R. Cherrington

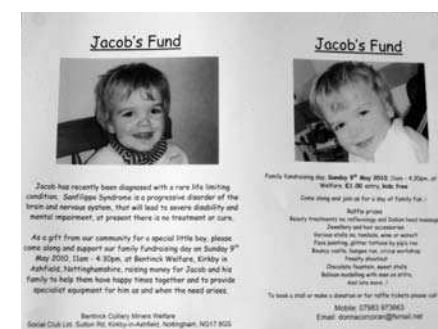


PHOTO 12 – Bentsick Miners Welfare Club, family fundraising event with a raffle and special activities, April 11th 2010, R. Cherrington

Image 13 Haringay Online, June 2010

Image 14 – Agenda 21 for culture logo

is a nationwide charity appeal to help poorer nations, based on comedy and the involvement of comedians. (A Red Nose is traditionally linked with downs.) There was a form of **welfare** provided by clubs long before the Welfare State was invented with some financial help for members fallen on hard times.

With the cutting back of public spending and clubs declining, is the network for welfare support and the “local community” leader role being reshaped? Perhaps it can be reborn in the space between virtual and real communities, what I term here the “new third space” between everyday offline, face to face contact and online virtual contact. *Online communities* can lead to offline actions and interactions. An example of such activity is now being investigated in terms of the role of online interest groups in terms of local neighbourhood/community websites in London, set up by local residents themselves. One such website being researched, located in a North London district, has attracted over 2000 members who regularly exchange views about local politics, the state of roads, crime, shops and forthcoming events.¹⁶

Haringay Online is one of the leading community sites and turns resident's attention to local facilities such as a working man's club. Communities are being rebuilt and regenerated so why not include existing clubs in this process? Many councils such as Coventry City, plan to spend money on building new community centres or "hubs" instead of looking to see what can be done with existing clubs, once at the heart of local communities. A "hub" is meant to be a centre which is full of activity for all ages and community residents, where different things are offered

and take place. This term is now preferred to the older one of community centre, because they were often underused and left standing empty for most of the week. The ideas behind the hub, however, as well as the funding, seem to come from the local council with consultation amongst the community. Unlike the clubs it cannot be seen as a grassroots initiative which were envisaged, paid for and sometimes even built by residents themselves. The hub may contain photos of the past in the local area, nostalgia for what is gone, and unlike the club it is the past as passive rather than an active source of continuity in the organic decision-making and self-management structures of community links, threads and possibilities expressed by a local, community entrepreneurship.

Refurbishments in clubs, updating their image, bringing the generations together, bringing in families, are all possibilities but these need funding and explicit recognition and support. The clubs are not in a position to do-it-themselves though they could be, once again, if some initial assistance in ***new management skills and network creation*** could be shared. (Koleva, Dietachmair 2009) With support in terms of tax breaks new initiatives and projects would stimulate activities at local level. New residents on the estates where old clubs are established might then be tempted to go inside and join in the activities rather seeing them as antiquated and irrelevant structures. The model of the clubs is already utilised in the “World Café” prototype of social networking.¹⁷ However the so called “**agenda 21**” - **cities and local governments** for cultural development – is where we see clubs as important agents of implicit cultural policy for the community. Around 300 cities, local governments and organisations from all over the world are

linked to Agenda 21 for culture. Among the 16 key principles, we wish to point out these:

Culture and governance - Quality of local development depends on the *interweaving of cultural policies and other public policies*, Local governance: a *joint responsibility of citizens, civil society and governments*; improvement of assessment mechanisms in culture. System of cultural indicators; importance of networks and international cooperation; Participation of local governments in national cultural policies and programmes **Culture, sustainability and territory** which upholds this principle “- *Public spaces as cultural spaces*” and **Culture and social inclusion** - access to culture at all stages of life, ... Building audiences and *encouraging cultural participation as vital elements of citizenship*; **Culture and economy**- Recognition of the economic dimension of culture. Importance of culture as a factor in the creation of wealth and economic development; Funding culture with various sources, such as *subsidies, venture capital funds, micro-credits or tax incentives*. ...¹⁸

“Community centre”
diversity of local models

The implications of this analysis extend beyond the UK as cultural and leisure institutions elsewhere can be similarly examined. Social clubs in Australia, for example as well as more generally specific types of bars and pubs across Europe can be considered in this way. There are also many possible historical comparisons, such as the café society of late 19th century Vienna. They are places where people gather not only to drink and socialise but express shared cultural identities.



