

**The New Global Fusion**  
Art, Technology, and Community Development



**GLOBAL LEADERSHIP FORUM**  
ON ECONOMIC AND CULTURAL DEVELOPMENT

**The New Global Fusion—Art, Technology, and Community Development**  
By Curtis Johnson and Kim Walesh



*In August 2006, the City of San Jose and 1st ACT Silicon Valley convened public-private leadership teams from 17 city-regions around the world in a two-day session called the Global Leadership Forum on Economic and Cultural Development. With the launch of the ZeroOne San Jose “Global Festival of Art on the Edge” and new strategic emphasis on creativity at the intersection of art and technology, leaders in San Jose/Silicon Valley wanted to learn from peers in other urban areas that are using arts, culture, and creativity as a catalyst for economic development. The Forum provided an opportunity to share strategies, showcase model projects, and unfold lessons learned. It provided a platform to discuss difficult challenges and fundamental questions about the importance, impact, and potential of this work.*

*This paper is intended to convey the key conversation themes pursued by Forum participants as well as core questions—questions answered as well as those left unanswered. We hope this paper assists Forum participants in continuing their exploration, and helps expand the dialogue to other colleagues internationally who are practicing in this field.*

*Thank you to the 120 leaders who shared their experiences pioneering new approaches to ensuring the economic competitiveness and community vitality of their respective cities.*

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**THE STAGE** was set as a mid-summer sun smiled on San Jose, and its streets came alive with new media artists, devotees of all sorts of technology, residents, and just plain tourists curious to see what was happening.

Signs and street banners for an inaugural ZeroOne San Jose international festival of “art on the edge” bedecked the downtown. The new Richard Meier-designed City Hall itself became a light show at dusk.

The City of San Jose, along with a long list of Silicon Valley technology companies organized as 1st ACT, was playing host to ZeroOne—a constellation of exhibits and programs that were an adventuresome mix of art and technology, heavy on interactive opportunity.

Visitors filled the Museum of Art and found their senses flooded by colorful computer animations. Lines formed to take in a whole-wall symphony of sound and word harnessing world-wide Internet communications. People gathered on the plaza outside to see blogging pigeons released to soar above the valley. Lightweight backpacks of pollution-measuring sensors coupled with cellular transmission capacity tracked vital environmental conditions as the pigeons flew their homing routes.

Visitors roamed the streets dialing up oral histories about community sites with their cell phones. Cell phone users could even contribute to a cell-phone chorus, a new kind of civic opera, echoing back news feeds that would be consolidated into a community voice.

But for some 120 special visitors from 16 city-regions around the world, the real excitement was inside a conference room incongruously situated atop a parking garage. Under the banner of the Global Leadership Forum on Economic and Cultural Development (GLF), the City of San Jose and Silicon Valley’s 1st ACT convened leaders in arts and culture, edgy new technology, economic and community development, and real estate—all in one place. They came not to admire or protect their separate universes of interest, but to examine the emerging intersection of all these forces, a convergence now beginning to define new rules for regional success.

To the uninitiated ear, some terms flying back and forth—new media, remix, mash-ups, fusions—were loaded with mystery and multiple meanings. At this conference, the emphasis on fusion signified a new kind of synergy among technology, cultural, and development perspectives being explored on the ground in leading world cities.

## PARTICIPATING CITIES AND MODEL PROJECTS

### **Creative Centers of Art and Culture...***urban developments that host cultural institutions, creative industries, art and artists*

Guadalajara, Mexico	University Cultural Center
Helsinki, Finland	Arabianranta Art & Design District
Melbourne, Australia	Federation Square
Yokohama, Japan	Creative City of Art and Culture
Beijing, China	798 Art District and Dashanzi International Art Festival

### **Urban Innovation Centers...***innovative work-live-learn-play environments that attract innovative companies and people*

Shanghai, China	Knowledge and Innovation Community
Singapore	one-north Development
Osaka, Japan	Osaka Knowledge-Capital Project
Basque Region, Spain	Urban Transformation of Basque Region
Zurich, Switzerland	ETH Zurich Science City

