



‘Spaces of Encounters’ Switzerland–UK

Cultural Policies Towards Economic and Social Urban Sustainability

Conference, 7 July 2011

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Glaziers Hall
Southwark
London SE1 9DD



Switzerland.

Introduction

For a number of years, the Embassy of Switzerland in the UK has run a series of bilateral dialogues on sustainable development. The aim of these events has been to share knowledge on approaches and best practice from both countries and to promote opportunities for synergy and cooperation. As part of this dialogue series, the Embassy organised a conference on the role of cultural policies towards economic and social urban sustainability, which was held at Glaziers Hall in the London Borough of Southwark on 7 July 2011.

The conference marked a certain shift in focus. While previous events placed environmental and ecological aspects at the centre of the debate, this latest dialogue concentrated on the economic and social dimension of sustainability. As Swiss Ambassador Anton Thalmann highlighted in his welcoming remarks, cultural policy can serve as a particularly interesting topical focal point of these two dimensions, owing to cities having discovered culture and the arts as a major driver of benefit to both the economy and urban society. By formulating coherent cultural policies, cities have not only aimed to harvest these positive impacts but have also created a tool for innovative approaches toward urban regeneration and spatial planning. However, incorporating various goals within the scope of cultural policies raises questions of prioritising and balancing different expectations from various stakeholders.

Cultural policy therefore demands participatory mechanisms involving different interest groups. Such inclusive and bottom-up approaches are further strengthened by artists and local communities which themselves use cultural expression as a language of critique and a new form of engaging with political leaders and urban society as a whole.

In recent years, both the City of Zürich and the London Borough of Southwark have experienced culturally-driven transformational processes. Delegates heard from Councillor Martin Vollenwyder, Deputy Mayor of Zürich, and Councillor Ian Wingfield, Deputy Leader of Southwark, about experiences and cultural strategies in Zürich and Southwark. Charles Landry, Director of Comedia and author of *The Creative City and the Art of City Making*, explored the meaning and dynamics of civic creativity and the city. Professor Timon Beyes (Leuhpana University Lüneburg, Germany) and Professor Simeon Nelson (artist and Head of Visual Arts, University of Hertfordshire) discussed the politics of urban cultural interventions, while Professor Josep Acebillo (Director of the Institute for Contemporary Urban Projects at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio) explored the need for “disruptive urbanism” in the post crisis ‘glocal’ context.

The conference was chaired by London-based urbanist and journalist Judith Ryser.

Cultural Policy and Urban Governance – Views from Zürich and London

Councillor Martin Vollenwyder and Councillor Ian Wingfield

The basic assumption of **Cllr Martin Vollenwyder's** presentation was that finance and creativity are closely linked and can be mutually enriching. While Zürich's expansion to become a leading city is undeniably and directly linked to its development as a world-leading financial centre, the city's rise as a metropolis has just as much to do with its creative spirit. The interconnectivity between the two is most evident in the creative economy. This sector has seen above-average growth rates and now generates 7.7% of the GDP of Zürich. One important factor contributing to the positive development of the creative economy is the high level of genuine investment (rather than sponsorship or charitable support) originating from the financial sector. As an example, Cllr Vollenwyder mentioned the Swiss Design Institute for Banking and Finance, which creates interactive media solutions for banks and financial institutes. The financial sector, therefore, invests in the creative economy because it benefits from it. This mutually beneficial exchange of investments and advantages has enabled the creative economy to transform itself into an independent economic factor and to become an integral part of the value creation chain.

