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**A crisis in urban creativity?**

**Reflections on the cultural impacts of globalisation, and on the potential of urban cultural policies**

Paper presented at the international symposium *The Age of the City: the Challenges for Creative Cities*, Osaka, February 7<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> 2004

The work in progress presented at this symposium considers some aspects of the cultural impacts of globalisation (1) on contemporary Western European cities, and some of their implications for urban creativity. It concentrates on trends which have the potential of undermining the conditions for urban creativity. These include the following: the dispersal of urban functions and the problem of the 'hypertrophic' city; the emergence of 'non-places' and of the 'experience economy'; the reduction in leisure time for people in work; the consequences of 'information overload' and of the 'audit explosion', particularly for public sector organisations. The paper then considers the creative potential of a further trend: the increasingly multi-ethnic and multi-cultural composition of cities in the UK and other European countries. The concluding sections of the paper discuss aspects of the potential of urban cultural policies in counteracting an emerging crisis in urban creativity and innovation.

(1) *The problem of urban hypertrophy*

The debate on the cultural impacts of globalisation on cities has intensified in recent years. During the 1990s there were widespread concerns about growing social divisions, fear of crime and alienation, the standardisation of architecture and retail environments (with the decline of independent shops and the rise of multiple retailers), and the dispersal of urban services, residential and industrial functions over a larger area. The latter trend contributed to a crisis of local identity, and to making the provision of sustainable public transport systems more difficult (Bianchini and Ghilardi Santacatterina, 1997, pp. 70-72).

Despite the revival of interest in the idea of the more environmentally sustainable, and less car-dependent, 'compact city' - advocated, among others, by Lord Rogers of Riverside, Chair of the UK government's Urban Task Force and reflected in the Urban White Paper (DETR, 2000) - urban sprawl is arguably more visible today than a decade or so ago, especially in countries like Britain, which have adopted a market-driven model of urban development.

The hypertrophy of the city, sprawling into the countryside, in a sense goes hand-in-hand with the hypertrophy of the human body itself. Urban sprawl makes walking or cycling in the city often impractical, unpleasant and in some cases dangerous, and public transport often not viable, especially for many suburban and outer urban residential areas. This has the effect of massively reducing the number of pedestrians and cyclists in city streets and public spaces, and subsequently of contributing to fear of crime. As fewer people use the public realm, there is less public demand for it to be properly maintained and upgraded. There is also less demand for linking existing (and often pleasant) but disconnected parks, squares, cycleways and walkways so that they form legible and well-functioning public space networks. Dependence on the car, and the related lack of exercise, is one of the key reasons why growing numbers of people in Europe today are overweight or obese. According to research by Denmark's National Board of Health (2), 40 million EU citizens are overweight. This is particularly a problem for children (who constitute about 6 million of the 40 million overweight

Europeans) due to factors including of course a preference for fast food, sugared drinks and sweets, but also sedentary leisure pursuits (like TV and computer games), the shortage of safe indoor and outdoor play areas, and the fact that their parents are often anxious about letting them walk to school or to their friends' places, thus tending to ferry them everywhere by car.

Models of urban development conceived in countries like the US, Canada and Australia - which, largely because of the amount of space at their disposal, have a significantly different relationship between the city and the countryside from that characterising European history - have become established also in Europe. This can be seen in the mushrooming of out-of-town hypermarkets, shopping centres and 'citadels of entertainment' including multiplex cinemas, bowling alleys, fast food restaurants, and other leisure attractions. These places tend to be lacking in local distinctiveness, and resemble each other both in their design and their offer of retail and leisure activities, dominated by the large multiples. Despite this, they are increasingly significant as public spaces, although clearly not designed with that function in mind. For example, people, when visiting their out-of-town supermarket, multiplex cinema or leisure centre, often bump into or arrange to meet neighbours, friends and colleagues in the car park. This dull, pedestrian-unfriendly and 'placeless' expanse of tarmac, in many cases surrounded by badly designed sheds, is clearly not the most stimulating place for socialising and conviviality. The fact that these car parks have become significant components of the public realm is one of the curious and worrying aspects of the hypertrophic city. There is an interesting disconnection between the boring and utterly uncreative physical appearance of so many out-of-town entertainment citadels and the richness of ideas and stimuli provided by, for example, the films projected inside them. The transformation of out-of-town shopping and leisure centres into an imaginative and stimulating public realm will be one of the challenges for creative cities in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

