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Theme: Crisis, chaos and change: Caribbean Development Challenges in the 21st Century

“Export Orientation and the Cultural Industries: The Case of Barbados”

Abstract

This paper will examine the case of Barbados and how it is strategically repositioning its economy towards export orientation by looking at its policies for culture and the cultural industries. Part I will examine very briefly the successes and challenges of Barbados after 40 years of Independence as a backdrop to understanding its current cultural policy in the framework of development. Part II will review the goals of the national strategic plan and the emanating cultural policy before an analysis of the cultural exports, and their support mechanism in Part III.

Keywords

Cultural Industries, Export Orientation, Technology

The State of Barbadian Development After 40 Years of Independence –

The Successes

On November 30th, 2006 Barbados celebrated four complete decades of ‘Independence’. For many academicians, economists and general onlookers, Barbados is indeed a success story of self-determination, having achieved a significant level of development in short space of time after World War II. What are these key success factors and indicators?

Firstly, the island boasts a 99% literacy rate with free education from age five right through to university level. With unprecedented expansion at the UWI Cave Hill Campus and plans to implement the University College of Barbados (UCB), the Barbados Government has set the target of one university graduate per household by 2025. This kind of investment in education has been the main catalyst in creating a large middle class made up of mainly professionals and government employees. The per capita income now stands at US\$11000 and Barbados’ ranking on the UN Human Development Index has been fluctuating between 26th and 31st over the last ten years.

Secondly, there is a universal health care system in place from cradle to grave. This system includes free health care at the island’s lone hospital and polyclinic network. Together with affordable private health care, Barbados has been able to successfully avert the kind of health care crises associated with developing countries.

These social successes have been facilitated by a stable democracy together with an impressive record of overall economic growth over the 40 year period. Nonetheless there are some challenges that continue to plague the country’s further development that will ensure its thrust into full development.

The Failures and Challenges

One of the founding fathers or craftsmen of Barbados’ Independence was the late Sir Cameron Tudor, who reached positions of eminence in the public service that included the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Education, Minister of Foreign Affairs and Barbados’ High Commissioner to Ottawa. It was Sir James who summed it up perfectly in a conversation with me while I was still a teenager when he said that “Barbados is a First World country with Third World constraints.” Sir James’ view of the world was conditioned by a Cold War reality and though we no longer apply these names to categorize nations in International Relations, his point remains valid.

In other words, there’s nothing in the developed world, materially, that is inaccessible to Barbadians; and our quality of life surpasses that of some developed countries. However we continue to be constrained by our inability to generate enough hard currency to support our consumption. This leads us to a negative balance of payments and invariably we continue to fall into the debt trap.

The quest for foreign exchange is driven by habits of consumption that we first copied from our ‘plantation masters’ and subsequently from the behaviors of artificial lifestyles promoted through the mass media which are controlled and dominated by American and other Western capitalist/industrialist interests. In other words, we borrow their money with interest to buy their own goods. This makes the debt trap twofold, one is financial and the other is psycho-cultural. Who

determines what our living rooms should look like, what foods we eat and how we eat them, the clothing that we wear, and the technology that we use? Though this may seem obvious, overworked and, to many, naïve it is an important challenge to address in we are to develop our cultural industries in any meaningful way. Indeed it was Professor Nettleford who surmised that:

“This is why those new Caribbean men who claim to be in the vanguard of change and development must avoid being mere mimic men and, instead, try to find not only new paths but also new ways of traversing old paths. In all this our Caribbean Experience must be a primary source of energy for the quest. But it will be so only if we are prepared to vest the Experience with the intrinsic validity of its being, and if we are courageous enough to recognize its weaknesses without self-pity and celebrate its strengths with conviction and faith.”¹

The Barbadian problematique is further compounded by a latent race problem that all parties seem afraid to openly discuss without offending each other. The simple reality is that the legacy of slavery has left us with an unfortunate social configuration whereby most of the country’s wealth is in the hands of a white minority that still controls big business within our context. So that the yielding of political power to the black majority in 1966 forced upon us the need for a pragmatic compromise in order to achieve social cohesion. However, this pragmatic compromise has brought with it a number of challenges and perhaps negative implications for our cultural development and expression.

In fact, it is the erstwhile director of Culture at Barbados’ National Cultural Foundation (NCF), Elombe Mottley, who describes this picture as the “Siege Mentality”.

“But whites in Barbados have failed time and time again to understand and/or acknowledge the psychological impact of the demonization of blackness and the destruction of memory and achievement of African peoples by European ideas, ideals and philosophy and religion. Nor have the white understood the nature of the power emanating from Eurocentric biases against black people simply because, in spite of their own incarceration, they saw themselves and still see themselves as extensions of that power of whiteness. Thus black political power is seen as meaningless and buyable through “social acceptance” or crass economic support...Until something is done about this siege mentality there will always be a distrust of the intentions of many of the leaders in the business community who use colour as a means of perpetuating control.”²

Mottley and Nettleford are therefore in agreement by suggesting that until we are bold enough to be true to our honest Caribbean Experience which is strongly rooted in a predominant African experience and cultural expression then we are doomed to be under siege, not only by dominant elites but also by our self-imposed defeatist attitudes of shame, surrender to a Eurocentric value system and fear. Such fears are played out everyday in how we create policies and socio-economic interventions, in the speeches we make in the various international fora and in how we negotiate our space in the global system as we seek foreign direct investment, recognition and prestige as a freed people.

¹ Rex M. Nettleford (2nd ed.), **Caribbean Cultural Identity: The Case of Jamaica**, Miami: Ian Randle Publishers 2003, pg. 145.

² Elombe Mottley, **Identities** (Vol. 1), Jamaica: Fatpork Ten-Ten Productions, 2003, pp. 29-30.

The Opportunities & Threats

It is perhaps sinister, and to many almost vulgar, that Caribbean governments have now turned to culture as a way out of our economic hardships and dependencies. If we accept that **culture is the implicit and explicit behavior of a people that evolves into a distinctive profile and pattern over time and through space; then culture becomes the overarching behavioral system that embraces all human constructs in a given space affected by events, ethnicities and spontaneous reactions, interpretations and manifestations of a peoples' understanding of who they are.** Such an understanding of culture gives us in Barbados and indeed the Caribbean, an opportunity to create another economic plank of development.