Nevertheless, the creative economy with often short, fixed-term employment contracts, irregular working hours and comparatively low and irregular income, and characterised by micro- or even nano-businesses, remains vulnerable. One of the main problems for young talents in Zürich with little money is finding affordable premises. In order to safeguard the level of innovation and creative vibrancy, city authorities need to develop policies to support access to and availability of reasonably-priced premises. Increasing the space available for Zürich's creative and cultural scene, and in particular the use of private and public properties, is therefore one of the priorities identified in the City Council's 'cultural and creative city of

Zürich' strategy, which is in itself a legislative focus of the Mayor of Zürich. Another strategic priority is to increase visibility of the existing creative potential. This includes positioning the city even more strongly in international terms by means of major high-quality events and as a hub of cultural activity and a vibrant cultural scene. Over the last decade, the cultural scene in Zürich has expanded from traditional flagship venues to include more contemporary, independent and intermediate forms of art. It has also put down roots in other more peripheral areas of the city, for example towards Zürich West, which has had a positive regenerative effect on the neighbourhood and the city at large. This development involves the support of the city authorities in collaboration with different stakeholders. Another pillar of the city's strategy is to set up new coalitions in cooperation with various partners and interests and inter-linking different actors from higher education, the creative industry and arts, as well as improving information and exchange on cultural activities.

For Cllr Vollenwyder, creating the best possible conditions to ensure a thriving art and cultural scene and financially supporting it with an annual contribution of 150 million Swiss francs is “not a donation but a long-term investment that is sustainable in the real sense of the word”. Beyond its intrinsic value, culture has become an important “soft factor” of location. It creates a positive feedback loop by drawing on and strengthening the attractiveness of Zürich for talent and building on the city's image as a centre of excellence in higher education, innovation and technology, with a long-standing tradition of tolerance and openness towards other cultures.

Cultural Policy and Urban Governance (continued)

Tolerance and cultural tradition, as well as a history of political radicalism that translated into art, also played a major role in the transformation process of Southwark. In his presentation, **Cllr Ian Wingfield** explained that 25 years ago, the borough had little prospect of improvement as manufacturing, commerce and trade moved to other parts of the city. The physical structure was in decay, particularly in the docklands along the waterfront. Faced with these challenges, authorities adopted two principal models as a response: first, a top down approach in the late 1980s, after central government decided to remove any local options and consultative local processes in decisions taken on development. The lack of local involvement in consultation was seen as a very negative thing by the communities concerned.

And even though this approach brought in some investment, it was largely into retail and the residential sector. There were no real employment initiatives and none of a cultural nature. The second model was characterised by a community led and cooperative approach, but some of the programmes developed in this framework lacked the necessary investment and, again, were of little cultural or employment benefit. A major improvement benefiting the transformation of the area came with the extension of the Queen's Walk which connected Southwark with the City, and resulted in more financially related businesses investing in the area, which was an entirely new phenomenon.

This led to a third approach on how regeneration could be progressed. The borough decided that it needed to



From left to right: Cllr Ian Wingfield, Judith Ryser, Cllr Martin Vollenwyder. © FDFA/Presence Switzerland

create a catalyst which would bring in investment and to use it as a trickle-down effect which would reach the whole geographic area of Southwark. Based on an analysis of location advantages, a strategic decision was taken that the 'old town' of the borough (along the Thames) should be identified as a cultural and leisure hotspot for central London, within central London. The assumption was that this would attract investment and sustainability into existing communities, as well as bringing in new people and ideas. The first key site, Shakespeare's Globe Theatre, was rebuilt and opened to the public in 1997. Secondly, it was decided that an iconic symbol of the area, the disused Bankside power station, should not be demolished but instead a world-renowned organisation should be brought in, capable of maintaining this building. The power station was famously transformed into the Tate Modern gallery, which now attracts seven million visitors a year. Over and above this, the borough identified a shortage of hotels in central London. The geographic position of north Southwark was a viable location to fill this gap. One of the key aspects associated with this development was not just to involve local residents but local businesses as well, particularly in and around Borough Market, an area which had seen trade decline over a period of several years. Eventually, there was acceptance that Borough Market could not retain its original wholesale grocery role but that something more modern with a certain vitality had to be created, without ignoring its history and heritage. The reinvented Borough Market has been an outright success, and is now a well-established tourist destination that can rival Covent Garden.