## *II. The emergence of 'non-places' and of the 'experience economy'*

Once you step inside the multiplex cinema, or the bowling alley, or the themed bar or restaurant, or the town centre or out of town shopping mall, you find that these places tend to lack the sense of discovery, unpredictability and of multiple possibilities which is a feature of traditional European city centres. 'Anywhere' places like most shopping malls and fast food restaurants are in many cases characterised by what American social theorist George Ritzer (1993) calls 'McDonaldization', a 'rational' model of organisation which offers efficiency, speed and predictability of the quality of the product, but which can also be dehumanising both for the customers and for the people who provide the service. French anthropologist Marc Augé describes such places and others, such as airport lounges, supermarkets and cashpoints as 'non-places', typical of a world "surrendered to solitary individuality, to the fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral"(1995, p. 78).

The mushrooming of 'non-places' coexists with the growing currency of enthusiastic arguments for turning cities more and more into theme parks. The article 'Welcome to the experience economy', by B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, published in 1998 in *Harvard Business Review* (see also Pine and Gilmore, 1999), has been influential in this trend towards theming. Pine and Gilmore write that "an experience occurs when a company intentionally uses services as the stage, and goods as props, to engage individual customers in a way that creates a memorable event" (1998, p. 98). The two authors argue that as competition for the sale of services increases (for example, competition between the growing number of designer clothes shops, cafes, bars and restaurants in city centres) services have to be repackaged, themed and offered as "experiences". They write: "an effective theme is concise and compelling...the theme must drive all of the design elements and staged events of the experience toward a unified story line that wholly captivates the customer"(1998, p. 103). They add that "experience staggers...must eliminate anything that diminishes, contradicts, or distracts from the theme"(*ibid.*). This is relevant for cities in Western Europe because we are seeing the emergence of new types of cultural attractions, inspired by American approaches to theming.

Niketown in Oxford Circus, London, for example, is much more than a shop. It is an interactive museum of human performance in athletics and other sports. Similarly, the Sephora perfume stores in Paris, Nice and Barcelona offer overarching experiences, ranging from museum of scents, to bookshop, live event and space for meditation. The emerging 'experience economy' is not necessarily a negative

phenomenon. As Marc Pachter and Charles Landry observe, it creates new types of institutions which blur "the boundaries between shopping, learning and the experience of culture" (2001, p. 46). These places can become successful visitor attractions and enrich a city's cultural landscape. However, new themed attractions often lack subtlety. Their effect can be to channel, control, simplify and 'banalise' our urban experiences, thus contributing to undermining the "creativity potential" (Landry *et al.*, 1996) of a city.

### III. *Other threats to urban creativity*

At least four other trends are potentially undermining the conditions for urban creativity. Due to lack of time and space, these will be listed (in no particular order) with minimum commentary, but clearly they deserve deeper and more detailed consideration.

The first of these trends has been characterised by Charles Landry (interview with Franco Bianchini, 12<sup>th</sup> January 2004) as "the contradiction between the creativity and the 'risk management' agenda", with the increasing currency in city management of insurance arrangements and risk policies which ignore opportunities, and tend to paralyse innovation.

Secondly, there appears to be a contraction of leisure time for people in work. It can be argued that availability of leisure time and freedom from pressure are not necessary conditions for creativity. Indeed Landry and Bianchini (1995, p. 20, quoting research by Melucci *et al.*, 1994) observe that there is an "'optimum threshold of resistance' in the relationship between the creative subject and the external environment...The appropriate threshold stands at a fine balance - if it is too intense it may overwhelm you, yet if it is absent it may not initiate a sufficient response". However, recent research suggests that the pendulum may have swung in a direction which is not favourable to creativity. For example, a survey carried out in 2002 by the UK Government's Department of Trade and Industry and by *Management Today* revealed that 1 in 6 (16%) of workers surveyed worked over 60 hours a week, compared to 1 in 8 (12%) in 2000, and that the number of women working over 60 hours weekly had doubled, from 1 in 16 (6%) in 2000 to approximately 1 in 8 (13%) two years later. Interestingly, twice as many of the employees surveyed said that they would rather work shorter hours than win the lottery (3).

Thirdly, a pamphlet by Italian sociologist Giuliano da Empoli (2002) convincingly argues that more and more of our time is spent handling an exponentially growing quantity of information, originating from an increasing number of sources (including post, e-mail, fax, internet, land line and mobile telephones, TV and radio channels, newspapers and magazines). We have less and less time to reflect on this mass of messages, understand what is central and what is peripheral, and use information creatively.