I will not use this space to define and discuss what development is or is not, but suffice it to say that Barbados' impressive record of Human Development sets the tone for an implicit understanding of this construct. In other words, it is simply about satisfying basic human needs through good health care, education and housing. Nonetheless, the new Caribbean political dispensation, in the current post-colonial period of consolidation, seems to accept that these indicators are not enough and we are thereby starting to hear echoes of entrepreneurship and wealth creation. Out of this new modality of political thought, policy and intervention comes the idea of using the cultural industries as a new development strategy by configuring Barbados as a Creative Economy.³

This is an ambitious idea and program where, simply put, the Barbados Government intends to use our collective artistic and cultural abilities as an alternative and complement to our tourism and international business industries. This is nothing new and is perhaps a bit late in coming in our post-colonial experience. Our Latin American neighbors have long used cultural policy to support other streams of developmental policies and interventions. Miller and Yudice examine this by showing how as early as the 1930s and 1940s both Mexico and the Sao Paulo industrialists of Brazil made concerted efforts to link cultural institutionalization and policy to their economic modernization programs. This included massive investments in universities, arts programs, museums and development of television and other media as well as determined linkages to other state policies in tourism, education and development.⁴

As such, it is unfortunate that in the Caribbean we always tend to look toward the industrialized West for our models, but Latin America (including Cuba) has a rich experience in cultural policy and strategic linkages to developmental strategy. The opportunities to develop our creative economy but government has done very little to implement the myriad of recommendations after spending hundreds of thousands of dollars on consultants' report.

Concomitant to developing the Creative Economy is the need to stimulate our citizens to respect and accept science and technology as an integral part of our consciousness and thereby part of our everyday living experience. Until this is achieved, the Creative Economy will remain a loose policy of disconnected ideas and programs that will not coalesce into meaningful ways of earning foreign exchange. In fact, without a complementary Science and Technology policy that seeks to enable, build national institutions and empower the masses, we run the real risk of continuing along the path of Sir Arthur Lewis' cycle of dependency. If the technological inputs that are necessary to boost the

³ See The National Task Force on Cultural Industries, Policy Paper to Inform the Propelling of Barbados' Creative Economy: A Cultural Industries Development Strategy, Barbados 2004, 171 p.

⁴ See Toby Miller and George Yudice, **Cultural Policy**, London: Sage Publications Ltd, 2002, pg. 129.

cultural industries are imported at top dollars and our outputs are sold at ‘competitively lower prices’ on the international market, then we will not achieve our objectives of using these industries to become net foreign exchange earners. In other words, the industrialized West and the emerging economies of Asia continue to dominate in Science and Technology and as such command the best price for their products by constantly beating the market with new products. If we continue to consume these products without attracting a commensurate rate of foreign direct investment, the cycle of dependency will not be broken.

The Internet therefore presents the most affordable outlet for us to broker a more equitable position in international trade as a technological platform to market and commercialize our goods and services. However, our reaction time remains very slow and we are missing these opportunities by the second. Here again, it is instructive to note that the main providers of Internet access are not Caribbean governments but foreign owned companies coming out of the industrialized West. For too long the Commonwealth Caribbean has been exploited for profits without benefiting from the real returns after we have provided the platform in terms of our labor, our hospitality to the investor and our incentives to invest in the region.

A case in point is that of the banking industry which is heavily controlled, in Barbados, by Canadian interests. Much of the e-commerce and e-business platforms require a banking interface and partnership to move beyond a mere web page to meaningful and sustainable business and trade development. However, these foreign owned banks, while they have made such investments and technological developments in their home countries, and thus empowering their citizens to participate in consumer-to-consumer trade via the Internet, they have strategically crippled the Caribbean region by refusing to make commensurate levels of investment in technology. Hence, Internet banking, e-commerce and e-business are slow on the take and the Caribbean continues to miss innumerable opportunities. This sad state of affairs coupled with the fact that our telecommunications sector faces similar control gives further credence to Elombe’s siege mentality. Later on in this paper I shall speak to how the West Coast model of development is impacting on the local art market and affecting its ability to be price competitive for the export market.

Nonetheless it is against this backdrop of relative success, challenge, opportunity and threat that Barbados is faced with the task of developing a policy and program matrix that will position it more equitably in the international system, if only from a human developmental standpoint.

II

National Strategic Planning & Culture

This section will briefly examine a sampling of Barbados developmental policies which can be seen as critical if we are to make the strategic shift towards an export oriented economy. The overarching document is the National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2005 – 2005 which one hopes will serve as the umbrella for all national policies, especially that of culture.

This plan in a very broad sense has six strategic goals:⁵

GOAL ONE speaks to a cultural transformation that will reinforce Barbadian values and national identity and act as a catalyst for propelling Barbados into the 21st century as a fully developed society. This goal will seek to create greater equity and social justice, while building an inclusive society with opportunities for all. (my emphasis)

GOAL TWO envisions vastly improved governance. It foresees a Barbados with, a “fully Barbadianized” constitution free of all vestiges of colonialism; a modernized parliamentary and electoral system; greatly enhanced political participation and the empowerment of all communities. It also envisions a radical overhaul of the administrative machinery of government as a catalyst for change, while also strengthening civil society as a critical part of the governance for the 21st century. It further envisages that there will be higher levels of self-reliance, less dependency on the state and greater diversity and tolerance.

GOAL THREE places people at the heart of the development process. It promotes the building of social capital. This involves the development of the human resources necessary to function in a knowledge-based services economy and the creation of appropriate family and community values. This calls for a revolution in education, which will unlock the productive potential of all Barbadians. A good quality of life will also be paramount and, therefore, a well-developed public health system and the eradication of poverty from our social landscape will all be part of this social transformation.

GOAL FOUR requires the protection, preservation and enhancement of our physical infrastructure, environment and scarce resources as we seek to advance our social and economic development. It demands that we find the right balance between our development and the preservation of our physical surroundings. It calls for access to adequate water and energy supplies, a good transportation system and the development and maintenance of sound infrastructure.