### **Media Arts Initiatives...***cultivation of new media artists, research, companies, and institutions*

Linz, Austria	Ars Electronica
Helsinki, Finland	Forum Virium Helsinki
Liverpool, UK	Foundation for Art and Technology
Toronto, Canada	Habitat New Media Lab
San Jose, California	ZeroOne San Jose and 1st ACT Silicon Valley

### **Creative/Cultural Strategies...***strategies that build distinction in creative industries and cultural capacity*

East England, UK	Creative Collaborations Prospectus
Espoo, Finland	City of Culture Strategy
Liverpool, UK	European Capital of Culture
Wellington, New Zealand	Creative Wellington-Innovation Capital

*The Forum program that includes one-page descriptions of each model project can be downloaded from [www.sjeconomy.com](http://www.sjeconomy.com).*

Actually, the technical definition of “fusion” goes a long way toward explaining a central theme of this conference. Scientists explain fusion this way: Since nuclei carry positive charges, they normally repel one another. The higher the temperature, the faster the atoms or nuclei move. When they collide at these high speeds, they overcome the force of repulsion of the positive charges, and the nuclei fuse. In such collisions, energy is released. The difficulty in producing fusion energy has been to develop a device which can heat the deuterium-tritium fuel to a sufficiently high temperature and then confine it for a long enough time so that more energy is released through fusion reactions than is used for heating.

That scientific analysis may not be far off in explaining emerging trends in metropolitan regions. Most of the time, in most regions, leaders working on a region’s future economic success develop strategic and action plans. People involved in arts and culture do the same, but in separate places with separate plans. Technology gurus are usually off somewhere producing occasional breakthroughs, but rarely seeing connections. And real estate developers and physical planners scheme their visions of the future built environment. When these forces collide, like nuclei, they are initially repelled.

But now the heat is on. The rules of the game are radically altered. Today, the most innovative global cities experiment with fusing people, projects, and plans across sectors and disciplines—seen as essential for creating a new kind of competitive advantage in a left brain-right brain world. And high heat is yielding a new breed of regional citizens, people who grasp the essential synergies and are eager to act. Just think about what happens when art and engineering collide at a temperature sufficient to release that creative energy.

This is a long way from being common of course. Most cities, for example, emphasize either their technical prowess, or their artistic and cultural savvy. And as individuals, most of us still operate in silos, steeped in stereotypes about what other groups and sectors are like. We do not wander far from our comfort zone. Most of us don't cross streets to learn what's on the other side.

Let's take an extreme but useful example. If a thousand people were asked, maybe one will know what a fractal is—and that one will likely be an engineer. Likely not an artist or a real estate developer or an elected official.

But among those who know fractals is Scott Snibbe. Snibbe is an engineer—but also an artist. And when the GLF delegates arrived in early August at the first session, they walked into a Snibbe-created interactive fusion of art and engineering. As people filed by, their shadows were captured digitally, reframed and replayed on the wall in a moving montage of silhouettes, with the recorded images migrating to the edges in smaller scale, finally yielding to the flow of new images of multiple people.

Snibbe's show took images and compressed them, breaking them into scalable smaller versions while preserving the algorithm—the rules—for restoring the original image. And the result was an intriguing artistic display, engineering made playful, designed for personal contact. Snibbe said people are absorbed into his work, offering a glimpse into technology-enabled artistic creativity.

And that is exactly what representatives from these 16 regions plus San Jose/Silicon Valley did, as they explained to each other how physical spaces were changing to facilitate and capture creativity from a new mix of community builders, and how collaboration between economic and cultural interests was benefiting both worlds. For two and a half days, the scene was like a highly compressed Piazza del Campo. Think of all the winding lanes, the well-worn paths, and always active streets that lead to this famous Siena plaza.

A 20th century style conference room over a parking garage is no Siena. But in San Jose, at a place in time, many paths of professional thought converged. The perspectives and the talents of artists and engineers, scientists and designers, politicians and builders—all these usually separate and often opposing paths converged on to the piazza of the meeting and began to define an important new field of inquiry and action.

Though as a movement, this new fusion is not firmly defined, its character is discernible in the spaces cities are creating and the synergies that follow.