Fourthly, Michael Power's work on Britain (1994 and 1997; see also Belfiore, 2003) identifies an 'audit explosion', and the emergence of an 'audit society', with the growing popularity of procedures of evaluation and quality assurance (described by Powers as 'rituals of verification'), especially in public sector organisations. Eleonora Belfiore comments that "Powers inscribes the phenomenon into the context of the changes that have taken place in society at large, and in public administration in particular" (2003, p. 13) since the 1980s. She adds that "such dramatic changes in public management can be associated with the necessity for much higher financial discipline brought about by the fiscal crisis faced by many Western governments in the 1980s" (*ibid.*). There is not necessarily a conflict between creativity and evaluation/verification, but there are, once again, signs that more and more time, energies and resources previously devoted to creative activities are now absorbed by quality assurance procedures. This appears to be the case also for State subsidised organisations operating in the field of artistic production. Belfiore suggests that "rituals of verification (e.g. the obsession for policy targets and outcomes of evaluation) might be seen as a surrogate for the arts' lost authority and legitimacy" (2003, p. 14). Administrative and secretarial personnel operating inside cultural and knowledge institutions (including arts organisations and Universities), which in the past worked in close contact with and in support of culture and knowledge producers, is now increasingly re-deployed to work in evaluation and quality assurance functions. This has the effect of not only reducing existing support for creative personnel, but also of generating additional demands on their time. On this point,

Belfiore writes that "the very fact that an organization undergoes a process of auditing becomes in itself a guarantee of legitimacy and transparency, regardless of the audit's actual findings - which are often simply ignored" (2003, p. 13).

Despite the objective pointlessness of some evaluation exercises, the 'audit explosion' marks a significant shift of power away from creative workers, who tend to be 'auditees', and are placed by quality assurance managers in a defensive position, by being presented with new time consuming tasks to be completed and new hoops to jump through.

In short, the emergence of the 'audit society', which is having a profound effect on management and policy-making at city level, presents serious problems for urban creativity. More generally, any future 'creative city' strategy will have to deal with the four trends briefly dealt with in this section. In the case of the issue of information overload, for example, the potential for a more proactive role for public libraries as filters, selectors and packagers of data could be explored.

#### *IV. The rise of the multi-ethnic European city*

A further key factor of change concerns the increasingly multi-ethnic and multicultural character of European cities (Borja and Castells, 1997) - this is because of both increasing legal and illegal migration and the higher birth rate among populations of non-European descent. This trend could provide opportunities for artistic, cultural, social, economic, organisational and political creativity and innovation, rooted in genuine local distinctiveness. Very soon in many European cities the social groups still often referred to as 'ethnic minorities' will not be minorities at all. These developments give rise to challenges for city governments, but also offer opportunities for counteracting the problem of the growing cultural standardisation of European cities. There are lively debates in Europe as to which strategy would be the most effective.

##### IV.1 Corporate multiculturalism

Since the 1980s, pragmatic, corporate multiculturalism has been the dominant urban policy response to the presence of ethnic minorities in Britain. This approach has worked in the main well in terms of securing relatively harmonious race relations (despite the incidents in 2001 in towns and cities in northern and central England, including Oldham, Bradford, Burnley, Leeds, Accrington and Stoke). It recognised former colonial subjects who settled in Britain as citizens, and came to address racial inequality and discrimination, both by legislative remedy and by accommodating ethnic minorities as communities, by negotiating with and channelling resources to group leaders. The weaknesses of multicultural policies in Britain have now become more apparent. By treating ethnic minorities as unified communities at the political - though not juridical - level, they often act as corporate groups, dominated by unelected leaders or male elders who speak on behalf of the community, as though no individual rights or diversity of opinion operate within it. These features have been exacerbated by communitarian ideology, adopted by some local activists and politicians who close the door on dialogue and mediation, by fuelling head-on conflict over values between groups who are counterposed as ethnic opposites. Corporate multiculturalism necessarily limits intercultural communication and understanding, and tries to protect community boundaries and traditional identities. This model has largely failed to build on the plurality of affiliations and the new kinds of identity that have emerged with subsequent generations born in the UK.

The British approach to multiculturalism is being re-examined in the light of the Macpherson Report (4) and the Cattle Report (5) following the 2001 riots. The ensuing debate is more open to considering different policy frameworks for cultural diversity. It would appear that such debates have an important role to play in shaping the cultural dynamics of urban policies in Britain over the next decade.