PHOTO 15, 16 – Chitalishte 'Probuda' built in 1951, photos 1975 and 2010, Kosta Stoyanov, Byala, Varna region



PHOTO 17 – Chitalishte 'Todor Peev' Etropole, Sofia region, May 2010, Petya Koleva

WMCs were not alone in European history as centres to help transform the working classes into active “citizens” and integrate them into an expanding democratic process. In Bulgaria, we can point to the “**chitalishte**” – a community club which was set up as result of citizen-led action promoting the political and cultural rights and freedoms of the Bulgarian nation in the period of its liberation from Ottoman rule. You can see on the images below that the authentic buildings located in the very centre of the city, town or village and built with citizen donations and with volunteer work have been preserved in most of the 3500 such cultural centres still existing today. Their location reflects the **all-inclusive policy of the citizen initiative** leading to their creation. The implicit choice behind this networking platform was to provide social cohesion across educational or social backgrounds, age, gender or economic barriers. It is worth noting that these are the only social and cultural organisations that remained legally **non-governmental institutions** during the socialist rule in Bulgaria. (Savova 2007)

The name means “reading space”, although these establishments offered **multi-purpose social infrastructure** where educational clubs, learning centres, social support and arts activities centres would be located. The key features of the WMC’s implicit cultural policy described above in **image 2** can be further be traced in parallel to the “chitalishte” as can also the decline of activities currently. Today some of them are successful in reconsidering their new role as a cultural space and networking agent of the local community. In the case of Byala’s “Probuda” this is true not only in regards to its cultural programme but also in the example of it hosting an annual festival of the chitalishte centres in June and

incorporating a **training retreat for managers** of those organisations. Some of the “chitalishte” social centres were moved into larger cultural complexes during the Socialist regime in the 80s. These housed professional theatre and conference halls, equipped music and dance rehearsal spaces or a conventional cinema theatre. They formed another network of impressive “local” cultural centres built by initiative of the public authorities. They present an instance of a top-bottom cultural policy, as an explicit instrument of the state in support of the cultural industries.

Many of those central buildings and their clubs or cultural organisations ran into financial trouble with the retreat of the state from funding local cultural institutions.

The Budapest Observatory of Culture has indicated the existence of “**houses of culture**” in other countries, speaking of a “type of cultural centres common in Central and East Europe which are not usually traced by national cultural statistics.” (Newsletter 2, March 2010) While these cultural institutions were created with public money and for social purposes, today they are somewhere in between being state-funded and needed local institutions. They provide another example of an alternative cultural space that is close to the definition of a community club because of their hosting of local activities and interest groups on the basis of local initiative and cultural entrepreneurship. At the same time, their existence depends and is limited by the “safety belt” of public funding as they belong to the authorities (national, regional or local).

Similar centres or networks are to be found in other places in Europe. In a smaller town in Italy today the social infrastructure for purposes such as social networking, arts and culture is

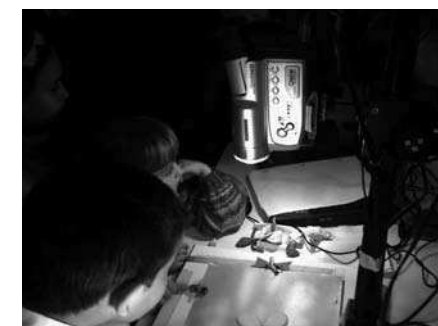


PHOTO 18, 19 – Children learn stop-motion animation during the “Fiabesque” festival, Centro Polivalente, Peccioli, Italy; P. Koleva 2007



PHOTO 20 – uqbar Berlin-Wedding project space - a multifunctional space for exhibitions, meetings, presentations, seminars, conferences, screenings and workshops, featuring Berlin based and international artists, 2009, P. Koleva, 2007

entitled “centro polivalente” which means centre for various needs. We may conclude that these various types of social infrastructure - centres or clubs - listed above share one similar trait. They offer “free or cheap” rent and some networking support to cultural organisations or arts/culture activities and indeed in all of these cases they are an agent of implicit cultural policy.