## **SPACE AS CAPACITY AND CATALYST**

Building space—especially new and well-designed space—carries significance beyond the physical properties of buildings and grounds. Spaces and places can enable or impede cross-sector creativity. Design drives what will happen in and between those spaces.

Some regions of the world are smart enough to see a new synergy of arts and technology and economy already. And they build special facilities to foster a regional advantage, including new research findings, products, services, and companies. Toronto founded its Habitat New Media Lab in 1997 so that Canada could capture primary effects of new media, not merely secondary services. While culture-based technology and technology-based culture has a long history in Canada, there is now a national recognition of “the global race for creativity in the networked world.” Habitat is already producing much of the needed talent.

At the core of Osaka's Knowledge Capital Zone is a Cyber Arts Center, designed to be a promotion engine for ambitious collaboration among industry, universities, government and Kansai residents. That center is itself inspired by the now 27-year old ARS Electronica in Linz, Austria, which has led the way in exploring new art forms and the cultural effects of new digital media. Linz, a classic industrial city, has made itself a distinct European culture center through its arts festivals, interdisciplinary labs, and through ARS, a teaching museum of the future.

But building places is not, in this rapid remixing, just space for artistic work in collaboration with other disciplines. Many projects showcased at GLF identified their goal to create better spaces for people, for living and playing, for studying and sharing. Federation Square, a now-iconic space of glass, sandstone and zinc, was built in Melbourne to serve as a contemporary public square—a thriving meeting place and a focal point for community and cultural activity. Its director, Kate Brennan, is sure that “with Fed Square, we got rid of that fuddy-duddy image, along with some hideous old buildings.” With its 1500 events every year, most of them free, it lays its claim today as the “heart of the city.” The book “New Public Spaces” by Sarah Gaventa reflects its success to date: “Federation Square...has successfully recreated the dynamism that has taken centuries to develop in civic squares in the old world.”

Shanghai, as Shui On Group CEO Vincent Lo told the conference, is properly seen as re-surg-ing China's most cosmopolitan region. “And we know,” he said, “that people choose where to live first.” So Shanghai has set out, with its Knowledge and Innovation Community (KIC) to unite its best concentration of universities with technology development and world-class living, entertainment, and recreational opportunities. Lo says the scene will be like “a beautiful postcard,” but that it's “the atmosphere” that will attract the international talent.

Sometimes, new space is a carrier for a special mission, even if the space is imbedded in existing institutional infrastructure. In Zurich, the ETH (Federal Institute of Technology) is

getting a new campus, Science City, a deliberate design to connect science and society. It will be “small, precise, expensive, quintessentially Swiss,” said Dr. Gerhard Schmidt, ETH vice-president. There people will encounter and experience science in a setting meant to be a hub of public dialogue. “We had a completely different problem, since we were already a successful place,” Schmidt said. “We had to start where we are. Our job is to build a city that is a thinking culture, where science is immediately measured for its societal value,” Schmidt said.

Guadalajara, Mexico is building Central Cultural Universitario that mixes virtually every form of arts and culture—with venues for the visual and performing arts, exhibitions of environmental sciences, along with Mexico's second largest library. This Cesar Pelli-designed complex will reach out to a radius of 22 million in population. “But it's what's inside, the experience, not the buildings that brings the people,” said Mauricio de Font-Reaulx, the general director. De Font-Reaulx credits private sector participation for achieving the mixed use and not taking as long as purely public projects do.

Another strategy heard at GLF was assembling the Finnish University of Art and Design along with five other educational institutions in the fields of art, design, and audiovisual media into a design district they call Arabianranta. This Helsinki district is also host to more than 300 companies specializing in the creative industries or information technology.

Among the most ambitious projects described was Singapore's “one-north,” a play on the city-state's equatorial position. Singapore, already a world economic leader, now has its sights set on being a center of creativity, says Dr. Tan Chin Nam, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Information, Communication and the Arts. One-north embraces the work, live, play, and learn standards, incorporating specialized labs for life sciences research, incubation spaces for start-ups, work-live spaces for artists, entertainment venues, capped by what Dr. Tan called “Fusionopolis,” an “epicenter” of information-communications technology, media companies and research institutes.