GOAL FIVE seeks to enhance Barbados’ prosperity and competitiveness in the world economy. This will require rapid and radical transformation in the way we carry out our productive activities. We must identify those areas of economic activity that are viable and competitive, and that can contribute to sustainable growth, employment and overall prosperity for everyone. Focusing on the

⁵ This overview is taken verbatim from the National Strategic Plan of Barbados 2005-2025, Prepared by the Research And Planning Unit Economic Affairs Division Ministry Of Finance And Economic Affairs Government Headquarters Bay Street, St. Michael, Barbados Telephone: (246) 436-6435 Fax: (246) 228-9330 E-Mail: economicaffairs@gov.bb June, 2005

export of services such as tourism and international business, while exploiting new ones such as culture and health, will all contribute to a more diversified and prosperous economy.

GOAL SIX calls for us to continue consolidating our image in the world. This image has served us well and has brought us considerable international respect since independence. Our political stability, education, democratic governance and good leadership have all earned for Barbados worldwide recognition. Our duty will be to continue to show others how a small country can be successful and yet retain its identity; in other words, we have to brand Barbados globally.

Defining Barbadian Culture, Technology & Cultural Policy

It is important to note that Barbados' Cultural Policy is still in draft format. However, it is further noteworthy that it takes its lead from the aforementioned National Strategic Plan and the CARICOM Cultural Policy serves as its template and ideological guideline.

Any definition of Barbadian culture must take into account this country's post independence nation-building efforts; its socio-economic structural and infrastructural development; and ultimately, its concept of self-determination. It can be argued that the early pioneers of a newly independent nation should have given culture a more primary role. By 1979, the Barbados Government took the initiative, for the first time after independence, to draft a comprehensive report and plan for Barbadian culture – this was assigned to one of our preeminent son of the soil, Edward Kamau Brathwaite. Brathwaite, would go on to define Barbadian culture broadly as being an:

“historically influenced life-style and expression, taking into special account the ancestral forces that have contributed to this life-style and expression...so that Amerindian, European and African orientations and influences must be taken into account; as must folk forms, colonial patterns, bourgeois-native, radical/experimental and metropolitan/modern formations.”⁶

It is arguable that a more current definition of Barbadian culture must also consider the impact of our physical environment, landscape and inherent ‘smallness’ on our “Barbadianness”. In the absence of a greater landmass and a wider array of natural resources, this has brought with it the innate cycle of dependency on foreign markets for goods and services, small market size, territoriality, and even escapism. These features need not be construed negatively as they have been balanced with a necessity of innovation, creativity and most of all, pragmatism. In other words, our history, environment and ancestry have all contributed to a culture that thrives on pragmatism.

The notion of pragmatism is reflected in the country's approach to politics, economic management and social development. So, if we accept that culture embraces and overrides all national systems then that notion of a Barbadian culture must not be limited only to how it is articulated in the arts, but also how we behave as political, economic and social beings.

Furthermore, the size-limitation of 166 squared miles is becoming less relevant as the region moves towards the reality of a single economic space within the CARICOM context. Therefore, a cultural examination of who we are and will be in the 21st century must account for a reality that is inclusive

⁶ Edward Kamau Brathwaite, **Bajan Culture Report & Plan**, UNESCO/Ministry of Culture, Barbados, 1979, p.4

of the wider Caribbean and its potential impact on what is traditionally thought to be an exclusive Barbadian space. This tilts, explicitly, towards multiculturalism, so that the almost racially homogenous society of Brathwaite's 1979 report must now be analyzed within a broader context of influences and confluences of other races, ethnicities and behaviors converging into a particular space and time, called the Barbadian cultural experience. This is particularly pointing in devising a cultural policy since Barbados is also a signatory to UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity.

The move towards the Caribbean Single Market as well as preparations for the Cricket World Cup in 2007 has brought the need for imported labor into Barbados from the rest of the Caribbean. Historically, Barbados has not had much diversity outside of white European descendent and African descendents. The increasing number of Indo-Caribbean immigrants has been met with some public outcry and xenophobia. As such it is instructive to recall Article 2 of the UNESCO Declaration.

“In our increasingly diverse societies, it is essential to ensure harmonious interaction among people and groups with plural, varied and dynamic cultural identities as well as their willingness to live together. Policies for the inclusion and participation of all citizens are guarantees of social cohesion, the vitality of civil society and peace. Thus defined, cultural pluralism gives policy expression to the reality of cultural diversity. Indissociable from a democratic framework, cultural pluralism is conducive to cultural exchange and to the flourishing of creative capacities that sustain public life.”⁷

Also, the world of 2007 is no longer restricted by limitations of technology with particular emphasis on telecommunications. The generations in the later part of this century will not necessarily identify themselves as strictly Barbadian, since their world is now strongly designed by external mass media programming, the Internet and easy access to regional and international travel. Barbadians are no longer limited by landmass, since their world can be easily constructed and deconstructed in a virtual reality. The Barbadian of the cyberspace can date online, purchase from the Internet music, food, vehicles, house wares and clothing as an independent consumer. It is today possible to download movies from anywhere in the world and watch them at our convenience. So this makes Lamming's definition of culture very relevant and timeless when he sees it as,

“ the variety of ways in which men and women interpret and translate, through the imagination, the meaning of that material existence in the light of their experience: religion, philosophy, art and the institutions which mediate their daily lives. All these...are influenced, in one way or another, by the circumstances of our material existence.”⁸

Shoshana Zuboff furthers this view on the virtual company when discussing the new modes of wealth creation in the 21st century. By examining the Ebay business model, Zuboff argues that

What was once at the center--the company, its managers, products, and services-- spins out to the periphery. What was once the periphery--every person's unique needs--becomes the center. Wholly new support networks will cluster around

⁷ See UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Adopted by the 31st Session of UNESCO's General Conference, Paris, 2 November 2001

⁸ Quoted by Dr. Glenford Howe in **Country Cultural System Profile: Barbados**, UNESCO/National Cultural Foundation, p. 24.

individuals, families, and virtual communities with the sole purpose of backing their aims. EBay is one small step through this looking glass. Imagine hundreds of eBays, each one able to address the spectrum of your needs, from health care to home repairs, all on your terms.⁹

The challenge therefore is how to prepare for emerging global citizenry without losing the sense of being Barbadian and Bajan? It is therefore clear that any appropriate definition of culture must embrace this notion of fluidity and dynamism within a global space that is becoming ever more borderless, whereby nationalistic perspectives are continually undermined by the forces of dominant globalizing patterns that converge in a virtual and/or even orbital reality.

