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Cultural Policy and Urban Regeneration in Western European Cities: Lessons from Experience, Prospects for the Future

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ABSTRACT This paper reviews the uses of cultural policy and planning as tools of urban regeneration in western European cities. Following a brief assessment of the evolution of European cultural policy in recent decades, the paper studies the origins and development of the European City/Capital of Culture programme and explores the experience of cities considered to have succeeded in re-imaging and regenerating themselves through cultural activity and special events. The paper ends with a reflection on the notion of cultural planning and its potential as an integrated alternative to urban cultural policy, and offers recommendations for further development within the UK context.

KEY WORDS: cultural policy, regeneration, city marketing, European City/Capital of Europe, city planning, urban policy

Introduction

For the last 30 years, the effort towards transforming industrial cities into service-oriented economies has been accompanied by a growing interest in using culture as a tool for urban regeneration. The principle of 'arts-led' regeneration was explored in US cities in the 1970s and early 1980s and consequently developed, with a wider cultural remit, in European cities such as Glasgow, Barcelona and Bilbao to name but a few.

Despite the general use of cultural initiatives as catalysts for urban regeneration, the development of urban cultural policies as an element of

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city governance has been far slower and less consistent. This has often meant that the high levels of investment required to produce hallmark cultural events and infrastructures are not framed in an assessment of long term cultural legacies or coherent strategies that seeks to secure a balanced spatial and social distribution of benefits.

After the Commonwealth Games in Manchester 2002, with Liverpool as European Capital of Culture 2008 in view, and the preparation of a London Olympic bid for the 2012 Games underway, the UK is in a particularly good position to strengthen the role of urban cultural policy in the context of major events. The challenge for the UK, as for other European countries, is to address the difficult balance between the economic, social and cultural dimensions of event-driven urban regeneration.

In an attempt to identify key successes and pitfalls in recent experience, this paper examines the evolution of discussions about the role of culture in cities and the effect of the progressive convergence between cultural and economic discourses in European approaches to urban cultural policy. After a brief assessment of the evolution of European cultural policy over the past decades, the paper studies the origins and development of the European City/Capital of Culture programme and reviews the claims of success made by cities such as Glasgow and Barcelona in re-imaging and regenerating themselves through cultural activity and special events. The paper ends with a reflection on the notion of cultural planning and its potential as an integrated alternative to urban cultural policy, and extracts lessons and recommendations for further development within the UK context.

Understanding Urban Cultural Policies

> Big cities have long been important arenas of cultural production, forcing-houses of cultural innovation, centres of fashion and the creation of 'taste'. In a world in which large cities have lost many of their traditional manufacturing functions but in which the imperialism of shifting tastes and fashions appears ever more important, it may well be that this traditional role of large cities can become part of a vital strategy for urban survival. (Harvey, foreword to Zukin, 1982, pp. xi–xii)

David Harvey used these words to introduce the seminal book *Loft Living* by Sharon Zukin in 1982. The book highlighted the meeting of art and real estate markets and exposed the growing contradictions between a discourse of cultural empowerment where artists and ethnic diversity are seen as the catalysts for vibrant urban centres, and the less obvious discourse of a new urban political economy managed by elites according to the interests of land speculators and corporate investors. Zukin (1982, 1995) has led the way in discussions around new forms of understanding the cultural – symbolic – economy of cities. In this sense, a key realisation during the last decades of the 20th Century was that, although cities have always had cultural functions, the evolution of a global, service-oriented economy has placed culture at the very centre of urban development, and

has shifted traditional notions of culture as art and heritage to a view of culture as an economic asset, a commodity with market value and, as such, a valuable producer of marketable city spaces.

Miles *et al*. (2000) note that this shift in the understanding and uses of culture must be accounted for:

> One of the challenges of the new century is to democratise this [cultural] process and create transparency in the production of urban spaces. That is, critically, to see what takes place and according to what sets of assumptions. Those assumptions . . . can then be seen as cultural products and open to change. (Miles *et al*., 2000, p. 4)

In order to make the process of producing and marketing culture more transparent, cities need to develop policies that acknowledge whose culture is being supported at any one time and for what purpose.