All these improvements have had a multiplier effect for the entire area, attracting a next, and still ongoing, big wave of investments into residential, commercial and cultural schemes. According to Cllr Wingfield, the immediate priority is to enlarge the trickle-down effect to areas further south of the borough, where levels of deprivation are highest.

Discussion

The exchange between the two politicians highlighted the privileged position of the arts in Zürich due to the assumed, albeit hard to prove, benefits of the arts to the financial sector. However it may suffer from its own success by pricing artists out. In less affluent Southwark, the expected trickle-down effect may well materialise, as cheap premises in the poorer parts of the borough could lead artists to initiate creative changes to improve local conditions. They can build on local creative community activism demonstrated in the Coin Street and Borough Market regeneration. The audience was concerned with institutional blighting of large areas to the detriment of local ways of life, livelihood, authenticity and identity and their displacement by successful urban transformation due to influx of new cultures.

Civic Creativity and the City

Charles Landry

For **Charles Landry**, 'culture' in its broadest sense is less an individual pillar than an overarching defining element of the environmental, social and economic dimension of sustainability. As such urban sustainability is a cultural project in itself. Art, art institutions and the art industry play a significant role in both raising awareness and changing the way we see the world operating. They are also carriers of imagination, which we need to go from where we are to where we want to be. Furthermore, imagination is not just needed at the level of ideas but also at the level of implementation. Today however, cities are too often seen in functional and technical terms. They are planned according to a manual, rather than in more 'lyrical' and imaginative terms, which take into account the city as a sensory experience with emotional effects. Instead of an urban engineering approach to city making, which puts hardware before software, Charles Landry advocated a paradigm of creative city making, which blends hardware and software together, and which understands relationships and networks. For example, great cities seem to have been able to create a feeling of connectedness within, rather like a 'village', as well as a feeling of being connected with the world. As the speed with which populations fluctuate and mix is becoming increasingly intense, the task cities are faced with is to find the 'diversity advantage' by, amongst others, building bridges between cultures and finding a context that brings people together. Cultural policy plays an important role towards this aim, but, according to Charles Landry, a more holistic approach to cultural policy should be adopted, where cultural policy is not just the remit of an individual department but is embedded and mainstreamed across the entire local authority and encompassing a wider (geographic) region.

The departure from silo-thinking would ideally create a situation where we perceive the city not just as a

list of projects but the 'city as a project'. The need to find holistic approaches to the city is becoming ever more urgent as a result of the dramatic transformation the world is facing today. For example, cities need to find ways to adapt to the shift towards the knowledge economy. In order to attract and sustain knowledge and innovation, they need to have a certain level of open-mindedness and curiosity which, in turn, are associated with creative thinking.

This raises the question as to what exactly creativity entails. There are different ways of defining creativity: as a place boasting art and art institutions; a place that has a lot of creative industry activity; or a place which attracts many 'knowledge workers'. Above and beyond that, for Charles Landry a broader sense of creativity is needed where creative skills migrate into mainstream industries and start to interact. Furthermore, it needs to be linked to a more bureaucratic sense of creativity, whereby bureaucracies 'create' the conditions within which people and the community can act with imagination, and participate in renewing and shaping the city they live in.

The renewal of the city is connected to a new idea of urbanity which is characterised by the search for 'meaning' and for 'something uplifting'. One important element of this is the notion "eco-urbanity", which blends nature and city culture and finds new ways to incorporate and transform the urban environment. At the heart of such urbanity lies a different conception of how the city should be put together, one in which the built environment communicates politics without the need for a manifesto. This instigates a learning process, which can trigger the behavioural change we want. What this process requires however is crossing boundaries, in which art in the more narrow definition plays a crucial role. Artists can help us redefine the city by looking and thinking about it afresh and by breaking

Civic Creativity and the City (continued)

down barriers between hierarchies and disciplines. Culture and the arts are, therefore, instrumental in creating a city that is not just interesting “in the world” but “for the world”.

The idea of ‘creative bureaucracy’ surprised. Yet, how could it reconcile localism with global city status, or how could it position the need for ecological adaptation over market forces?