Further research is needed in order to assess how many and which type of these organisations provide a space explicitly for self-managed community activities. The roles of citizen’s initiatives and clubs’ features linked to the functions of the community centre must be further explored. We argue that the link to the local needs of the public demands that artistic and cultural initiatives are close to the community. This is what distinguishes the community-size, cultural spaces from those more formally established through top-down state policy or economic logic that is often governed by the initiative to build “new cultural spaces.” These tend to be huge, expensive and detached from communal networks. Implicit cultural policy, by contrast, is found in action in the examples of Bulgarian, English, Turkish, Greek (etc.) cafes and clubs, both at home and in areas of diaspora, where they become also centres of culture and assist in the (re) production of cultural identity and community practices including those of cultural diversity. It is also found in the flexible, small structures of arts clubs or initiatives that dare to house transient works and workshops stimulating exchange in the artistic and cultural processes.

Note

- ¹The term **Working Men’s Club** is used here as a generic term to describe various social clubs set up by their members from the 19th century onwards. Many originally had this in their club name but it has become less popular in the past few decades with many clubs dropping this in an attempt to show modernity and equality.
- ²The main club organisation set up in 1862 as the Working Men’s Club and Institute Union (WMCUI) now more commonly known as the **CIU**. Also referred to as ‘the Union.’
- ³Nadejda Savova has researched the ‘chitalishte’ network since 2007 and continues to publish on this topic.
- ⁴www.clubhistorians.co.uk site statistics week ending May 14th 2010.
- ⁵**Study circles** are typically created by people who discover a common interest, whilst other study circles may be created to analyze and find solutions to social, political or community problems.
- ⁶Ahearne 2009, Bennett 2009, Cherrington 2009
- ⁷http://ec.europa.eu/culture/news/news2624_en.htm
- ⁸Solly recognised that working class people couldn’t entertain at home and looked to the gentlemen’s clubs frequented by upper class men, for some inspiration as a model for WMCs. He believed that the clubs would help keep men out of pubs and their money in their pockets, thus benefiting their families.
- ⁹Many early clubs were set up by men in the same profession. Weaving was one of Coventry’s key industries in the mid-to late 19th century and some weavers came together to **open a club for mutual benefit**. See Cherrington, 2008.
- ¹⁰**Informal learning** denotes that which takes place outside formal designated spaces of learning such as schools, colleges and universities. It might involve direct tuition through talks, lectures and workshops but not with the aim of passing exams or tests at the end. Or, informal learning can occur when people with a shared interest get together and those with more knowledge and experience pass these on to others without necessarily consciously aiming to ‘teach’ them anything. (Koleva 2010)
- ¹¹Mass Observation sent observers to the pubs of ‘Worktown’ in the north of England to find out not only how people used pubs but their meanings and significance. Much of this work is applicable to the clubs. See Harrison, T. (1970 2nd edition) *The Pub and the People: a Worktown Study* by Mass Observation, Welwyn Garden City: Seven Dials Press.
- ¹²‘Happily Ever After’ Community Pantomime Performance provided by Talegate Theatre, based in Retford, Notts. Thanks to Kate Lindsey and James Worthington for allowing reproduction of this image of their performance.
- ¹³During the UK General Election Campaign in 2010, Conservative leader David Cameron (now Prime Minister) frequently referred to ‘**broken Britain**’ with some youths being out of control and having no respect for society.
- ¹⁴See, for example, **Age UK** website
- ¹⁵Bennett, O. 2009. p. 156
- ¹⁶See www.harringayonline.com This site was an initiative of a few local residents but it quickly took off and expanded. It increasingly attracts the attention and involvement of local politicians, the media and community support agencies. The author is actively involved in this site and is attempting to give the local under-used working man’s club higher visibility through the site and to encourage greater use as a community facility as well as part of local history and heritage. It is another example of positive implicit cultural policy.
- ¹⁷<http://www.theworldcafe.com/twc-stories.htm>
- ¹⁸<http://www.agenda21culture.net> The website <http://www.agenda21culture.net> hosts all the resources, including translations of the document into several languages, articles, publications, news and events.

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Implicit Cultural Policy - the role of Social Clubs in Communities

Intercultural Training Module for culture operators

ICC ©, inter-cultura.eu

In the method of a study circle we seek to analyse the possibility for the social community club's renaissance in view of their challenges and strongholds. We will discuss in groups the new communities and professional networks that may rediscover the potential of citizen initiative and the creative resources of informal training, arts creation and cultural practice. (Koleva 2010)

Joint opening warm up game / informal walk to training venue via a cultural site discovery route

Introduction to the subject including and Q&A (60 minutes)

This training begins with an interactive "talk," supported by PowerPoint slides.