As such, the attempt to create a new Barbados Cultural Policy will not overlook the role of science in technology and the convergence of digital technologies. Positioning Barbados' cultural industries favorably in an international trading space requires a new national mindset and 'change-of-heart' in respect of how we view technology. Government must take the lead, as the foremost employer and designer of policy, by reengineering this mental change in how we respond as people to technology and its rapid changes. Aside from the EDUTECH program which has promised to offer universal computer access to all Barbadian schools, managers in the civil service need to be retooled urgently if we are to grapple with this changing world.

Already, maybe with the exception of Jamaican music, we have missed the boat in getting our music to rest of the world using the Internet platform. In fact, a recent New York Times article has confirmed that traditional record sales are tumbling while digital downloads are on the increase. Apple iTunes and Emusic are now the industry leaders:

"EMusic recently celebrated the sale of its 100 millionth download; it trails only iTunes as the largest online seller of digital music. (Of course, iTunes, with 2 billion downloads, has a substantial lead.)"¹⁰

Unfortunately, a quick search on either iTunes or Emusic will hardly feature any music that can be defined as Barbadian, though Barbadian-born artists like Rhianna and Rupee are featured prominently.

Nonetheless, it has been proposed that Barbados adopts a cluster model in its cultural policy. Empirical evidence has suggested **Music, Fashion, and Film** are currently the most dynamic areas of artistic endeavor and are the key drivers. These areas are therefore likely to remain critical for the development of the overall cultural industries sector in the coming decade. As such, any national policy should give impetus to these drivers. Furthermore, the very dynamism of fashion, film and music will dictate that national policy does not remain static but that it keeps pace with the rapid changes taking place within these sectors. This is the fluidity and dynamism that were explicitly discussed in the above definition of culture.

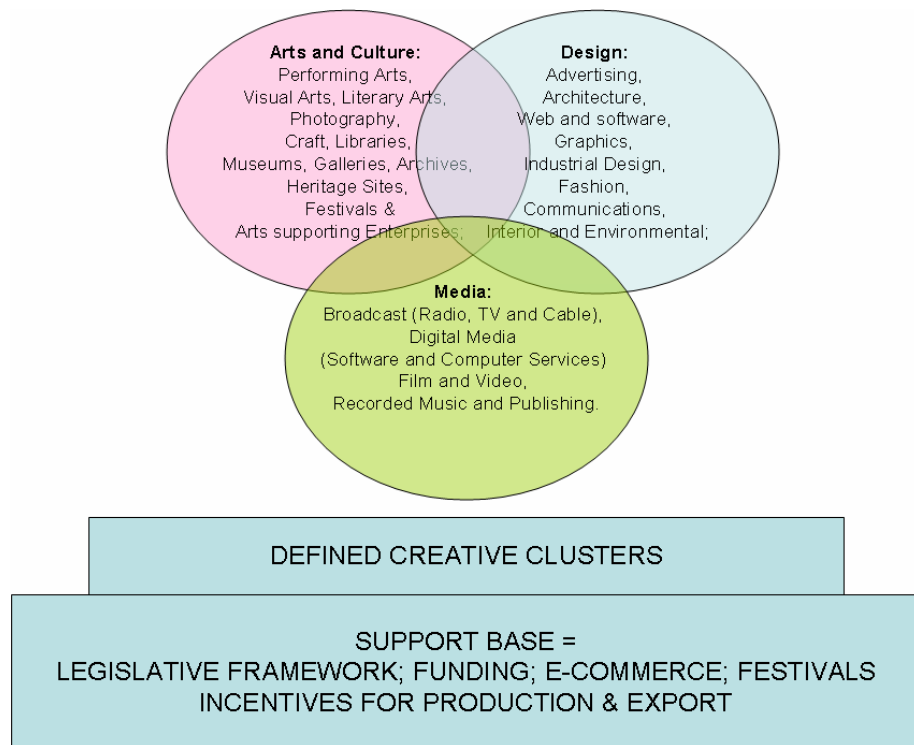
⁹ See, **Shoshana Zuboff** Wealth Creation, 21st-Century Style: Glimpses of the building blocks of wealth creation, 21st-century style. <http://www.fastcompany.com/magazine/80/szuboff.html> . Zuboff develops her theory and hypothesis in more detail together with James Maxmin in **The Support Economy: Why Corporations are Failing Individuals and the Next Episode of Capitalism**, London: Penguin Books, 2003, 448 p.

¹⁰ These figures were quoted in recent New York Times article by Randall Stross, Digital Domain [Want an iPhone? Beware the iHandcuffs](#), Published: January 14, 2007

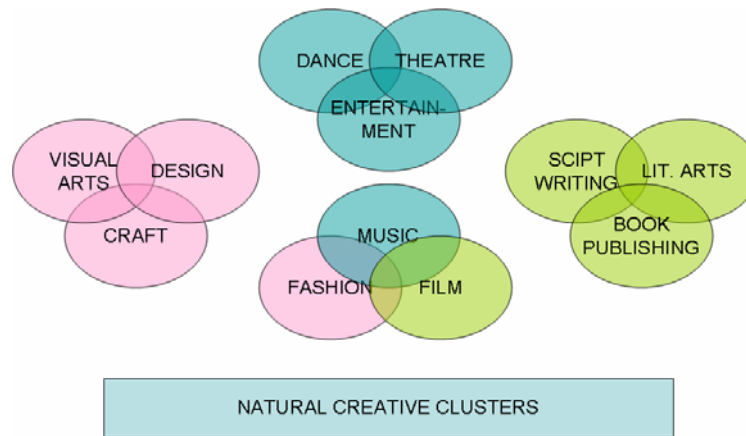
Barbados has followed UNESCO in defining its cultural industries according to categories as seen here below.