However, the introduction of urban cultural policies has been far slower than the trend towards commodifying urban culture. At a European level, it was not until the early 1990s that academic circles initiated an explicit debate on this area. The debate was pioneered by Bianchini & Parkinson (1993) with the publication of a collection of essays that explored a range of West European cities and argued about the effect of cultural policy in the context of urban regeneration. Bianchini (1993, pp. 201–204) concludes by identifying a range of dilemmas that retain their relevance today. These are ‘spatial dilemmas’ such as tensions between city centre and periphery and the risk of gentrification; ‘economic development dilemmas’ such as that of encouraging consumption over production; and ‘cultural funding dilemmas’ in the choice to support ‘ephemeral’ activity such as events and festivals or ‘permanent’ activity such as infrastructures.

To address these dilemmas, Bianchini (1999) argues the case in favour of ‘cultural planning’, understood as an alternative to both traditional cultural policies – ‘still mainly based on aesthetic definitions of culture as art’ (Bianchini, 1999, p. 41) and cultural policy led regeneration – which ‘tend to take a sectoral focus’ (Bianchini, 1999, p. 41). In contrast, cultural planning adopts as its basis a broad definition of cultural resources[1] and adopts a territorial rather than a sectoral focus. Discussions around cultural planning have evolved in parallel to the urban cultural policy debate but, partly due to its more ambitious and holistic nature, the first is more difficult to recognise in practice. An effect of this situation is that the approach to culture within urban policy tends to be made in purely functional terms that prioritise the question ‘what can the cultural bring to the economic’ rather than allowing the delivery of social and cultural developments and recognising their intrinsic value for urban regeneration.

This paper argues about the value of advancing on the debate and practices of cultural planning. At this point, however, it is worth reviewing

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[1] This definition includes arts and media; cultures of youth, ethnic minorities, and others; heritage (including gastronomy, dialects . . .); local and external perceptions of a place; natural and built environment; diversity and quality of leisure entertainment; repertoire of local products and skills in the crafts . . . (Bianchini, 1999, p. 41).

the evolution of cultural policy in Europe and the progressive development of urban cultural policies specifically. This reveals a progressive shift towards economic priorities and the relegation of cultural aspirations as a relatively junior partner in the equation.

The Evolution of Cultural Policy in Europe: Towards a Convergence of Economics with Culture

From the 1940s to the 1960s, the predominant approach to cultural policy in Europe defined culture as the pre-electronic arts (Bianchini, 1999, p. 37) and '[t]he prevailing attitude among politicians and policy-makers was to "define culture as a realm separate from, and actively opposed to, the realm of material production and economic activity"' (Garnham, 1983 cited in Bianchini, 1999, p. 37). Bianchini refers to this era as 'the age of reconstruction' noting that it was a period marked by the effects of World Wars I and II (Bianchini, 1999, p. 36). The same neglect of the economic potential of cultural resources was carried into the 1970s and 1980s, 'when cultural policies served social and political agendas rather than economic ones' (Kong, 2000, p. 386). These decades were characterised by new urban social movements, which prompted politicians to give greater political and cultural autonomy to the grassroots and use cultural policy as a tool to enhance community-building (Kong, 2000, p. 386). This period is defined by Bianchini (1999, p. 37) as the 'age of participation' and marks a beginning in the use of culture as an 'integral part of urban policy and politics' (Kong, 2000, p. 387) with the city centre gaining a primary role as a 'catalyst for civic identity and public sociability' (Bianchini, 1993, p. 10).

However, by the mid 1980s, the emphasis of cultural policy as a mechanism to enhance community development and encourage social participation was progressively substituted by an emphasis on the potential of cultural policy as a tool for urban economic and physical regeneration. Kong (2000) identifies four main characteristics of what she defines as a period of 'cultural economic policy'. These include growing investment in the infrastructure needed for cultural production such as 'studios . . . marketing and support associations and the planning of cultural districts' (Kong, 2000, p. 387); the launch of flagship arts developments and high profile events in the inner city, 'often linked to local heritage themes, to encourage cultural tourism' (Kong, 2000, p. 387); the revival of urban public spaces; and, finally, a remarkable growth in public–private partnerships, 'including developers, banks and companies of national and international significance' to address urban issues, including city cultural provision (Kong, 2000, p. 387). Bianchini (1999, p. 38) refers to this period as the 'age of city marketing'.

