

# **Creative Cities and Creative Clusters**

**Presentation to *Creative Articulations: Creative Research Network***

***Workshop, Brisbane, Australia, October 1, 2005.***

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## **Sub-National Cultural Policy: Creative Cities and Creative Clusters**

The U.S. cultural policy analyst J. Mark Schuster has recently posed the question of whether there has been a shift towards the *sub-national* levels of government, such as cities, states and provinces, increasingly becoming the most dynamic sites of cultural policy formation and implementation. He notes that, in countries with a Federal government structure, such as the United States, Germany and Australia, cultural policy funding must occur on a co-operative basis between different levels of

government, but also argues that, even in countries with a more centralized system of government, ‘programs of delegation, devolution, decentralization, and *désétatisation* have been taking hold’, making the shift towards sub-national cultural policy more generalized (Schuster, 2002, p. 4). Schuster argues that the growing significance of sub-national cultural policy accelerates other trends in the field, such as a stronger focus upon popular cultural practices than the ‘high arts’, a greater role for public-private partnerships and other more entrepreneurial forms of arts and cultural management, and a greater enmeshing of cultural policy with policy fields such as tourism, economic development, education, youth policy, multiculturalism and social policy (Schuster, 2002, pp. 14-16; c.f. Rentschler, 2002; Stevenson, 2004). A growing importance for sub-national forms of cultural policy is consistent with Cunningham’s (2002, 2005b) proposition that national cultural policy fundamentals are being squeezed from both ends, by globalization of the creative industries and international trade agreements on the one hand, and the growing significance attached to SMEs and geographically-situated knowledge to contemporary forms of cultural entrepreneurship.

A focus upon the sub-national dimensions of cultural policy draws attention to its links to the burgeoning literature on *creative cities* and *creative clusters*. The creative cities literature has drawn attention to both the reassertion of place in the context of globalization and seemingly ‘weightless’ new media, and the positive agglomeration effects that arise from the development of urban sites, or what Charles Landry terms *creative milieux* (Landry, 2000; c.f. Hall, 2000), which bring together complementary practices of cultural production and consumption for further creativity and innovation spin-offs (Pratt, 2000, 2002; O’Connor, 2004, 2005; Tay, 2005). At one level, creative

cities may be simply global cities by another name. *Global cities* are those cities which, by virtue of their dominant place within the key global service industries, constitute critical nodes for all global transactions, and whose relative significance grows the more that economic activity moves from predominantly national to increasingly global circuits (Sassen, 2000, 2001, 2002; Taylor *et. al.*, 2002). On this basis, cities such as New York, London, Tokyo, Paris, Los Angeles, Hong Kong, Singapore and Sydney emerge as creative cities on the basis of their dominant place in key global service industries as accountancy, advertising, banking and finance, insurance and law, as well as being at central hubs in communications and transportation networks. Such cities inexorably draw in, or have embedded within them, the other key components of creative cities, such as investment capital, highly skilled and ambitious people, culturally diverse populations, an arts, cultural and entertainment infrastructure, ancillary service industries (e.g. media post-production, fashion, tourism), and key educational institutions. On this register, it would be hard to know whether a city is global because it is creative or creative because it is global.

The 'creative cities' debate has tended to have the strongest resonance among so-called *second-tier* cities, as it raises the issue of whether pro-active public policy can either capture creative activities from the first-tier global cities, or generate new forms of competitive advantage in the global cultural economy. It raises questions about the conditions through which, for example, cities such as Boston and San Francisco can be leaders in the U.S. new media sectors on the basis of their cultural amenities and diverse populations (Florida, 2002), whether cities such as Manchester and Glasgow can challenge the hegemony of London in the British cultural economy (O'Connor, 1999, 2004), or whether cities such as Melbourne, Brisbane and Wellington can

constitute alternative points of attraction for global investment capital to the lead Australian and New Zealand cities, Sydney and Auckland. Such place-based competition for being 'lead site' for creativity has become increasingly intense in the East Asian context, as the realisation that IT-based jobs are highly geographically mobile has seen cities such as Shanghai, Beijing, Seoul and Shenzhen challenging traditional leaders such as Hong Kong, Singapore and Tokyo for being the hubs for creative work which fuels East Asian popular culture, particularly in the digital media content industries (Keane, 2006). In all of these forms of place-based competition for global investment in the creative industries, there is a strong emphasis upon building the *soft infrastructure*, or the 'system of associative structures and social networks, connections and human interactions, that underpins and encourages the flow of ideas between individuals and institutions' (Landry, 2000, p. 133), alongside the *hard infrastructure* of buildings, transport systems, communications infrastructure and public institutions. As such 'soft infrastructure' invariably develops best outside of the direct purview of the state, it points to the need for 'enabling state' policy strategies that work in new forms of partnership and mutuality with non-governmental, 'third sector' or civil society-based networks and social infrastructures.