##### IV.2 Civic Cultural Integration

France is characterised by a strong tradition of civic republicanism in which immigrants from the colonies have been integrated as citizens in a secular state with universal rights, which find their origin in the Revolution of 1789. However, until recently, this has happened within an assumption of the cultural uniformity of what it means to be French - whose symbols range from the French

language as the embodiment of civilisation, guarded against American contamination, to the distinctive flavours of regional cheeses and wines. While civic republicanism is secular, and religion considered a private matter, the personal display of symbols of religious faith by Catholics (and by Jews), has been tolerated in contrast to racist controversies about Muslim girls wearing headscarves to school. French institutions are now dealing with the problems of detaching universal citizenship rights from specific cultural norms – recognising the *de facto* pluralist character of French culture. This process has been helped by the success of the French national team in the football World Cup in 1998 and in the European Championships in 2000. The key role played in these victories by French footballers of diverse ethnic origins like Zidane, Henry, Vieira and Djorkaeff has enabled the Left in France to turn what could have been a traditional reassertion of national grandeur into a pluralistic redefinition of the nation.

Compared to Britain, the French civic tradition is better able to transcend neighbourhood-based class and ethnic identities, through a stronger sense of shared belonging to the city. Such civic identification is especially important today, in times of growing social fragmentation. In France the civic space is highly prized, as evidenced by the quality of design, maintenance and access to the public realm - e.g. the successful upgrading of public transport systems and public spaces in cities like Lyons and Strasbourg. The high quality of urban spaces and services is visible also in schemes for improving peripheral housing estates (*banlieues*) where there are high concentrations of immigrants, such as the Banlieues '89 project, led by architect Roland Castro . At its most successful, it added a degree of civic urbanity to working-class dormitory areas, through the development of new squares, high quality housing, public art, cultural centres and festivals (Castro, 1994).

#### IV.3 Interculturalism

This approach goes beyond equal opportunities and respect for existing cultural differences, to the pluralist transformation of public space, civic culture and institutions. It does not recognise cultural boundaries as fixed but as in a state of flux and remaking. An intercultural approach aims to facilitate dialogue, exchange and reciprocal understanding between people of different cultural backgrounds. Urban cultural policies based on this approach, for example, would prioritise funding for projects where different cultures intersect, 'contaminate' each other and hybridise. This contrasts with the multicultural model, where funding is directed within the well-defined boundaries of recognised cultural communities. In other words, intercultural urban policies would be aimed at promoting cross-fertilisation across all cultural boundaries, between 'majority' and 'minorities', 'dominant' and 'sub' cultures, localities, classes, faiths, disciplines and genres, as the source of cultural, social, political and economic innovation.

There are significant intercultural experiments at city level in many national contexts, including Canada, Denmark, France, Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal. For example, the regional authority in Tuscany (Regione Toscana) has created 80 intercultural centres in public libraries in the region between 1999 and 2001. This initiative forms of the Regione Toscana's "Porto Franco" ("Free Port") project, which seeks to change perceptions of cultural diversity and of visible minorities in the region by recasting Tuscan identity as diverse, and by reinterpreting the history of Tuscany as the product of intercultural influences from the Etruscans to the middle ages, when Tuscan society was influenced by Arab traditions of science, philosophy and the arts (6).

The new production of the built environment, in the centres of multi-ethnic cities in the UK, tends to be dominated by corporate international styles, with little consideration of cultural diversity and of how to draw on the skills and creativity of local citizens. The planning system in Britain appears to be too weak, or unconvinced about the merits of an intercultural strategy, and unwilling or unable to negotiate with developers to produce a greater diversity of styles, sources, contracts and uses. As a result, city centres fail to reflect the richness of local cultures. There is, for instance, virtually no involvement in new city centre-based developments of craftspeople from ethnic minority backgrounds, who work regularly in the production of religious buildings in many UK cities. While the Urban White Paper (DETR, 2000) clearly envisages a greater role for cultural considerations within the planning system, it is less clear on the types of strategies and powers planners should use in order to create a more culturally diverse urban experience.