The convergence between culture and economics in the urban context has been accentuated since the late 1990s with the expansion of city marketing techniques and their progressive transformation into city

branding strategies. The evolution from city marketing into a holistic city branding approach has had important implications for the uses of culture. While the first was limited to using selected cultural elements within promotional campaigns (see Ashworth & Voogd, 1995) the latter implies a 'wholesale city repositioning and place-making' (Ward, 1998 cited in Evans, 2003, p. 420) which 'attempts to reconcile leisure, business and community demands and aspirations, in a competitive environment' (Evans, 2003, p. 428). The issue here is that new approaches to cultural policy assume that business aspirations must supersede leisure and community demands. This paper aims to discuss precisely this question: whether or not the assumption on which new cultural policy is based is necessarily true.[2]

Tibbot (2002) argues in favour of city branding as an essential mechanism to maximise the 'impact' of cultural endeavours. In his words,

> If a cultural project is going to succeed in leading regeneration, it is crucial that it does so as part of a holistic destination brand. This means the promotion not just of separate elements of a destination but all of them, wrapping up individual attractions and buildings with the infrastructure surrounding them, to create a unified destination brand and sense of place. The overall brand should guide the long-term planning and operation of the destination as a whole. It is only this sense of strong destination brand that is capable of connecting with the heart and gut of the consumer. Once it has achieved this, it is able to position itself in the minds of visitors, and then to actually deliver market share and all the economic benefits that flow from this. Cultural projects give emotional 'fuel' for successful destination brands. And cultural brands can be adopted by commercial regeneration projects. Ultimately, correctly planned cultural projects can add significant value to regeneration. (Tibbot, 2002, p. 73)

This approach has been capitalised on by tourist authorities who, in their pursuit to promote and differentiate the city, have often become the most visible champions of the culture of cities. According to Evans (2003, p. 418),

> It is with tourism, therefore, that branded arts and entertainment shares common characteristics, since resorts and destinations have long been branded and pre-packaged. Indeed, as Dean MacCannell claimed, tourism is the cultural component of globalization, and cultural tourism in its various forms heritage, arts, convention, trails . . . is increasingly an urban phenomenon.

Economic development agencies are also leading the way in terms of city cultural strategies, and, in particular, in the development of schemes to support the so-called 'creative industries', a process widely encouraged by central government in the UK (see DCMS, 2001; DTI, 2001).

The predominance of tourist and economic development agencies in championing city culture keeps increasing due to the growth in global

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[2] I appreciate the suggestions made by an anonymous reviewer to emphasise this point.

connections and inter-urban competition. This process has been explained by Scott in his exploration of the cultural economy of cities. Scott (2000, p. 2) notes that 'cities have exhibited a conspicuous capacity both to generate culture in the form of art, ideas, styles and ways of life, and to induce high levels of economic innovation and growth'. As such, 'the culture-generating capabilities of cities are being harnessed to productive purposes' (Scott, 2000, p. 14). Castells (1989, 1996) adds that such a process is remarkable in capital cities and in regional capitals that aim to establish their own international identity without depending on the centre – nation state – in order to compete in the global economy. Indeed, this is even more the case in former industrial cities that have needed an 'aggressive redefinition of city identities and images' (Miles *et al.*, 2000, p. 5) to attract private sector and tourist investment. The most sought after formula is that which allows reinvention into creative and knowledge economies as argued by Landry (2000) and Florida (2002).