The buildings will be impressive enough, but Tan points also to the importance of green spaces, trees, winding roads, and places that encourage quiet thought. The spaces between the spaces matter too. Building a wood fire requires attention to the spaces between the logs. That's where the fire prospers.

Another ambitious success story is Yokohama's "Creative City for Arts and Culture" project, which is revitalizing the historic commercial and industrial districts along the Port of Yokohama. Through development of public and private sector cultural institutions and creative industries, this unique creative environment that has resulted is attracting artists, creators, educators, entrepreneurs and tourists—who are shaping a new cultural identity for Japan's historic cultural window to the West.

The Basque region of Spain is finding that the global advantage is in fact going to regions that link distinctive assets. For Basque citizens this means combining the assets of Bilbao, San Sebastian, and Vitoria. In each city there is a wave of new investment aimed at the creative industries. Dr. Alfonso Vegara has his own way of describing strategy for investments that pay big dividends. He told the GLF group that "we try to discover the points of acupuncture," those places and ways to touch the built environment so that all the systems are activated.

All this begged the question: what does the ever expanding digital world mean for physical places? How might we harness the features of both to strengthen community, and build better connections and collaboration?

Or, to put the question another way: what if you could walk right into your browser? That is very close to the experience that Jeffrey Huang claims Swiss émigrés can have to keep them tethered to their home country.

Huang's brief comments, coming at mid-point in the conference, encapsulated the new synergy under way between technology and arts and economic development. Blessed with an infectious enthusiasm for making complex change comprehensible, Huang described how Switzerland aims to deploy new spaces around the world that link the physical and

virtual worlds—up to 20 nodes of contact with highly talented Swiss citizens who are studying or working in various global intellectual centers. Huang has been a professor at the Harvard School of Design, but he's now headed back to his native Switzerland, to massive Swiss applause due to the country's nagging worry that too many of its talented and superbly trained young leaders/talent will wander away and not return.

A Huang conversation starts with a reminder of how fast human experience is shifting from physical to virtual. The traditional banking experience is nearly gone, he said, as bank buildings are turning into offices for trade associations, even night clubs. We buy more books on-line than in stores. But Amazon.com's fulfillment warehouse is a physical necessity. And installation of new fiber networks is "altering the morphology of cities." So the new reality may lie more along a "gradient between the physical and the virtual," he said.

The "Swisshouse," which Huang described, offers a prime example. The first such creation can be found in Cambridge, Massachusetts, in a small nondescript building hollowed out to accommodate the latest in communications and information technology. The entire floor is a motherboard. The new walls are transparent, capturing images and sounds as Swiss émigrés come in to connect to people and places, to get information and send messages. As Huang puts it, "The wallpaper listens to conversations and the words in the walls drop slowly to the floor. By late afternoon, you can observe the sediment of the day's thoughts."

In the world of commerce it is now the consumer experience that drives differentiation among products and services. Something very similar is behind the decisions people make every day about where to live and work. People make judgments every day about quality and design of workplaces and communities. Jarmo Eskelinen from Helsinki pointed out that technology advantages are nice, but "we all have gadgets hanging off our belts now." As Wolfgang Wagener of Cisco Systems said, brandishing a sparkling new Treo, "I can do my work with this thing, from nearly anywhere. So I need a good reason

to be somewhere other than my home. Why do we go to the office?”

Hearing so many descriptions of revitalized places, the Basque region’s Alfonso Vegara warned that “as we develop where the market doesn’t go, let’s not find that at the end we’ve eliminated the creative class from high prices of everything.”

### **ARTIST INNOVATORS— PARTNERS NOT PATINA**

Gerfried Stocker is the director of the ARS Electronica in Linz. He was blunt. “Artists are not there to make your home more beautiful, to entertain you, to make you more comfortable. Artists do want to contribute to society. But this they do as they disturb us. They force us to see things differently.”

Saying that “design can be the breaking point,” Jarmo Eskelinen, director of Forum Virium Helsinki, told of an old cable factory found and used by artists but then taken over by the city. “Just let it go on,” he said. “Let the people stay and let it take its own course.” This was not a stand for squatters’ rights, but a fundamental case that artists are increasingly viewed as crucial to an innovative system in society.