More direct attempts to manage urban space in order to promote the creative industries through cultural policy have been seen with strategies to promote *creative clusters*. Drawing upon a variety of experiences in the new media sectors, such as rise of the South-of-Market area (SoMA) in San Francisco, 'Silicon Alley' in New York, and the Cardiff Bay region in Wales (Cooke, 2002b; Pratt, 2002), as well as the literature from economic geography and business studies on cluster dynamics and agglomeration effects, there has been a growing focus in cultural planning upon the

capacity of local governments to facilitate the creation of new urban sites able to stimulate and integrate cultural creativity and economic innovation, as part of the growing 'culturalisation of economic life' implied in concepts such as the creative industries, creative cities and the creative economy (du Gay and Pryke, 2002; Flew, 2003c, 2005; Hesmondhalgh and Pratt, 2005). In an analysis of creative cluster formation in the Netherlands in cities such as Amsterdam, Rotterdam, Tilburg and Utrecht, Hans Mommaas (2004) has observed that creative cluster strategies have been driven by a heterogeneous range of policy priorities including:

- Attracting globally mobile capital and skilled labour to particular locations;
- Stimulating a more entrepreneurial and demand-oriented approach to arts and cultural policy;
- Promoting innovation and creativity more generally, through the perceived interaction between culturally vibrant locales and innovation in other economic sectors;
- Finding new uses for derelict industrial-era sites in post-industrial economies;
- Promoting cultural diversity and cultural democratisation, and being more inclusive of the cultural practices of otherwise marginalised social groups

Mommaas describes the resulting policy strategies as exhibiting *ad-hocracy*, whereby different arguments are drawn to different situations on a contingent, highly localised, case-by-case basis. He observes that this is both a consequence of the relatively recent development of such new cultural policies, but is also a reaction against earlier, top-down models of arts policy and cultural planning. While he broadly welcomes such reflexivity and 'enabling' in the policy process, he also notes that there is also an 'art

of tightrope walking' on display in these cases, which could easily lapse on the one hand into essentially a 'high arts' policy by new means on the one hand, and a subsumption of progressive cultural policy initiatives into speculative real estate strategies which drive out non-commercialised forms of cultural expression on the other (Mommaas, 2004, pp. 525, 528, 530).

A stock take of creative cities and creative clusters initiatives indicates the extent to which, in the face of the impasses of 20<sup>th</sup> century national cultural policy in terms of its attachment to the 'high arts' and cultural citizenship defined through national identity, local and regional authorities are taking up the baton with more entrepreneurial and *ad hoc* forms of sub-national cultural policy. Invariably, these are characterised by a sense that debates about globalization, the relationship between the cultural and the economic, and the antimonies between high arts and popular culture are either largely resolved, or can be addressed independently of the more urgent need for strategic policy engagement arising from investment in cultural infrastructure and the creative industries in a globalized economy. In this sense, they adopt a 'Third Way' approach of engaging with globalization (Stevenson, 2004), that maintains the need for a positive role for the state in managing and directing market forces, but which also rejects the dichotomy between national culture and global commerce that animated cultural policy for much of the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Recognition of such innovation and dynamism in the local cultural policy sphere does not, however, entail an uncritical endorsement of what Deborah Stevenson (2004) has termed the new 'civic gold rush' in urban cultural policy and cultural planning.