However, the key question remains – are global competitive cities able to retain a unique local character? Looking back at the city branding thesis, Scott (2000, p. 9) argues that major cities exhibit 'well-developed individual identities . . . rooted in the fact that cultural-products industries compete increasingly on . . . global markets' and need competitive 'branding'. But city branding exercises can also be seen as artificial makeovers or 'carnival mask' (Harvey, 1989), used to divert attention away from the growing economic, social and racial polarisation within cities (see also Kearns & Philo, 1993). Furthermore, the ability of city branding to create a distinctive sense of place is questionable as it relies on the creation of harmonic all-encompassing messages that can be in direct contradiction with the diverse and often conflicting cultural identities of a given urban environment. In the words of Evans (2003, p. 421),

> Despite their global reach and ubiquity, the extent to which branded urban entertainment centres can develop and sustain an identity and image for a city, as they create for an otherwise placeless self-created theme park, is less apparent. Associating a place with a cultural icon is . . . an attempt to imbue a place with a creative character, one that civic and tourist boards have appropriated in the case of Mackintosh's Glasgow, Gaudi's Barcelona . . . and now Guggenheim Bilbao . . . [But t]he danger of brand decay is . . . evident . . . as the single image and brand loses its impact and novelty, and a more pluralist range of representations is required.

In this context, it is worth returning to the question of cultural policy and its uses within urban governance. This is so because, in contrast to the frequent use of cultural references within economic development strategies, an understanding of economic processes is not always evident in cultural policy discourses. Without the establishment of explicit policies that try to explain or uncover the relationship between the cultural and economic, the approach to cultural development in cities tends to be biased towards the instrumental ends of those in charge, be it city leaders, urban planners and/or related specialist agencies. In the process, certain

activities are privileged while others are discouraged and marginalised. As such, while culture is being used to reinvent cities as centres of excellence for business and tourism consumption, its role as a critical force that can question the status quo is being progressively diminished (see Bianchini, 1990, pp. 239–240). The problem with this trend is the limited capacity of cultural endeavours to address issues of social inclusion and multicultural representation. This indicates that there is a need to broaden the approach to urban cultural policy and update the rhetoric in use within the cultural and arts community to catch up with the fast-changing approaches to culture-led economic regeneration in government and corporate circles. The next section explores some of the most influential initiatives taking place throughout Europe to stimulate city cultural policies and culture-led urban regeneration, and it analyses their achievements and limitations.

Culture-led Regeneration in Europe: from Glasgow to Barcelona

In line with the developments in cultural policy outlined above, following several decades focusing on regional development cultural action in the European Union (EU) has progressively shifted towards more localised initiatives in urban environments, with schemes such as the European Capital of Culture – previously named City of Culture. Evans (2003, p. 426) suggests that this scheme 'has acted as an effective "Trojan horse" by which structural economic adjustment policies and funding have been diverted into arts-led regeneration . . . generally bypassing national and even city cultural and economic development policy'. In his words, 'the use of culture as a conduit for the branding of the "European Project" has added fuel to culture city competition, whilst at the same time celebrating an official version of the European urban renaissance' (Evans, 2003, p. 426). Some have contested the ability of such a scheme to surpass local cultural policies (Myerscough, 1994, p. 24). However, there is little question about the scheme's effect on increasing city competitiveness and advancing culture-led regeneration agendas within the UK in particular. As such, it is a scheme that deserves more detailed analysis.

The European City of Culture Programme and the Glasgow Model

The European City of Culture (ECOC) programme was conceived in 1983 by Melina Mercouri, then Greek minister for culture. The purpose of the programme was to give a cultural dimension to the work of the European Community at a time when it did not have a defined remit for cultural action, and to celebrate European culture as a means of drawing the community closer together. The first cities to hold the title were an unsurprising roll-call of great European cultural centres – Athens (1985), Florence (1986), Amsterdam (1987), West Berlin (1988), Paris (1989) – who all celebrated

the year as a marker of their already-apparent cultural importance. The 1990 host city was scheduled to be in the United Kingdom and in 1986 the British government held, for the first time in the history of this programme, a competition to decide which British city should be nominated. Nine cities competed – including Bath, Bristol, Cambridge, Edinburgh and Liverpool – with Glasgow receiving the nomination in October 1986.