Coffee/tea break – max 20 minutes

Buzz groups then discuss and brainstorm assigned scenarios and report back to the large group during a debriefing/Q & A session, facilitated by the presenter.

Coffee/tea break – max 20 minutes

Workshop interactivity (60 minutes)

A role-play activity for Club Leaders is also provided as a game based on the comparative chart of social clubs and cultural centers.

Joint closure - informal walk to an exhibition or performance with optional lunch or free time

Topic	Visuals & Materials	Trainees - optimal number 7 to 21
This training provides local culture managers with the resources to structure their profiles as cultural initiatives provider on community centre grounds	animated materials sustaining interaction , - websites and online tools (YouTube videos, sites), DVDs, photos of clubs and typical culture activities animated materials sustaining action – authentic research material transformed into role play and comparative chart identification	meet one of the following requirements: 1. are a culture/arts professional. 2. are a certified cultural manager 3. Have received training in management techniques 4. Have written documentation of having other training in these fields that is recognized at higher education level 5. Have successfully completed cultural cooperation projects executed at local level within a community club

Learning Objectives & trainee benefits	At the end of this session, the participants will be able to: Develop strategies to assist clubs and/or community centres - in defining their public advocacy profile in relation to implicit and explicit cultural policy - in getting the full benefit of their cultural entrepreneurship potential - Identifying key proactive methods to invigorate communal involvement in arts and culture - Recognize both the challenges and opportunities that community centre provides for the culture operators	
The module as part of an ongoing intercultural Culture Strategies training series offer by ICC	The trainers' feedback is collected via direct evaluation forms and indirectly via informal talks and follow-up communication with the target group	Key recommendations to inter-cultural trainers of culture operators will be refined in the course of trainings

OUTLINE OF PPT for a detailed training (2 days)

Characteristics of clubs / community centres

5 minutes

Ask the participants to describe characteristics of local community centres they relate to.

Slide 2, depicting the most recognizable characteristics and acknowledging those that they mentioned: **independent, self-managed and volunteer-based aspects** associated with the community foundation **model** of the clubs

Explain that those are merely the "Tip of the Iceberg"; more complex factors and characteristics are "**implicit**."

5 minutes

Slide 3, Note that a *cultural policy per se* will not be discussed here. The focus here is to **illustrate issues of community culture present in the citizen-created clubs / centres** that are not always visible from the outside.

5 minutes

Slide 4 – 7 Tips

15 minutes

Slide 4, Emphasize that in order for community centres to get the most out of **cultural entrepreneurship**, it is essential for members and community (both creators and supporters) to work together collaboratively. This can be done with citizen based initiatives realised with the recruitment of volunteers, by delegating tasks of the work programme to social committees such as those advising local authorities on culture, or the creation a public advocacy tool to target donors, as well as via online tools – sites, forums, social media and special audience development through key events.

Slide 5, Encourage learners to let you know if **their club has invested in outreach activities or partnerships with social or cultural service providers and policy-makers**, so that you can find out what their needs are. Be sure to ask them what works well and what does not help in their communication with virtual to real audiences, what are the management tools applied.

Slide 6, Encourage learners to let share experiences and note down possible **action points!** Work in groups to develop a written action plan and support them if needed.

Slide 7, Encourage learners to consider getting trained to initiate projects for cooperation themselves. Knowledge of the Culture Strategies program of ICC will make it easier for them to communicate their culture cooperation and entrepreneurship needs, and they will become an invaluable resource for colleagues with similar needs and for their community as well.

Audio-Visual Resources

1. Last Orders, BBC2 TV programme about the demise of Working Men's Clubs, March 2008
2. New Members Welcome! Film made by Sussex University Students about Brighton Trades and Labour Club, Brighton (May 2010)
3. Selection of photos provided by R. Cherrington from different WMCs in UK
4. Podcast by R. Cherrington (Warwick Univ 2008)
5. Selected pages of www.clubhistorians.co.uk
6. Web pages of some clubs online
7. Selection of published articles by R. Cherrington
8. Selection of published articles by N. Savova
9. Selection of research papers and photos provided by P. Koleva and ICC experts, learners and partners from different community clubs and centres in Europe.