Urban Dynamics

- Collaboration between government and artists is difficult, but not impossible
- Art, if skilfully used, can be a vehicle through which divisions within communities can be erased
- Art is about creating new from the old and is a tool gateway to the future
- Ensuring holistic sustainability of artistic collaboration is imperative

The session presented four distinct perspectives on how the arts can influence urban dynamics. One of the panellists said that art can bridge the rural and urban divide. The panellist, who works in the field of architecture, tries to marry her contemporary designs with the work of local artists thereby helping to preserve India's rich artistic heritage in modern building design. Her projects also provide livelihood for traditional artists who learn contemporary design skills through the knowledge transfer that happens when they collaborate. In her words: “Villages across the world are filled with artisans who must become part of our global growth story. This is one way to promote holistic development in communities across the world.”

With the current trends in rural-urban migration, it is imperative to attract people to return to the rural areas. Another panellist, who brought together 20 artists to create art in an abandoned hotel in Taipei, learned first-hand that dying communities can be revived through art. After the artists jointly renovated the hotel and opened it up for an exhibition, the local community took immediate ownership of the historic building and began to invite visitors. Soon, tourism followed and businesses that were once on the brink of collapse were revived. She said: “Art can be a tool of healing to broken communities and can be economically viable as long as the communities feel a sense of ownership in the projects.”

Another panellist promotes the development of children in various communities through exposure to arts. Her experiences have led her to believe that the arts can be used as a tool to help children learn how to work together and adapt to a changing world. She estimated that “art can help to teach children the importance of innovation and creativity”.

Through an innovative social enterprise, another panellist is proving that arts can also be used to bridge cultural divisions that are prevalent in many urban cities. His project, the Rich Mix Shoreditch, brings together young people from different ethnic traditions to experience arts through pictures, film, live performances, trainings and other events. The project is unifying the surrounding community that was previous divided by ethnic tensions. It also currently provides jobs for 350 people and operates 23 businesses which subsidize arts and education in the local community.

Disclosure
These insights were written by Yawa Hansen-Quao. The views expressed are those of certain participants in the discussion and do not necessarily reflect the views of all participants or of the World Economic Forum.