The selection of Glasgow marked a radical change in orientation for the ECOC that reflects the previously mentioned transition into an age of city marketing within cultural policy. Glasgow was the first city to use the ECOC as a catalyst to accelerate urban regeneration, which resulted in an ambitious programme of cultural activity with an unprecedented level of funding from local authorities and private sponsors. Key elements that have inspired other urban centres and are seen as pioneering examples of urban cultural policy include the emphasis on using a wide definition of culture, comprising not only the arts but other elements that reflected Glasgow's identity, such as design, engineering, architecture, shipbuilding, religion and sport; the distribution of activities not confined to the city centre but also outlying areas, with a view to reach and stimulate participation in less-privileged communities; the inclusion of flagship national companies and international stars at the same time as supporting emerging local artists and grassroots organisations; and the allocation of funding for both temporary activities and permanent cultural infrastructures.

Approaches to culture-led regeneration were also being developed in cities such as Barcelona and Paris, which – as discussed in the following section – also saw the value of using major events and hallmark infrastructures as catalysts for urban renewal throughout the 1980s and 1990s. In any case, Glasgow was able to distinguish itself and set some new trends thanks to its explicit dedication to celebrating culture in a broad sense and supporting cultural activity in deprived neighbourhoods as well as prestigious arts venues.

Despite Glasgow's unquestionable achievements, the 1990 experience suffered from some important limitations, the most remarkable being the lack of provision to sustain cultural legacies in the long term. There is no denying that 1990 created the conditions to secure a relevant physical legacy through the generous investment in capital projects (£43 million) that resulted in new or renewed cultural infrastructures still operating today. These include the new Glasgow Concert Hall, the refurbished McLellan Galleries and the transformation of previously derelict spaces into innovative cultural spaces such as Tramway and the Arches. However, the event organisers failed to establish partnerships and workforce structures that could survive the year and be applied, on a smaller scale, outside a major event hosting process. The explanation lies partly in the fact that the city approached 1990 from an economic rather than a cultural perspective (see Booth, 1996). Culture was used as an instrument for economic regeneration without being supported by a properly developed urban cultural policy. As such, decisions were often made on the basis of potential business returns, media coverage and tourist appeal rather than

community development and self-expression.[3] This is reflected in the lack of balance between budgeting for activity that would be presented during the event year and investing in the conditions that would allow further activity to be produced and distributed in subsequent years. Overall, this situation reveals a marked division between the support to elite and grassroots activities. Although there was a balance in the programming of such activities, they were not equally promoted nor supported to survive beyond 1990.

An added constraint to sustaining a legacy was the radical transformation of governing structures in the city, with local government reorganisation taking place between 1995 and 1996. Reorganisation meant the disappearance of the Strathclyde Regional Council, a key player in 1990 that, combining priorities and resources with Glasgow District Council, made possible the acclaimed balance in cultural provision – elite and grassroots – and spatial distribution – centre and periphery – so unique to Glasgow's celebrations. The changes in local government resulted in a break with emerging cultural policies born out of the 1990 experience.[4] Instead of building on the experience, cultural policy in the new Glasgow was to take a different direction and progressed unevenly throughout the 1990s. The city kept reinventing itself, bidding for and hosting a variety of – often unrelated – special events in the cause of city promotion and to drive economic regeneration. The limited consistency of cultural policies underpinning this process has meant that, as forecasted by Booth (1996, p. 26) the process has been 'expensive in terms of agency and money' and has at times been 'a distraction from the key goal of realising progressive social, economic and physical regeneration benefits'.

Despite the downsides, Glasgow 1990 transformed perceptions not only of the city but also of the ECOC programme. Since then, nominated cities have been more ambitious with their proposals, most of which have shifted towards urban regeneration agendas. The European Commission has responded to growing expectations by increasing the allocated budget – from an average of ECU 120,000 [£80,000] up to 1992, to ECU 600,000 [£400,000] in 1996, and ECU 3 million [£2 million] to support, exceptionally, nine cities in the year 2000 (EC, 2004; Myerscough, 1994, p. 5). However, overall, the ECOC programme reveals a series of weaknesses that mirror many of the still unsolved tensions in European urban cultural policy.