- ❖ **Arts and Culture:** Performing Arts, Visual Arts, Literary Arts, Photography, Craft, Libraries, Museums, Galleries, Archives, Heritage Sites, Festivals and Arts supporting Enterprises;
- ❖ **Design:** Advertising, Architecture, Web and software, Graphics, Industrial Design, Fashion, Communications, Interior and Environmental;
- ❖ **Media:** Broadcast (including Radio, Television and Cable), Digital Media (including Software and Computer Services) Film and Video, Recorded Music and Publishing.

This first level of cultural policy formulation stems logically from the primary definition of what constitutes the cultural industries. Immediately there is evidence of sub-sectors and clusters as shown below and this therefore will inform how all policy and program intervention ought to be designed.



This is the very innate advantage of policies and programmes that are designed with the methodology and technique of clustering in mind. The below figure further suggests that clusters are not static entities but have the ability to morph according to the demands of their operating space and time.



The following are some of the advantages of clustering:

- ❖ Cross-fertilization is allowed to take place;
- ❖ Creative synergies are encouraged and allowed to organically evolve;
- ❖ The creativity of clusters drives new business models;
- ❖ It promotes innovation;
- ❖ It promotes management in a projectized environment and reduces the risk of stagnation;
- ❖ Because clusters are largely project driven they are not only proactive entities but also have the ability to react more quickly to change;
- ❖ It promotes an environment of change;
- ❖ It acts as a natural magnet that attracts the requisite energy, imagination, skilled personnel and investment.

To see this at work one only has to look at the music industry and its vibrant sub-sector of music video production. This brings together a cluster of musicians, film-makers, engineers, graphics artists, dancers, actors, songwriters, producers, fashion designers, makeup artists and business managers.

At a second level, clustering will demand cross-sectoral management and collaboration at the public sector level. For cultural industries to work as a tool for national development, then these sectoral linkages are key to the methodology of cultural policy formulation.

Outside of the Barbadian experience, clustering has been experimented with at a slightly different level within larger metropolitan cities whereby authorities invested heavily in infrastructure for cross-sectoral artists to come together and create.¹¹

¹¹ See Doreen Jacob, "The formation of intra-metropolitan creative industries clusters. New York City: The South Bronx and Long Island City," Paper presented at the 4th Int'l Conference on Cultural Policy Research, Vienna Austria. (This paper was commented on by Ian W. Walcott at the conference)

III

Export Orientation of Barbados' Culture and Creative Industries – What will we sell the rest of the world?

If we were to use a simple anecdote of the young Barbadian born in 2006 and reaches age 60, we would quickly recognize that in his or her life time would be the experience of a country that is celebrating 100 years of Independence. This is particularly pointing because we sadly lack a tradition of recording and archiving our history and cultural legacy. Put another way, we are not cognizant of the fact that our generation is still very much the pioneers of a not too distant future. What therefore are we doing as a nation to iconize our cultural heroes? How much is recorded? And who, in the end, are these cultural icons?¹²

As we further grapple with our notion of self-determination together with our collective will to free ourselves of the last vestiges of a colonial past rooted in brutish memories of slavery and a Plantocracy system, it is sometimes unfortunate that we find ourselves depending on “the other” to help us create our own icons. It is as if we have to await the canonization of a Nobel Prize or a Grammy Award before we have the courage to install our cultural heroes. Sometimes we are bogged down, in our quintessential Barbadian style, with over-regulation and paralysis by analysis, when our heroes stand before us for all to see with the naked eye. In other words, as a nation, we need to be confident about who we are as people and maintain our sense of pride in our culture. Until such time, our breakthrough into the international market will be nothing short of sporadic and piecemeal.

This search for self and identity was perhaps earmarked in the watershed year of 1981 when Barbados hosted the [Caribbean Festival of the Arts](#) (CARIFESTA) for the first time in our history. Then we were able to showcase to ourselves, the region and indeed to the world that there is a ‘package’ called Barbadian culture. The energy that poured out of CARIFESTA 1981 was so great that we saw the emergence of new theatre groups, dance troupes, visual artists and perhaps most importantly, the creation of our own [National Cultural Foundation](#) which would become the country’s main engine of cultural administration and preservation. Since then, the NCF has gone on to manage over US\$100 million dollars in national events, with festivals like Crop Over and the [National Independence Festival of the Creative Arts](#) (NIFCA) representing our main annual cultural attractions.

Interestingly enough, these two festivals undeniably create the main national cultural platforms for new artists to emerge and for existing ones to showcase their talents within the Barbadian cultural industries.

In fact, the last NCF commissioned Economic Impact Assessment (EIA) of Crop Over showed this festival earning some \$50 million in a four-week period.¹³ Therefore, the evidence strongly suggests that our culture represents a major plank of economic activity and potential for growth.

¹² The NCF has commissioned Barbadian historian, Mr. Trevor Marshall, to compile a list of Barbadian Cultural Icons.

¹³ NCF Commissioned Report, Economic Impact of Crop 2001, prepared by Dr. Daniel Boamah and Mr. Harold Codrington

Cases of Successful Export

In this final section we will examine the cases of Rihanna, Barbadiana Art Exhibition, Israel Lovell Foundation and young fashion designer Antonio Cumberbatch as real examples of Barbadian cultural export and potential.

Case 1 – Rihanna

The young Barbadian international music and singing sensation, [Rihanna](#), is a very good example of local talent with the potential of wooing the international market. Why should we claim Rihanna as an export though she is not necessarily promoting a strict Barbadian artform? The answer is simple; it was Barbados that created the platform in a literal and figurative way. In the first instance, she was a pupil of Combermere Secondary school which has a long tradition in the arts. Why is this fact important? Combermere was one of the few secondary schools that benefited greatly from the 1981 [CARIFESTA](#) investment. The school hall was redesigned and outfitted with the most modern equipment of the time to accommodate performances in the arts during the festival. As such, the school provided a natural milieu for an arts curriculum and staged performances. As history would now record, Rihanna made her singing debut on the Combermere stage.

This is important. Barbados has the great fortune of having 26 secondary schools each outfitted with a multipurpose school hall and stage. This is a natural advantage for developing the arts. Therefore with the current thrust of cultural industries development and the move toward implementing a cultural policy, the country is well poised to reform its education curricula to accommodate schooling in the arts to take advantage of this infrastructure.