The first concern, as Stevenson points out, is that there is often a slippage in such strategies around the concepts of cultural or creative capital, which is held to be both the actually existing local and vernacular cultural resources and practices into which successful urban cultural policies will be able to tap into, and the expectation that one of the outcomes of such policies will be the development of new forms of cultural or creative capital, particularly among marginalised and socially excluded populations. The danger here, which is the second point, is that such policies may set up false hopes of addressing conflicting policy objectives, such as being able to simultaneously promote expansion of the local cultural economy and address social exclusion and marginalisation. In particular, tensions emerge between the promotion of those creative industries sectors whose products and services circulate in largely global circuits of cultural production and consumption, and where returns to the local economy are likely to be minimal indeed, and those sectors where cultural products and practices remain strongly grounded in a sense of locality and place, which remain highly vulnerable to the broader tendencies associated with economic and cultural globalization.<sup>1</sup>

Third, there is the danger of overly genericised creative industries policies – such as creative clusters models – adopting a ‘cookie-cutter’ approach grounded in excessive sameness. Oakley (2004) has expressed concern in the UK context that creative industries strategies too often ‘seem hellbent on trying to replicate a single creative industries model’, characterised by ‘a university, some incubators, and a “creative hub”, with or without a café, galleries and fancy shops’ (Oakley, 2004, p. 73). As Oakley notes, such strategies cannot simultaneously work in all places, and it would be better to try and understand and work with local and regional differences rather

than apply this model to all places, in the vain hope that, for instance, the British advertising industry may move *en masse* from London to Sheffield or Huddersfield. On an international scale, it would be one thing to observe that Beijing has aspirations to be a creative city, but another to then assume that Richard Florida's emphasis on San Francisco's large gay population as a factor in its creative dynamism will find enthusiastic acceptance with Beijing's local political authorities.

### **Cities, Festivals and Events: Performing Creativity in the City**

The relationship between large-scale events and urban regeneration has a long history. The 1851 Great Exhibition in London and the 1855 World Fair (*Exhibition universelle*) in Paris perhaps provide the two most famous historical examples of such events being used to fundamentally reconstruct a city in order to make it more public and 'on display', through massive investments in architecture, design, transport and communication, whose legacies remain apparent in both cities today (Hobsbawm, 1996; Hall, 1998; Tay, 2005). It has been the case, however, that until quite recently, large-scale events that have focused upon urban regeneration and developing a global profile, such as major sporting events (e.g. Olympics, World Cups) or trade and technological showcases (Expos, World Fairs), have not tended to attach much significance to arts and cultural activities as an important element of the urban mix which they seek to promote to the rest of the world. This is despite the extensive literature on the role of the arts in the marketing of cities, and on cultural tourism, that would seem to suggest considerable scope for such a linkage to be made (García, 2004; c.f. Landry *et. al.*, 1996; Landry, 2000).

There has been a very sharp and significant change of thinking on the relationship between cultural activities and major events in cities since the early 1990s. Two developments seem to have been critical to this. The first was the European Cities of Culture (now European Capitals of Culture) initiative, initially developed by the European Commission (now the European Union) in 1985. While the initial successful bidders, such as Athens, Amsterdam, Florence and Paris, had largely used the event to showcase existing cultural activities and institutions, the cities of Glasgow (European City of Culture, 1990) and Dublin (1991) approached the event as part of a wider transformation of their cities' infrastructure, image and amenity and appeal, both to local residents and the wider global community. In the case of Glasgow, it provided an opportunity to re-position a city that had suffered significantly from the decline of U.K. manufacturing in the 1980s, and had an image associated with unemployment, drug and alcohol problems, and sectarian violence, as a vibrant urban artistic and cultural centre. For Dublin, the 1991 European City of Culture award provided the opportunity, not only for urban renewal in the city centre – particularly the re-development of the Temple Bar area – but for promoting its emergent image as a European city, rather than an impoverished backwater dependent upon EU subsidies. Dublin's success as a European city of culture in 1991 was linked to its economic boom in the 1990s as the 'Celtic Tiger', just as Glasgow's successful initiative was a factor in promoting a resurgent Scottish national identity in the 1990s.