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[3] Strathclyde Regional Council co-funded the 1990 celebrations with a strong social and educational agenda, which resulted in a very extensive community programme spanning Glasgow's outlying estates. However, this programme lacked visibility during the year and, partly due to local government reorganisation in 1996, failed to influence the city's urban cultural policy in the long term.

[4] Strathclyde Regional Council had been working on a 'Post 1990 Cultural Policy' for the region since 1988. This policy document continued to evolve until 1993 and was to be adapted into a cultural policy for the new – restructured – Glasgow after 1996. However, this initiative did not survive local government reorganisation and was officially terminated in 1997.

At its core, the problem with the ECOC is the lack of clear definitions and guidelines for action. Despite attempts at creating platforms to share know-how (such as the Network of European Cultural Cities and Months) there is no formal monitoring mechanism in place. As such, the information available about ECOC experiences relies entirely on the willingness of host cities to produce final reports. Existing reports have often been produced as promotional devices, intended to justify the value of the year and celebrating its successes rather than acting as an informed analysis of the experience that explains the process of decision-making and recognises limitations or failures. Comprehensive reports are, in any case, scarce and mostly restricted to the assessment of immediate impacts, without a follow-up study in the medium to long term. The resulting effect is the creation of virtually unquestioned 'myths' about the value of hosting the title, which cover up the lack of serious attempts to learn lessons from the experience and establish replicable models of successful and, most importantly, sustainable culture-led regeneration.

Alternative Approaches to Culture-led Regeneration

The ECOC programme has not had the same degree of influence in all European countries. Interestingly, alternative models seem to suffer from similar limitations. In France and Paris in particular, culture-led regeneration has been influenced by the programme of 'Grand Projets Culturels' involving the refurbishment and development of infrastructures, such as the Louvre Pyramid, the Centre Pompidou and the Opera at La Bastille (Bianchini, 1993, p. 16; Evans, 2003, pp. 424–425). In Spain, an interesting variation of the programme is the case of Bilbao, a city that has acted as a pioneer of city-rebranding (Evans, 2003, p. 432) by investing in a hallmark cultural infrastructure – the Guggenheim museum in 1997. The main principle behind these schemes is to create permanent and highly visible infrastructures. However, in common with the ECOC programme, most of these infrastructures have been fundamentally designed as prestige devices, which have generally succeeded in boosting city images and attracting tourism, but have often disregarded the social and cultural needs of the local community and have had a limited impact on employment figures and the long-term economic recovery of the area (see Evans, 2003, p. 425; Gómez, 1998).

Barcelona is another interesting example of culture-led urban regeneration that has resulted in references to a much praised 'Barcelona model' of city planning that is being replicated worldwide. Distinctive characteristics in this model are the use of major events as catalysts for city renewal – from the Universal Exhibition in 1888 to the 1992 Olympic Games and the 2004 Forum for Cultures – and an approach to regeneration that combines physical restructuring – ring roads, waterfront development – with symbolic representation – promoting the Catalan/Mediterranean identity – and takes place in a polycentric manner, creating multiple hubs

of cultural and business activity rooted in strongly defined communities in every corner of the metropolis.

However, these apparently successful elements should be considered in context. The aggressive use of mega-events as symbolic devices to boost local pride and establish a Barcelona brand reflects a top-down approach to cultural representation, with local identity being used as a marketing device. This has resulted in what Balibrea (2001, pp. 199–189) refers to as a 'totalizing and coherent representation/meaning of the city' that is 'hegemonically constructed . . . for the foreign viewer' and can lead to the 'alienation and displacement' of the local citizen. Furthermore, the creation of a polycentric city has not avoided but rather accentuated the risk of gentrifying spaces; the city has created multiple cultural hubs, but low income communities are not being allowed to remain part of them. Arguably, the development of every new trendy cultural neighbourhood parallels the relocation – displacement to the margins – of the historical non-trendy ones.

As in the case of Glasgow, the experiences of Paris, Bilbao and Barcelona suggest a lack of adequate integration between economic and cultural policies. The roots of this problem and recommendations to overcome them are outlined in the final section.