Image 1 – Barbadian International Star Rihanna

Case 2 – Barbadiana Art Exhibition

Since 1999 the National Cultural Foundation, in collaboration with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, has successfully mounted an art exhibition entitled *Barbadiana*. There were four such exhibitions in the series that have toured Miami, Montreal, Ottawa, Brussels, Paris, Vienna and London.

This exhibition creates a platform for Barbadian fine artists to have their work shown in major cities around the world. However, apart from the obvious desire to have Barbadian art sold in this market, this particular exhibition is noteworthy because it represents the type of breakthrough that will be

necessary if we are to export our cultural goods in a meaningful and sustained way. By this we mean that it is important to break the market barrier beyond the Barbadian and Caribbean Diaspora that inhabit these major Western cities.

Though the Diasporic market is indeed valuable, it only really represents the first stage of international market breakthrough. In fact, the longtime curator of this exhibition, Mrs. Denyse Menard-Greenidge, refers to this market as “social sales”. That is, persons who purchase our cultural products because of their natural Barbadian affinity. To her mind, this is not a true breakthrough and *Barbadiana* has been able to attract a truly international market.

This point of view is potentially controversial because it can be equally argued that we have not sufficiently saturated the Diasporic market. Nonetheless, the argument is valid if we consider the international market to be that beyond the natural cultural and historic affinities. If we looked at the now international appeal of Indian, Chinese and Japanese cuisine, then it underscores the need to go beyond our Diaspora.

However, pricing of artwork remains a major challenge for Barbadian artists and curators and this has the potential to negatively impact on a further international breakthrough. From our experience, Barbadiana has met with relative success because its curator has managed to impress upon the artist the need to reduce their prices in the first instance. Nonetheless, below we will illustrate how changes in the domestic real estate market can undermine this effort.



Image 2 – Barbadiana Art Exhibition

Case 3 – The Israel Lovell Foundation

The Israel Lovell Foundation (ILF) is a very good example of raw Barbadian talent at the community level. Here is a community based organization that is geared to social programming primarily through the arts. Though this group is a non-profit organization, it clearly demonstrates how pride in ‘self’ is the starting point for successful export. Most of the group's dance and music repertoire is notably Afro-Caribbean and strongly rooted in a Barbadian experience. It is perhaps this strong socio-cultural awareness and consciousness that has contributed to the group’s rise in national attention and prominence as a leading exponent of Barbadian culture.

Again ILF, in the past five years, was able to conquer local audiences by first appearing at NIFCA. This platform then allowed them opportunities to be invited to perform before visiting delegations and ultimately to tour internationally to Toronto, Philadelphia and Caracas, all within a very short space of time. With the assistance of the NCF’s Cultural Action Fund (CAF), a grant scheme for local artists, the group was able to produce a website and posters which they can now take on tour for sale after wooing international audiences.



Image 3 – Dance Poster Series of Israel Lovell Foundation

Case 4 – Antonio Cumberbatch

Antonio Cumberbatch is a young graduate of the Barbados Community College in the area of Fashion Design and at just 19 years old has already been invited to the Caribbean Fashion Week in Jamaica for two consecutive years and is now about to further his studies in Italy having caught the attention of many an international eye.

The opportunities for Barbados in the area of fashion design are endless, but a concerted effort and policy will have to be in place to ensure that there is international protection of brands, trademark and other areas of intellectual property. With extremely high energy costs, it is pointless to develop the industry from a manufacturing standpoint. Nonetheless, young Antonio has demonstrated that our design talent has the potential to break barriers and enter the international market.

Again the NCF spotted this designer's talent and believed him to be worthy of developmental support through a CAF grant. It was at Caribbean Fashion Week 2006 that Antonio was featured once more in a front page story of leading Jamaican newspaper, the Gleaner – testimony to Barbados' potential to breakthrough into regional and international markets.



**Image 4 - Designs by Antonio Cumberbatch – Posh Punk Collection 2005
Presented at Caribbean Fashion Week, Jamaica**

There are also other examples where private companies in Barbados have been actively developing festivals with the aim of attracting foreign visitors to the country. It is through this concerted effort and partnership that governmental agencies like the Barbados Tourism Authority (BTA) and the NCF continue to support the likes of the Barbados Jazz Festival, Gospelfest, and the Bridgetown Film Festival. Though this is not export orientation proper, it is understood that once these events and festivals can attract enough tourists then they have the potential to be net foreign exchange earners.

The Barbadian Art Market and Emerging Gated Communities¹⁴

This brings us to the question of how Barbados is capitalizing on the captive market that passes through the island on an annual basis as tourists or even the transitory expatriate community. This is an important issue since this is also a form of export, especially in converted into hard currencies. An examination of what is happening in the Barbadian art market, however, is cause for some concern as there is evidence of a sad paradox that is affecting how local artists are pricing their work and missing out on a potentially large export market right under their noses.

For many Barbadians, the selling off of the West Coast of the island has become a disturbing and worrisome fact that has given rise to passionate national debate. What is more instructive about this phenomenon is the rise of gated expatriate communities and the impact it is starting to have on the consumer supply of everyday needs, not to mention its impact on the art market. Though we are a civilized society that respects law and the right to private property, our land mass is way too small and peculiar to adopt wholeheartedly the concept of the gated community. It's unfortunate that profit-driven developers have not seized the opportunity to create a model of social integration. Indeed, the problem will be created when the villager has no access to the private gated community, but they have access to his very public village road.

The irony is that if we were to get a glimpse into this private world of gated communities and examine the art we would notice the walls littered with scenes of the reality outside of their barriers. Yet the real world of this art is inaccessible to them because of a self-imposed cocoon and psychological cultural enclave. The real concern therefore is that the artwork penetrating these physical barriers and adorning those walls invariably make use of burlesque and may be so folkloric and stereotypical of the *soi-disant* Barbadian lifestyle that it only acts as a segregationist tool fomenting this 'illusion' of us and them. So this is what we are offering to the would-be real estate investor in 2007! A private world that comes equipped with a maid, a gardener, a cook who will not disturb you after six o' clock; and your eyes to the world of the Barbadian working-class reality will be through the art on your walls – representational art of a distorted reality that you don't have to be a part of.