An English experiment which showed some of the potential of intercultural urban design was carried out in the 'Balti zone' of the Ladypool Rd., in the neighbourhood of Sparkhill in Birmingham in 1998, (funded partly by the ERDF's URBAN programme) by Prasada – a Sanskrit term for a temple or palace which is also an acronym for Practice, Research and Advancement in South Asian Design and Architecture, an institute based De Montfort University in Leicester. Prasada's aim is to bring together the study of traditional South Asian architectural forms, visual arts and crafts with contemporary South Asian cultural expression. The designs for the Balti zone are based on Moghul motifs and forms which add to and interact with the Victorian pavilions and church spires of the area (7).

The invention of new civic events can build on needs, desires and dreams, not to create a false sense of jollity or togetherness, (in some cases manufactured by tourist or place marketing agencies) but memorable festive occasions in which large swathes of the city participate in person, express their own ways of celebrating or commemorating, and share moments of conviviality. Such occasions express the French urban theorist, Henri Lefebvre's idea of the *fête* as a disruption of established routines that prefigures a possible alternative future (Lefebvre, 1996).

One example of an attempt at enacting a new pluralistic civic identity is the annual Karnivale der Kulturen in Berlin - which is not a Carnival in the African Caribbean, Latin American or Mediterranean sense, which have their roots in Catholic culture. The Karnivale is held in the streets, with the participation of almost all the minority cultural organizations in the city, and has become hugely popular, attended last year by an estimated 600,000 Berliners. The structure of the event is not fully intercultural. Hybrid forms of music are presented in traditional terms, according to country of origin, on separate stages – Turkish dance, Russian disco, reggae, tabla, and food stands are separated according to national, geopolitical or ethnic definitions of the culture. So while it succeeds in creating a multicultural public space, the Karnivale does not fully exploit the potential of the cultural mixes that are a unique product of Berlin.

Intercultural place marketing strategies are being introduced at neighbourhood level in some cities, in some cases to counteract negative images which characterise urban areas where ethnic minority populations are concentrated. One example is the Hyson Green district in Nottingham, England, where the Partnership Council - in collaboration with other local stakeholders - implemented a place marketing strategy to counter the stigmas of poverty, racism and crime, under the campaign slogan 'Life at the heart of the city'. It focussed on the history and of the area and residents' perceptions of its tolerance, easy-going atmosphere and mix of cultures - reflected, for example, by the wide range of specialist shops, ethnic foods and fabrics - as well as its closeness to the city centre, to change its negative image. The media campaign used initiatives including adverts in the local press, posters on buses, a photographic competition and a website showcasing the area's cultural diversity. A series of highly publicised events, such as a public food tasting in the market square, a specially produced Hyson Green tea launched at a tea dance and a *Life at the Heart* CD featuring music tracks and lyrics by pupils in local schools were promoted as keys to experiencing the area differently. The project, also funded by the ERDF's URBAN Programme from 2000-2002 with an initial £100,000 budget, appears from the evaluation to have had a positive impact on the

consciousness of residents and outsiders, attracting commercial investors and new homeowners to the area (8).

In short, intercultural approaches in urban policy can help deal with the dangers of cultural standardisation and of the loss of distinctiveness which can be by-products of many entrepreneurial urban regeneration strategies, and can contribute to stimulating urban creativity and innovation.

#### IV.4 Transculturalism

Cities which have developed an intercultural practice as part of mainstream urban strategies, would be able to undertake transcultural projects, which transcend cultural differences and focus on common humanity. Transculturalism aims to transcend cultural differences, through values which define and unify us as a species, i.e. peace, solidarity, human rights and environmental sustainability. These values should find embodiment in the symbols of the city centre, flagship buildings, public art, education, transport, library and information services and social policies.

This approach is not new. It gained momentum after the Second World War with the development of peace memorials and gardens, and of the town twinning movement. In its more traditional forms, transculturalism can produce anodyne or banal solutions which unconsciously fall back on monocultural traditions which are assumed to be universal, but have not sufficiently engaged in an intercultural process.

The acceleration of globalisation processes and the world environmental crisis have given new impetus to transcultural initiatives like the Local Agenda 21 movement, and global ethics and citizenship education programmes aimed at young people, such as the Birmingham's Young People's Parliament project.

Barcelona City Council, in co-operation with the Catalan and Spanish governments and UNESCO, launched the Universal Forum of Cultures initiative. It will be a programme of exhibitions, performances, markets, games, conferences and debates focussed on transcultural themes, involving most countries around the globe. It will be held in Barcelona from 9th May to 26th September 2004. The Forum is intended to be the first of a series of programmes, held every four years in different cities across the world (9).