Lessons for the UK

For the last 20 years, local authorities throughout the UK have revealed an increasing dedication to finding and implementing ever-successful 'models' of culture-led urban regeneration. This has reached a peak in present times, after the much-publicised competition to host the European Capital of Culture in 2008 – eventually won by Liverpool – and with London working on a bid to host the Olympic Games in 2012. Bilbao, Barcelona and Glasgow are used as recurrent examples of good practice and are hyped by a section of the media, public bodies and private corporations alike. The hype is surrounded by strong pressure among policy-makers and cultural practitioners to find the perfect model of action. This paper shows that there are no straight answers, or clear models to follow. But some lessons can be extracted from past experience.

Most of the problems embedded within the cases reviewed here relate to the three dilemmas pointed out by Bianchini in 1993. The 'cultural funding dilemma', understood as the difficulty in providing the right balance of investment in temporary and permanent activity, is apparent in event-led as much as infrastructure-led regeneration. The dilemma lies not as much in an opposition between investing in events and investing in cultural infrastructure as in a reconsideration of how to approach either of these investments. Investing in events can lead to sustainable practices if the process is embedded within a consistent approach to cultural policy. This has been in the case in Barcelona after the Olympic Games and could have been maximised in Glasgow if the city had been spared the radical funding cuts and priority changes that followed local government reorganisation. At the opposite end, investing in hallmark infrastructures may lead to

the creation of expensive, underused facilities or 'white elephants'. The examples provided here do not seem to run this risk in the foreseeable future. However, a danger inherent to the French 'Grand Projets' and the Guggenheim Bilbao is that the expense of maintaining these high profile facilities has at times led to cuts in support to more participatory and locally owned initiatives that, at a lesser cost, could prove more sustainable in the long term.

Addressing this first dilemma requires an understanding of a second, 'economic dilemma', which points out the difficult balance between stimulating cultural consumption, which brings immediate benefits in terms of community involvement and tourism attraction, and supporting cultural production, which requires longer lead times but is the most effective approach to guarantee a degree of control over the local economy and its sustainability in the long term. After decades of trying to recover from industrial decay and an excessive reliance on production, it is understandable that the service-oriented city aspires to excel in providing amenities for consumption. This is reinforced in the context of a global economy, with the trend towards accumulating the production of cultural goods in a few mega-cities and creating an ever increasing network of dependent second cities. However, cities that aspire to establish themselves as vibrant cultural centres and attract the 'creative classes', as argued by Florida (2002), need to retain some level of autonomy in terms of cultural provision, be it infrastructures to support the production of traditional arts (artists' studios, good quality performing spaces) or other rapidly expanding creative industries. In Glasgow 1990, the generous provision to present first class cultural performances during the event year was not matched by investment in new music and film studios nor design and fashion centres, to name but a few of the areas through which the city wanted to reinvent itself.[5]

Finally, all the cases explored here reveal a difficulty in addressing the 'spatial dilemma', or challenge to cater for both the city centre and peripheral states and avoid the danger of gentrification. Glasgow 1990 offers an excellent example of a wide geographical distribution of cultural activity, including the most deprived areas in the city, but failed to establish sustainable structures to maintain this balance once the ECOC was over. Barcelona has excelled in sustaining a geographical balance in terms of cultural provision but this has taken place at the expense of replacing old low-income with new upper-range neighbourhoods. A common limitation has been the inability to use cultural hallmark investments to improve the conditions of deprived local communities. Instead, these investments have been used to refurbish or embellish previously derelict or unattractive

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[5] The support to music, film and design production has since become a priority within Glasgow regeneration services. Appropriate funding was however not made available until the mid to late 1990s and many of the schemes have suffered from periodical funding cuts.

areas and thus achieve the relocation of high income groups while pushing those with low incomes further to the margins.

The failure to overcome these long-identified dilemmas suggests that there are some unsolved contradictions within current approaches to urban cultural policy. This is due to an unbalanced relationship between economic and cultural priorities in urban policy. The thesis that culture has an economic dimension has resulted in the misleading conception that there has been a harmonic convergence of both spheres that materialises in contemporary cultural policy. Instead, the cases under study reveal that urban cultural policies remain second to the rationale of more ambitious and easy-to-monitor economic development strategies.