The next question is pretty logical and straightforward. If these access barriers are being erected then it holds too that the Barbadian artists who are struggling to make a living will find it very difficult to penetrate such a market. What kind of art market do we wish to develop? Why do we wish to recreate a segregationist reality in our art market? Shouldn't art transcend all these barriers and promote human freedom by way of integration.

¹⁴ This section was adapted from a two-art article that was featured in the Nation Newspaper, Barbados 2006 by Ian W. Walcott

Policy makers, therefore, must be mindful of their role in pioneering an independent Barbados by creating a model for the rest of the world that shows love and true integration. It's important that all artists have the same access and exposure. We should not create the psychological barriers that would disallow our young Community College graduates from making a living as forerunners in the cultural industries. There is a perceived risk that our young graduates who are experimenting with new artistic interpretations of their reality maybe excluded whilst those persons who have access to the inner recesses of the hallowed premises of the gated communities must be vigilant and guard against the unwitting perpetuation of the myths, stereotypical images and symbols of an ethnically divided Barbados.

It is incumbent upon decision-makers to sell Barbados to the rest of the world as a country and community of social integration and not one of segregation. When we achieve this then all the art on all the walls will tell the same story, the barriers will have been broken down and the paradox of art appreciation removed. But is this desire to sell to the foreigner that is impacting negatively on how the local artists are valuing their artwork.

The Barbadian Art Market and Price Distortion

Though it is understood that the perfect market does not exist in economics. However, there are certain factors that can cause a departure from the ideal of perfect competition in the aim of matching supply to demand. These may be taxes and subsidies, tariffs and non-tariff barriers, externalities, incomplete information, and imperfect competition. In other words there are behaviors or agents that can skew the market and affect the true market value of a good or service.

The best example of this is what is happening to land prices in Barbados. The seaside villages on the rocks of the West Coast are being quickly replaced by the rapidly growing villa market (gated communities) which has created a snowball effect on the land prices in Barbados. Though the West Coast demand for land is driven by wealthy expatriates, this has created a fear among locals that there is no more land left and the collective panic has led to an increased demand and further pushed our land prices of out whack. Now there is a risk that a similar phenomenon is about to take place in the art market and make local art uncompetitive in terms of price.

Again this pricing distortion is caused by the West Coast expatriate community and other psychological factors. This is what is happening. The interior designers who have cornered off the Barbadian villa market are heavily influenced by an island décor whose standards are set in the international magazines. On examining the furniture available in Barbados one will see that a significant portion is now imported from Asia. What has happened to traditional Barbadian furniture?

The 'island feel' created in the villa market is not necessarily Barbadian. The accompanying art is also cornered off by a very elite group of artists and designers who cater to the warped view of what 'island art' is supposed to look like. However, here is the core problem leading to the price distortion – like the rising value of the land, the accompanying art market is starting to show signs of rising prices. It is therefore not uncommon to hear of a single piece of art going for US\$10000. An important West Coast art gallery can fetch US\$1000 for a print. It must be noted that some art commentators and critics have shied away from blaming the artists directly for these exorbitant prices, but instead attribute them to increased private gallery expenditure and commissions driven by the need to satisfy a wealthy expatriate clientele.

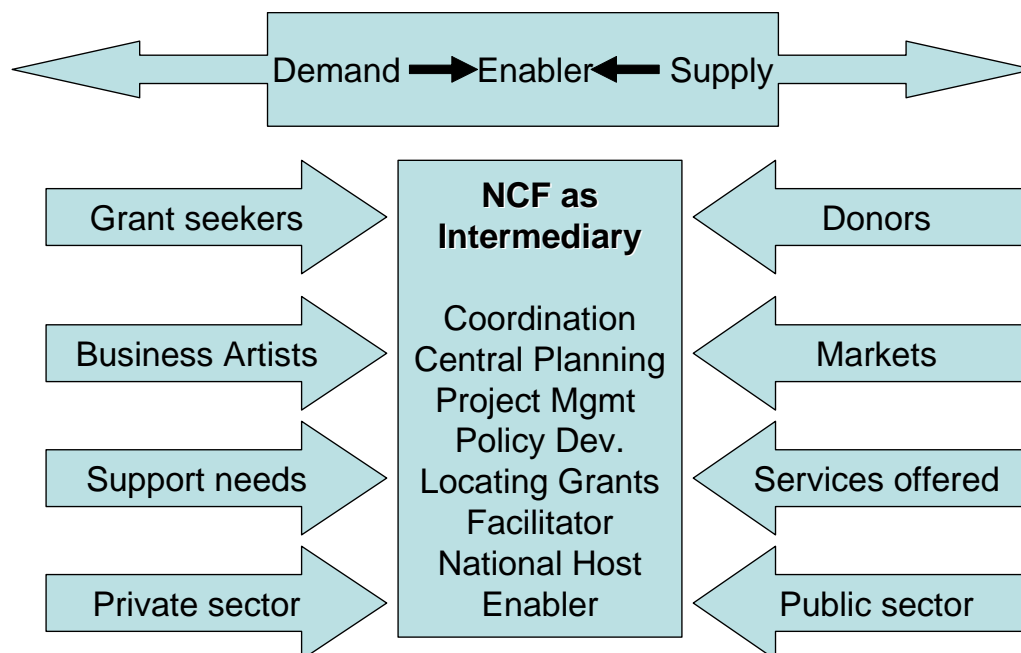
Here's another question. Are all local artists benefiting from the apparent increased demand and value? Though more research is required, my constant treks to all the major art galleries and exhibitions on the island suggest that the price of art is rising. Who are we painting for? Are we painting for the tourist and expatriate market alone? This is not to undervalue the contribution of this market to the Barbadian economy, but we have many struggling artists who are shut out of the 'villa market' because they simply lack the social connections. The evidence of price distortion is most evident when the struggling artists catch wind of the art deals taking place on the West Coast and seek to match those ridiculous and astronomical prices. So the newcomer to the art market must be seriously cautioned about distorted pricing techniques and should not be enticed to overprice their work based on false assumptions. In essence, many artists can be easily tempted to price themselves out of the market.