Huang Rui is the artistic director of the Dashanzi International Art Festival in Beijing. He is aware that people see China still as a top-down society. And he is feisty in asserting that artists are not shy about conflict. They thrive on it. If a city has a defined plan and timetable, ultimately artists have no interest. He pointed to thousands of top-notch artists in Beijing who thrive on the confrontations in society, making Beijing a more interesting, alive, relevant place.

Looking back on the history of ARS, Stocker said “We had to make ARS drive to every dimension of society, not just to arts themselves.” Design delivers when it is trusted. By emphasizing the linkage of art and technology to society, ARS has created an identity for Linz very distinct from Vienna and Salzburg, and its commercial R&D work has helped make the Linz economy Austria’s most vital region for business.

Habitat New Media lab director Ana Serrano said that nearly every R&D project is interdisciplinary and collaborative, so the core methodology is to get people to think of the “story form” for their innovation project. That requires an artistic thinking about narrative that’s proven useful in the commercial sector.

That’s why, said Dan Keegan, executive director of the San Jose Museum of Art (who admits that most museums are boring, especially to the emerging generation), “our trustees are helping to conceive a new kind of museum.” This new museum will educate about and display new forms of technology-based art throughout the city, but also use technology in practical ways to enhance the experience of more traditional art forms.

It may be legend, but people claim that Steve Jobs, founder of Apple Computer, told author Daniel Pink (*A Whole New Mind*) at an international conference that the best credentials for getting a job at Apple these days were “an art portfolio and good social skills.” This may be true, whether or not Mr. Jobs said it. In cars or cool electronic gadgets or clothing, design and the consumer experience rule today. Only the hand of the artist explains the market success of an iPod. As Adobe executive Leslie Bixel puts it, “Having the coolest technology is important, but so is delighting the customer with the entire product experience.”

### **FUSION AS CRITICAL REGIONAL ADVANTAGE**

Saying Thomas Friedman and his best-selling book (*The World Is Flat*) got it only half right, John Seely Brown told GLF delegates “The world isn’t just flat, it’s spiky. And the trick is figuring out which spikes are significant.”

Brown is an ardent and articulate proponent of acknowledging “the remix culture and capabilities—the building, tinkering, learning, sharing, and creation of meaning that occurs in open source cultures where consuming and producing interact in a loop, become contagious, imbed themselves as culture.” He speaks with considerable authority, having brought artists into a technology park a generation ago when he was chief scientist

at Xerox and then director of the Palo Alto Research Park.

User-created content is becoming an important part of contemporary culture, exceedingly so with young people. Increasingly, content generated by our friends, family, and self as well as by total strangers is proving more popular than content generated by the entertainment industries.

Throwing a Google Earth 2 graphic on the screen, Brown showed how mash-ups work. One day after Katrina, a swarming behavior of data reporting with cell phones organized into an Ajax data base—and you got a picture of Katrina’s impact that would have taken a top-down organization two weeks to do.

This play of imagination enabled by technology is a new seedbed of creativity, of innovation, Brown said. It is the new regional advantage, if people can figure it out and climb out of their one way of seeing the world. The internet has graduated from information source to an interactive platform—just check out Flickr, MySpace, YouTube, Wikipedia, and more grow every day.

Since Brown first began bringing artists and research scientists together at Xerox Park, he has believed that artists can play an important role in the innovation system. “Getting stuck in one way of looking at the world is more dangerous than ever before,” Brown said. “Because of hyper-competition, the world is moving from managing continuity to driving innovation in world of discontinuity.” To be a serious player, most of us have to re-learn how to see what’s going on.

Artists bring a different way of looking at things. They can help address a critical need facing most businesses today—to solve complex problems in novel ways.