In conclusion, there is a need in European cities for debates on how elements of civic cultural integration, interculturalism, transculturalism, and open forms of multiculturalism could contribute to the urban creativity and innovation agenda.

#### *V. 'Cultural planning' strategies: learning from the processes of cultural production*

The idea of 'cultural planning' is a possible response to the problematic cultural implications of globalisation for cities. It is an attempt to challenge traditional approaches to urban development by recognising the value of local cultural resources. In the case of the UK, it is possible to detect traces of a cultural planning strategy within the Labour government's urban renaissance programme, for example in the planning guidelines of the Urban White Paper (DETR, 2000), or in aspects of the policies of the Neighbourhood Renewal Unit.

There is no doubt that the emphasis which was placed on the impact of cultural activities on consumer service industries, property development and place marketing in European urban cultural policies during the 1980s and the 1990s, was an important addition to the battery of arguments for policy-making in this field. This perspective, however, is too narrow to provide a sound basis for sustainable urban development. 'Cultural planning', which has been discussed since the early 1990s in North America, Australia and Europe (McNulty, 1991; Mercer, 1991 and 1996; Bianchini, 1990 and 1996) is a possible alternative to both cultural policy-led urban regeneration strategies and traditional cultural policies. Unlike traditional cultural policies - which are still mainly based on aesthetic definitions of 'culture' as 'art' - cultural planning adopts as its basis a broad definition of

'cultural resources', which consists of the following elements:

- arts and media activities and institutions;
- the cultures of youth, ethnic minorities and other 'communities of interest';
- the heritage, including archaeology, gastronomy, local dialects and rituals;
- local and external images and perceptions of a city, including the ways in which they change in the course of history and how they can be interpreted by different groups within the population - by, for example, children, particular ethnic communities, and the elderly;
- the natural and built environment, including public and open spaces;
- the diversity and quality of leisure, cultural, eating, drinking and entertainment facilities and activities;
- local milieux and institutions for intellectual and scientific innovation, including Universities and private sector research centres;
- the repertoire of local products and skills in the crafts, manufacturing and services, including local food products, gastronomic and design traditions.

Secondly, while traditional cultural policies tend to take a sectoral focus - e.g. policies for the development of theatre, dance, literature, the crafts and other specific forms of cultural activity - cultural planning adopts a territorial remit. Its purpose is to see how the pool of cultural resources identified above can contribute to the integrated development of a place, whether a neighbourhood, a city or a region. By placing cultural resources at the centre of the table of policy-making, two-way relationships can be established between these resources and any type of public policy - in fields ranging from economic development to housing, health, education, social services, tourism, urban planning, architecture, townscape design, and cultural policy itself. Cultural planning cuts across the divides between the public, private and voluntary sectors, different institutional concerns, types of knowledge and professional disciplines. In addition, cultural planning would encourage creativity and innovation in cultural production, for example through interculturalism, co-operation between artists and scientists, and crossovers between different cultural forms. It is also important to clarify that cultural planning is not intended as 'the planning of culture' - an impossible, undesirable and dangerous undertaking - but rather as a culturally sensitive approach to urban planning and policy. In the UK, contemporary urban planning under the Blair governments does address cultural issues, but it does not as yet place culture at the centre of planning.

Crucially, in this context, advocates of the cultural planning approach argue that policy-makers in all fields should not simply be making an instrumental use of cultural resources as tools for achieving non-cultural goals, but should let their own mindsets and assumptions be transformed by contact with the richness and complexity of the often hidden and invisible assets of local cultural life. This can happen if policy-makers learn from the types of thinking characterising processes of cultural production.

Six main features of such processes can be identified. The first refers to the *interdisciplinary, lateral and holistic* nature of the work of the best artists, which usually crosses disciplinary boundaries. By contrast, in the world of urban policy-making today departmental and disciplinary divisions and rigidities remain among the most important blockages to creativity and innovation.

The second characteristic of cultural production is that it tends to be *innovation-oriented, original, and in some cases experimental*. Unfortunately in many of the practices surrounding physical planning and urban regeneration not enough space for experiment is allowed - there are perhaps not enough ideas competitions, research and development projects, and not enough learning from examples of best practice from the private sector. There is also an excessive fear of risk, and often an inability to distinguish incompetent mistakes from 'competent' ones, which may contain the seeds of future success.