This is instructive since how we price our cultural products will determine our ability to compete internationally. We can therefore examine a straightforward formula for the struggling artist who does not have access to the West Coast 'villa market'. Let us make some basic assumptions starting at the size of our population. For argument's sake we will assume that Barbados has a population of 270,000 inhabitants and we will place three persons in every home which gives us a total of 90,000 households. Let us create a buy local art campaign to have a piece of Barbadian art in 50% of these homes, we now have a market of 45,000 households. Let's have the average price within the reach of the average Barbadian and sell each of these homes \$200 worth of art. By our calculation, this is a nine million dollar untapped market that can be serviced over a 36 month period by local painters. This is not at all unrealistic. What is unrealistic is having an inventory of paintings sitting in galleries or in studios that is not moving because the prices are too high. When we apply the same formula to attract the transitory tourist market, we begin to see the real impact an export orientation can have on the economy.

What is also noteworthy is the fact that a single market reality will soon open up the local market to cheaper art from the likes of Haiti, Jamaica, Dominica and even Trinidad. In fact, the competition is already here. So wisdom would dictate that it's better to lower the price of art and move it quickly, thereby creating a stimulus for future demand, than to try to hit the jackpot. The appeal to local artists therefore is to have a more realistic approach to their pricing structure and do not fall victim to the illusion of the artificial art market that is evolving on the West Coast. The local market is not well supplied but if the exorbitant prices continue, artist will not make the desired impact on both the domestic and export markets. As such, the Barbadiana Exhibition is but a small dent in our potential.

The National Cultural Foundation as Enabler of Cultural Policy

Outside of the formulation of a national cultural and cultural industries policy, the NCF is the de facto government agency responsible for implementing policy and managing the country's culture. As the organization, therefore, reinvents itself to meet the needs of an export oriented economy, it is forced to become an enabling intermediary between the private and public sectors as illustrated below.



This enabling position puts the NCF at the forefront in terms of administering government funding for the arts through the Cultural Action Fund and the recently launched patronage fund, the Youth in Arts Fund. Whereas the former is funded by profits from the merged lotteries, the latter raises its funds primarily from donors.¹⁵ It must be noted that at the time of writing, the NCF is considering the implementation on business incubators working with small businesses in the cultural industries that have a potential for export.

This comes on the heel of well placed advice from the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in their recent paper on the Creative Industries and Development.

Entrepreneurship, especially cultural entrepreneurship, is not well developed in developing countries. To strengthen entrepreneurship, a framework must be established to improve the investment climate through appropriate market mechanisms, as well as public-private arrangements.

¹⁵ For details on both these funding programs, please see <http://caf.ncf.bb> and <http://youthinthearts.ncf.bb>. It must be noted that at the time of writing, the NCF is considering the implementation on business incubators working with small businesses in the cultural industries that have a potential for export.

This implies a wider development strategy where the central focus is on the creation of local enterprises with a high propensity to invest as a necessary prelude to closer integration into the global economy. Building cultural entrepreneurship has the advantage of captured local markets, but it must also be outward-looking, both regionally and globally. **Because experimentation is a key to successful entrepreneurship in creative industries, rigidities coming from heavy-handed state action as well as conformity linked to market forces must be avoided.** (My emphasis)¹⁶

Conclusion

The four cases above clearly demonstrate that Barbados has a huge potential in the arts, ranging from music, fashion, visual arts to the performing arts. These groups and/or individuals have all shown some degree of regional and international success and should serve as examples to others who aspire to break beyond the boundaries of the local market.

It must also be noted that the linchpin of success in the international market is a strong notion of 'self' that is rooted in an understanding of who are as a people and whence we came. This sense of national pride together with the existing infrastructure for cultural development can now be harnessed to allow our young citizens to explore new career options in the arts.

Finally, if properly exploited, the Internet will allow us a gateway to market and sell our cultural goods, services and information. Be that as it may, this has implications for policy and government's social and educational programming, since there is evidence of a digital divide even in our own small society, and perhaps an unfortunate resistance to the use of technology. When we overcome these self-imposed obstacles, we will realize the heights of our potential in exporting Barbadian cultural products.

¹⁶ UNCTAD Eleventh session -São Paulo, 13–18 June 2004, Creative Industries & Development, TD(XI)/BP/13 4 June 2004, pg. 8. (http://www.unctad.org/en/docs/tdxibpd13_en.pdf)

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[Ian W. Walcott](#), (B. Sc., M.A., M.Sc.) is the Senior Business Development Officer at the [National Cultural Foundation](#) of Barbados. His current projects include managing the [Cultural Action Fund](#), the [Youth in the Arts Fund](#) and business process re-engineering. He has also lectured in the discipline of Project Management and Business at the Cave Hill Campus of University of the West Indies.

He is one of the founding members of the Barbados Chapter of the [Project Management Institute](#) and its VP for Education. Mr. Walcott was also instrumental in conceptualizing the **Caribbean & Latin American Conference on Project Management** which has become the region's leading forum on the discipline.

A former [OAS](#) research fellow in International Political Economy at the [University of Brasilia](#), Brazil, Mr. Walcott also spent two years in Japan specializing in Comparative Business & Management and has worked in the areas of marketing, banking and finance in Venezuela and Barbados. A member of the International Association of Theatre Critics (IATC), his spare time is dedicated to the development of the theatre arts in Barbados.

Papers & Publications:

- ❖ July 2006 – **Applying Program Logic to Project Grant Funding** – Fourth Int'l Conference on Cultural Policy Research, Vienna, Austria
- ❖ April 2004 – **Project Management & the Cultural Industries: The Case of Barbados**, Presented and published at the Project Management Congress of Europe, Czech Republic
- ❖ Sept 2003 – **The Commoditization of Higher Education & The E-Learning Revolution** –Presented at The 10th Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning, Cambridge University, UK
- ❖ April 2003 – **Applying Project Management to the Cultural & Creative Industries** – Paper presented at the Congaline Symposium, Barbados
- ❖ 2004 - **Management: Keep it real** – Weekly columnist – [Barbados Advocate Business Monday](#) Barbados