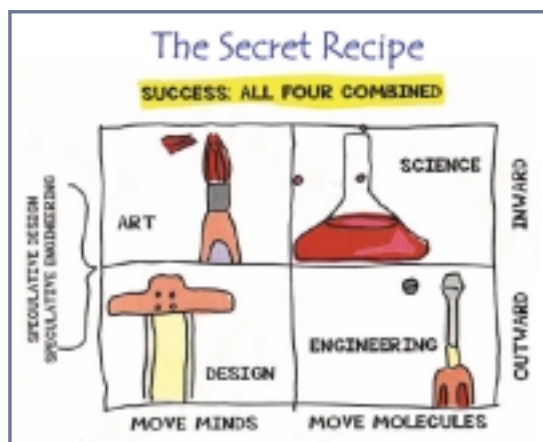
Plus we have to get pairings of imagination, Brown said. Presenting a matrix of potential pairs, Brown showed how artists and scientists—both somewhat inward-looking—have trouble making active connections with designers and engineers. The former move minds. The latter move molecules. Success is combining all four. Regions that find ways—through physical space or program—to get

all four together are in the advantaged position for the future, he said.

In one sense, Silicon Valley’s sponsorship of the GLF is rather obvious testimony that those who conceived of 1st ACT (Arts + Creativity+ Technology) get Brown’s message loud and clear. And that message was clearly the music of the day at the GLF meetings. Delegates from diverse places found a common voice around this new synergy.

Agreeing enthusiastically was George Dolivo, cultural affairs director for Espoo, Finland. Dolivo made no pretense that Espoo was handicapped in this new race. “We’re young, educated, wealthy, conservative, and suburban,” he said. “But without this new mix of culture and technology, our citizens will not have the tools to participate in what all these changes make possible.” With new tools for creation and competition, boundaries start falling way—even geographic ones. Espoo participants readily embraced the reality of economic and cultural regions, citing their close ties to Helsinki, located next-door.

Liverpool’s Jason Harborow claims they started at the other end of the pole. “When we set out to compete for the distinction of being the European Cultural Capital (which they won for 2008), we knew it would take years, not like going for the World Cup. But we had come to a conclusion: the place could go on being a disaster forever, or we could take responsibility. We knew our people had opinions. We just had to involve them.”



Rich Gold and Anne Balsamo, as cited by John Seely Brown in "Rethinking Innovation Ecologies for the Global Economy"

England, said that outlying parts of their region are relatively poor; access to technology for most people is limited to television reception. So developing centers of excellence and creative knowledge networks that link artists and creative businesses and universities (Cambridge among them) is a critical step to raise the region's sights.

Wellington, New Zealand is really down under, said Suse Reynolds (who manages the Creative Sector Initiatives), a long way from most places. But Wellington has totally embraced the Brown thesis, having now wedded its economic fortunes to the health of its arts and culture. Making sure that the Peter Jackson-produced Lord of the Rings trilogy was not just a one-time flash, Wellington is making itself the heart of an arts culture for all of New Zealand and a growing international arts destination.

### MEASURING IMPACT— DIFFICULT BUT IMPORTANT

Does this new fusion among art, creativity, and technology have impact? Here's a sample of responses:

- Yokohama has seen a proliferation of experimental projects, new collaborations, and open studios, attracting talented people from other places.
- In Helsinki, use of the internet has tripled, along with a rise in people living and studying and working from one location.
- In Melbourne, maybe you cannot measure it precisely, but there's a real "animation of public spaces" not seen before, as Reynolds puts it, describing all the events and the huge numbers gathering.
- Guadalajara echoes that sentiment. There's a pride factor. People feel very happy to be part of it, says de Font-Reaulx.
- Tan says in Singapore the life sciences cluster is already attracting international talent. And the whole area has become a kind of "watering hole for Singapore, a place that can actually attract world-class scientists."
- In Zurich, where land prices were already high, they've gone even higher for the areas around Science City, evidence that people want to live near a vibrant "thinking culture."

- Carol Coletta, a conference moderator and the head of the U.S. organization CEOs for Cities, says that is the dividend of the new "remixable city, the "new normal" as it's been said, where people can create their own experiences out of pre-existing parts. That is sure to add new value."
- Vegea welcomes an impact analysis of just the Bilbao Guggenheim museum investment. "When we did that, unemployment was at 30 percent. The museum alone generated more than a million new visitors and drove hotel occupancy rates from around 25 percent to nearly full all the time," he said.

Are we trapped in habits of measuring only what we can count? Coletta pointed out how important it is to try measures. "Measures help to clarify what we're doing. Look how long Detroit was comfortable. That shows we need to measure the right things," she said.