The other major development which drew attention to the links between major events, culture and the development of global creative cities was the 1992 Barcelona Olympics. While most Olympics hosts had given little attention to the potential of the event to trigger wider urban regeneration, and the Olympic Games of the 1970s and

1980s had mostly been mired in controversy (terrorism in Munich (1972), boycotts in Moscow (1980) and Los Angeles (1984)), or had been financial disasters (Montreal (1976)), the Barcelona Games were universally hailed as a success, that had put Spain's second largest city – a city which had suffered significant deprivation under the Franco dictatorship as the centre of the Catalan minority population – onto the global map. It continues to be seen as an emblematic European and global city for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, as seen by Barcelona now being seen as Europe's sixth most desirable city in which to locate a business by leading CEOs in 2002, as compared to 11<sup>th</sup> in 1990 (Landry and Wood, 2003, p. 36).

Balibrea has noted that the successful Olympics bid acted as a galvanising influence for a range of key urban constituencies in the post-Franco 1980s, as it was 'a sporting, cultural and ideological event all in one ... [that] succeeded totally in generating local patriotism and consensus, as well as introducing the city to the world at large' (Balibrea, 2001, p. 198). Balibrea has also contested the claim that the 'Barcelona model' is an unequivocal success story which other aspirant creative cities should emulate. She notes that the more recent UNESCO-endorsed Universal Forum of Cultures (*Fòrum Universal de les Cultures*), held in May- September 2004, may have revolved around the principles of cultural diversity, world peace, and environmental sustainability, but did so in a city where urban inequalities have been growing, and where urban regeneration associated with the Forum had the potential to endanger the sustainability of the lower-income communities in the coastal areas where the major Forum events were held (Balibrea, 2001; c.f. García, 2004).

The ambition to link the arts and culture to global profile and economic competitiveness in 21<sup>st</sup> century cities is now apparent from multiple perspectives. Landry and Wood (2003) have asserted the importance of cultural factors to the competitive advantage of cities in the global economy through their notion of the *drawing power* of cities. The concept of drawing power refers to ‘the dynamics of attraction, retention and leakage’, or ‘the contributing factors which encourage outsiders to come in [to cities] or existing populations to stay’ (Landry and Wood, 2003, p. 23). They argue that the drawing power of globally successful cities is linked to three factors:

1. The successful branding of the city as comprising a unique combination of cultural resources, heritage, and symbolic assets;
2. The ability of a city to act as both an attractor of new talent and as an incubator of its own talented people and creative resources;
3. The existence of arrange of activities and opportunities in a city that can lift the everyday lives of its residents, and generate new forms of self-expression, civic pride and community identification.

The renewed focus upon creativity and cultural activity as drivers of the success of cities in the global economy can be seen in one sense as a return to classical understandings of the nature of the city. Critical urban theorists of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, such as Lewis Mumford and Jane Jacobs, saw the integration of both art and community as central to a human-centred vision of the modern city as part of ‘good city planning ... [that] promotes the full participation of citizens, both as performers in the urban drama and as spectators of it’ (Makeham, 2005, p. 3). At the same time, this focus upon the city as a ‘theatre of social action’ (Makeham, 2005, p. 1) also

draws attention to George Yúdice's arguments that globalization demands an increasingly *performative* role for culture, which becomes a resource for social and economic development and 'a generator of value in its own right' (Yúdice, 2003, p. 336) in the location-based competitive advantage of cities in the global economy.

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<sup>1</sup> The example of Australian indigenous art is interesting in this regard. Since the mid-1980s, there has been a growing international demand for artistic works produced by indigenous (Aboriginal) Australians, to the point where auctions for such works are held by the leading British auction house Christie's, and where the new *Musee du Quai Branly* in Paris will have Australian indigenous artists painting its ceiling. While this generation of new international income from the sale of art works is welcome in Australian Aboriginal communities, which are among the most socio-economically disadvantaged groups in Australia by some margin, it nonetheless generates three problematic issues. First, the art world's preference for payment to the original creator as author sits uncomfortably with the expectations of indigenous communities in remote areas, whose work is by far the most sought-after in international markets, for collective forms of ownership and responsibility. Second, it has set in train a conflict between the expectations of wealthy international art patrons that 'traditional' works will continue to be produced, and the fact that indigenous artists are increasingly working within a global circuit of artistic and cultural trade. Third, among an indigenous population that was routinely dispossessed of its land and identity in over 200 years of European settlement, there is the danger of reinforcing stereotypes of 'real' Aborigines living in remote settlements, and those living in cities and regional centres as somehow not being 'authentic' in either their indigenous identity or the products of their artistic and creative work.