Thirdly, artists are often renowned for asking awkward questions, for being *critical*, and for exploring contradictions and conflicts through their work and their public role. On the other hand, urban policies are in many cases well known for the opposite reasons - for pretending that there are no conflicts and contradictions, and that a public-private partnership consensus can be relatively easily

achieved (often based on the 'common sense' idea that 'what is good for the business sector is good for the city'). There is in many cases a failure to understand that perhaps those conflicts and contradictions should be viewed positively, as policy resources to be explored, to develop more sophisticated, sustainable and democratic future urban strategies.

The fourth set of characteristics of cultural production is that it tends to be *people-centred*, *humanistic*, and healthily *suspicious of technological and economic determinism*. The influence of deterministic thinking on urban planning and policy is a continuing contributory factor to poor decision-making.

The fifth characteristic of cultural production is that it is a '*cultured*' approach, meaning that it is critically aware of history, and of traditions of cultural expression (Hall, 1998). One of the main critiques of physical planners, especially in Northern Europe, has been that they have not paid sufficient attention to aesthetic and historical considerations, and have made often fairly insensitive decisions, especially in the 1960s and early 1970s. One example is the legacy of urban motorways built especially in the 1960s, which have blighted and dismembered so many historic city centres in the UK and in other Northern European countries.

In cultural planning, the cultural policy-maker, the artist and/or the cultural manager can become the gatekeeper between the sphere of cultural production - the world of ideas and of the production of meaning - and any area of policy-making. In this sense the cultural planner's role is to improve the cultural skills of politicians and other policy-makers.

One last feature of cultural production is worth highlighting: artists insist typically on their work being *open-ended* and *non-instrumental* and on having a *non-judgmental* moment of creativity to try out new paths and ideas. This is, of course, often difficult to argue in urban policy-making, where there is tremendous pressure - from the media, opposition politicians, voters, pressure groups, as well as from central government, through extremely complex systems of performance auditing - to be very instrumental and achieve results quickly. However, urban strategies could be conceptualised, especially in their early stages, as more of a workshop process, with - for example - the use of temporary architecture to try out different ways of solving problems without committing oneself too early to a solution in bricks and mortar (10).

## VI. *Researching local cultural resources*

Today in many European cities there is, at least in theory, an increasing recognition of the importance of local cultural resources. For example, every local authority in England has been encouraged by the Government to prepare by the end of 2002 a Local Cultural Strategy (LCS), aimed at integrating cultural resources into local economic, education, environmental, tourism, social and health policies. LCS development was not a statutory duty for local authorities, but it formed part of Best Value performance reviews. It is notable that in the research, on which these local cultural strategies are based, there is an overwhelming emphasis on needs analysis, and not enough on entrepreneurial opportunities and desires, on the dreams of individuals and groups in civil society. Local authorities and urban public-private-voluntary sector partnerships could perform a useful brokerage function to bring to fruition these entrepreneurial opportunities. This process, however, would have to involve a recognition of obstacles and constraints. In some cases, as suggested earlier, an excessive emphasis on auditing, monitoring and evaluation has become a constraint. It is diverting an excessive amount of resources and time away from the more creative task of identifying the cultural resources themselves, establishing the necessary partnerships and developing innovative strategies. There is also not enough emphasis in many places on the gate-keepers, gateways, networks and alliances linking the local cultural economy with national and international markets and opportunities. This is particularly important in cities which have large multi-ethnic populations. Often diasporic networks are not very visible because the gate-keepers are not particularly well integrated into the local policy network.

Equally, it is important for local authorities to learn from certain private sector industries, like the fashion and design sectors, to value people who can spot talent and identify creative and innovative

milieux. These talent and trendspotters, sometimes described as 'coolhunters', can give vital information to the local policy-making system. They can help design support services (ranging from access to venture capital, technology and cheap premises to advice on management, marketing and intellectual property) tailored for talented young people wishing to work in the creative industries. By doing this, they can help prevent the migration of talent from regional cities to London, Paris, Milan and the other global centres of the cultural economy.

Lastly, very few towns or cities have an adequate understanding of their image, not only now, but also historically. This is important because images of three or four centuries ago can still have a resonance and be 'used' to develop distinctive cultural initiatives and city promotion strategies. Researching local images means studying their multi-faceted components, from jokes and 'conventional wisdom' to songs, film, literary representations, mythology and media coverage. There are some worrying results from recent research by Chris Murray (2001). His analysis of tourism brochures and other place marketing literature produced by local authorities and tourism promotion agencies in 77 localities in England and Wales leads him to identify "a strong and persistent tendency...to focus on the past and be generally backward-looking;...represent places as culturally uniform; and not to show diversity, but to promote a similar, bland mix of facilities and attractions for every area" (2001, p. 9).