True enough. But trying to get overly quantitative on the new remixable region can feel a little like shoveling smoke. One can count the strokes and still find the product elusive. No matter, said Suse Reynolds, "These discussions have made me more comfortable that I'm not going away with anything concrete. You cannot truly measure economic development, but need to treat it like a great piece of art—how do you feel about it and does it work for you?"

### LEADERSHIP DIFFERENT IN THE NEW NORMAL

In this "new normal," a more collaborative and less predictable civic arrangement, how different must leadership be?

For starters, leaders have to see the synergy, the strength in combining sectors previously held separate. As Beijing's Huang Rui said at the closing session, "When you want to complete a piece of work and you just look at the technological side, you're creating a bias...you're using just one arm. One arm can never compare to the strength of two." And it is not just coalescing different societal sectors, Peter Thornton maintained, but pulling together personal and group attributes seldom combined, "like ambition and trust." Usually, he said, you find one without the other. Bruce

Liedstrand, a host committee member, added “And even in the public sector we need a culture that honors taking risks, and that feels enough trust to handle failure.”

Alfonso Vegeera said leadership is a mindset that focuses on strengths, on assets, not on deficits. Successful regions know to build on their uniqueness. Paul Krutko, economic development director for San Jose, and part of the host committee, added that “it is only in these intensely local processes that we can identify the vital elements of this ‘new normal’.”

John Seely Brown stressed the critical leadership role of “listening with humility.” That sentiment resonated with Gerfried Stocker whose definition of leadership was setting a scene in society where the new and unexpected is actually desired, not feared. Making friends with questions may matter more than seeking clear answers. But doing any of that means “there has to be space for listening,” said Kate Brennan. And leaders do not have to do everything, said Ana Serrano, but “maybe be more like doulas of invention—helping to give birth to creativity in society.”

In this approach, leaders do not need to be specialists, but need to excel at creating platforms and process architectures that bring together different disciplines and generations for constructive engagement with each other. In San Jose’s new ZeroOne Festival, for example, civic leaders and corporate sponsors created a platform to showcase and engage with the world’s most cutting-edge new-media art. The positive vibe stemmed not from control, but from a respectful hands-off trust of the creative process. This may be key to a more remixable city—a place where people constantly contribute to creating experiences for themselves and for others in a quite fluid process.

There must also be a leader’s will to be one of the “creatives,” to do what is not normally done. As Kyung Yoon, chair of Heidrick & Struggles, put it, “I am not an artist, but I always look to put things together that don’t belong. That’s what we must do. Once we thought all our lives would be better simply from technology. But they are not. We know we all want to live in communities where there is spirit.”

David Nieh, formerly Chief Architect for San Jose and now Studio Manager with SOM in Shanghai, mused over these evolving senses of both art and leadership, pronouncing them both to be more “process than nouns.”

Nieh, though now working in China, remains glued to the canvas of change that is the Silicon Valley leadership. Where leaders from all sectors have come together in forming 1st ACT, through which Silicon Valley will leverage its distinctive technological and multicultural assets into a strategy focused on creativity, using arts and culture as the fulcrum for writing a new, 21st century chapter of success.

So ended the first Global Leadership Forum on the convergence of the arts with technology and economic development. This fertile valley of creativity, through which so many change waves have swept—from the days of agriculture to its contemporary distinction as the technology capital of the world—proved a suitable cradle for a conversation still in its infancy. Participants who came long distances were the pioneers who dared to describe their local experiments—successes and frustrations—who were willing to think together with strangers about what it all might mean for their city and for others.

A retired scientist with Bechtel, Michael Wakelin, watched and listened to these pioneers, and mused that “We have managed to talk to each other for two days about things we don’t yet understand individually.” Perhaps so, but as Carol Coletta put it, “There is now enormous potential for new transnational networks, where ideas are exchanged independent of national identities.”

Whatever label this movement eventually attracts - fusion, new mix, remix - its core ideas are making waves. Or as Jasmin Aber of the University of California at Berkeley quipped at adjournment, “The genie is definitely out of the bottle.”

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### **Madison Nguyen**

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