In order to ensure that urban cultural policies maximise the role they should and could play in contemporary cities, fundamental revisions need to be made to the terminology currently in use. Crucially, the remit of cultural policy needs to be further expanded in a way that addresses the complex and multifaceted nature of urban culture. Bianchini (1999) suggests that it can only be possible through radically changing our understanding of how to plan and develop policy in cities,

> What urban planers and policy-makers . . . need today is perhaps the creativity of artists . . . . This is the creativity of being able to synthesise; to see the connections between the natural, social, cultural, political and economic environments, and to grasp the importance not only of 'hard' but also of 'soft' infrastructures . . . . A knowledge of how to use soft infrastructures [daily routines of working and playing, local rituals, ambiences and atmospheres, people's sense of belonging . . .] is crucial for successful policy implementation . . . (Bianchini, 1999, pp. 42–43)

Following existing arguments around the concept of cultural planning, this will require a more holistic and flexible understanding of cultural policy that informs both the current notion of an arts sphere, and the economic, political, social, educational and environmental spheres of cities. In this sense, cultural policy makers need to be as ambitious in their approach as tourist bodies and development agencies have proved to be in their pursuit of culture-led city marketing and cultural branding. But rather than encouraging a top-down 'expert' approach, as has been commonly the case in the examples explored here, the emphasis must lie in providing a platform for the local communities, including both the average citizen, authorities and specialist agencies, to express their views and expectations and survey the decision-making process. The ultimate objective is to retain 'local control', forging a 'local identity' and 'sense of place' (Stevenson, 1998, p. 103) and thus avoid the feeling of alienation, misrepresentation and lack of ownership that surrounds most current approaches to city regeneration and branding and prevents them from being distinct, credible and sustainable in the long term.

There is also a need to keep arguing in favour of a cultural agenda that is not necessarily subsumed to economic imperatives. For this, it is critical to further develop techniques to evaluate cultural impacts and legacies

as an alternative to the more established and clearly predominant techniques to assess immediate economic impacts. Part of the problem today is that urban planners and policy-makers rely almost entirely on the evidence produced through economic and physical impact assessments because there is a lack of convincing evidence about cultural and social impacts – indeed, as is the case of cultural policy definitions, the terms themselves are loosely defined and thus extremely difficult to measure. To change the trend, initiatives such as the ECOC need to place a stronger emphasis on the value of monitoring the long-term effect of hosting a cultural event and ensure the wide distribution of findings and know-how. This process would indeed benefit from a coordinated approach at EU level to allow the establishment of new comparative models of cultural analysis as is already the case in other areas of urban research.

The different arguments and situations exposed in this paper could be summarised in a series of key lessons. Cultural policy makers and city planners in the UK and elsewhere would benefit from considering these when embarking on major urban developments, be it large cultural events or hallmark infrastructures:[6]

- First, it is critical to ensure that capital investment and building schemes have sustainability and long-term costs planned in from the outset.
- Ensure that all levels of the community are involved in local consultations, thereby avoiding the predominance of a top down approach to decision-making.
- Ensure that cultural investment is not merely seen as a matter of importing world class products, but rather as a way to facilitate the creation and sustainable production of local culture for local consumption and cultural export.
- Ensure that cultural investment brings people and communities along with it, investing in both them and their environment rather than running the risk of leaving people behind when there is a change of environment.
- Finally, ensure that cultural investment is assessed and measured for its cultural impact as well as for its economic and regenerative impacts. The latter requires increased support to the development of longitudinal studies that monitor the progression of impacts and legacies in the long term – beyond the first five years.

As indicated at the outset of this paper, the UK is currently in a particularly good position to strengthen the role of urban cultural policy and planning in the context of major events. The argument that culture has a strong economic dimension and can be a key catalyst for urban regeneration and image renewal is still valid. The challenge is to place culture closer to the centre of the equation and to use it, not as a temporary – commodified –

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[6] I thank Matthew Reason for his advice here.

instrument towards external ends, but as an end in itself that can develop its full potential in the long term as a mark of truly distinct urban centres.

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