Specialists with a narrow training in rather formulaic approaches to product marketing - which is not appropriate for complex and multi-faceted entities such as cities - tend to dominate the place marketing discipline. Experts in product marketing need to work together with other disciplines which possess knowledge of the locality in historical, geographical, sociological, anthropological, economic and political terms. In other words, there is a need for a more interdisciplinary, team approach to city marketing, which would also involve artists and other people from the cultural sector.

## VI. Conclusions

In a speech to a conference in Dublin in 1994, the then Irish Minister of Culture, Michael D. Higgins, said:

"For too long...financial institutions have used their hegemony to set limits to policy in other areas, constantly diminishing the cultural space in which so much radical or innovative thinking is possible. One result has been a dire impoverishment of social philosophy: we no longer seem to be living in countries but in economies. It is not inappropriate to use the concept 'the depeopled economy' for such a development. Another consequence of the fracturing of intellectual life has been the devaluation of play as a creative activity, for a consumer society is so goal-oriented that it has little use for any goal-free activity. *Homo economicus* feels justified by his products, whereas play is concerned with means rather than ends, with the quality of an action rather than its results. Hence the major contradiction of our economic arrangements: that a society based on the negation of the play element presents itself as uniquely able to deliver play - but only as an experience of consumption. In the process play has been placed in the service of something which is not at all playful, being narrowed, some would say degraded to the level of specialized work. This degradation is only possible in a society which has lost an ancient wisdom which taught us that play, far from being a deviation from the workaday norm, is the basis of all culture" (Higgins, 1994).

Higgins's argument about play is especially important in relation to the phenomenon, discussed earlier, of the danger of transforming cities more and more into theme parks. It would be more interesting and productive to try to, as Higgins suggests, recover a dimension of playfulness in cities, not primarily as an experience of consumption and carefully manufactured and staged commercial entertainment, but as a genuine expression of creativity, and as a process of education and re-discovery.

(1) Urban policy and the management and delivery of urban services, in short, should be infused with an understanding of the fine grain of the creative contents and of the cultural resources of a

city. By drawing inspiration from the marvelous and ever changing detail of local culture, urban policy-makers should be better able to counteract the negative effects of globalisation.

## Notes

- (1) On the concept of 'globalisation' see Tomlinson (1999) and Held (2000).
- (2) >[www.eu2002.dk/news](http://www.eu2002.dk/news)<.
- (3) ><http://164.36.164.20/work-lifebalance/press300802.html><.
- (4) *The Stephen Lawrence Inquiry. Report of an Inquiry by Sir William Macpherson of Cluny*, presented to Parliament by the Secretary of State for the Home Department by Command of Her Majesty, February 1999 (Cm 4262-I, published by The Stationery Office; >[www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/4262.htm](http://www.archive.official-documents.co.uk/document/cm42/4262/4262.htm)<).
- (5) *Community Cohesion: A Report of the Independent Review Team Chaired by Ted Cattle*, London, Home Office, December 2001.
- (6) >[www.cultura.toscana.it/intercultura.htm](http://www.cultura.toscana.it/intercultura.htm)< and >[www.cultura.toscana.it/progetti/porto-franco/home.htm](http://www.cultura.toscana.it/progetti/porto-franco/home.htm)<.
- (7) >[www.lsa.dmu.ac.uk/Research/Prasada/projects.htm](http://www.lsa.dmu.ac.uk/Research/Prasada/projects.htm)<.
- (8) >[www.life-at-the-heart.co.uk/hyson.htm](http://www.life-at-the-heart.co.uk/hyson.htm)<.
- (9) >[www.barcelona2004.org](http://www.barcelona2004.org)<.
- (10) On the idea of the 'creative city' see Landry and Bianchini (1995) and Landry (2000).

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## **Acknowledgments**

This paper is based on a chapter for *New Horizons in British Urban Policy*, a book edited by Craig Johnstone and Mark Whitehead (Ashgate, forthcoming). Earlier versions of this paper were delivered at conferences and workshops in Birmingham, England (July 2002), Stockholm (March 2003), Bogota' (May 2003) and Karlstad, Sweden (November 2003). The section entitled 'The rise of the multi-ethnic European city' is based on *Planning for the Cosmopolitan City*, an unpublished report I have written with Jude Bloomfield, commissioned by Comedia and completed in 2002.