Discussion

As usual, Charles Landry provoked contradictory reactions. Many shared his optimism, while others felt that the ‘festival city’ might interfere with traffic flows, or introduce suburban culture into exceptional centrality. Smaller towns may be more able to draw on ‘positive tensions’ to become ‘playful cities’.



Disruptive Urbanism

Professor Josep Acebillo

According to **Prof. Josep Acebillo**, current urban paradigms cannot be sustained in view of the global economic and financial crisis and multiple global challenges.

As a result of climate change, the arctic corridor can be established as a viable trading and shipping route, with far-reaching consequences for the logistics of Europe. The importance of port cities will decrease in particular in the Mediterranean, and with decline and isolation comes the risk of sliding into “a creative silence”.

Within the next 25 years, 70–80 per cent of the world’s population will live in cities. As the future of the planet and the future of cities are closely related, ecology and sustainability cannot be decoupled from a new urban paradigm. Migratory movements and the flux of people are a reality of globalisation, and so is the socio-cultural diversity of the city. It is impossible to configure the new city without taking that into account.

The economic crisis has massively damaged the dominant FIRE economy (finance, insurance, real estate and enterprise), and has only left enterprise to function. A new urban paradigm has to take this into account, and be modelled in a context nearer to enterprise. These shifts are happening against the background of an all encompassing technological revolution, which is of a disruptive nature and has had an accelerating effect resulting in an excess of time, space and individualism and which has led to a shift of power away from states and cities to supranational operations.

All these developments strain the fabric of cities. Unless cities understand that their economic, socio-political, technological and cultural context has broken with the past, the fabric might tear. To date, cities have not yet found appropriate responses

to the new context in which they operate, but have continued to function on models adapted to the industrial economy of the 19th century. According to Prof. Acebillo, what is needed is the “rupture of the old” and critical pragmatism to re-interpret and remake our ideology of the cities and to create a new urban paradigm. An “Urban U-Turn” towards a new urban metabolism, defined as a complex open system, through which materials and energy are constantly processed, is necessary. Elements of this new urban metabolism could include a shift towards polycentrism and archipelago models of urban planning, and new transport matrices which take into account the limits of collective transport offers. Furthermore, it would mean striking a balance between the necessary urban critical mass and efficiency. Prof. Acebillo mentioned that while a critical mass is needed for a city to function efficiently, economically as well as ecologically, efficiency does not linearly increase with an increase in city size. For example, the capital of European finance, Zürich, has only 300,000 residents. Thought needs to be given to the constitution of an “urban commons”, with the goal to create public space for diversity. Moreover, overall design methodology has to move from planning to projects and strategic thinking.

For the Urban U-Turn to be successful in adapting to the post-crisis ‘glocal’ context, we need to understand the “city as the people”. Prof. Acebillo mentioned the current protests in the cities of Spain, which he sees as a reaction to the control of the city by an entwined system of high-level financial corporations and politics, which “makes the people disappear”. The resurgence of the people is an expression of urban creativity, which plays a crucial role in assuring the continuity of the city. In this context, Prof. Acebillo supported Charles Landry’s idea of creativity as a consequence of the complexity of human groups rather than as a complexity of the new economy.



Prof. Josep Acebillo. © FDFA/Presence Switzerland

Discussion

The audience picked up the contrast between Prof. Josep Acebillo's dark perspective and Charles Landry's forward-looking belief in 'the good city' run by 'creative bureaucrats' with active citizen participation. Owing to the property market cities play a major part in financial crises. How to protect citizens against such global forces which destroy local livelihoods outside their control? The 'self-built' city was evoked, but how would it work in practice? And how would it cope with global demands for urban space and logistics between them?

Disruptive Urbanism

New urban paradigms in the post-crisis Glocal context

| Topic | Urban U-Turn I (Industrial Context) | Urban U-Turn II (Post-crisis Glocal Context) |
|-------------------------------------|---|---|
| Urban planning models and intensity | Land use zoning Sprawl and low density | Functional hybridity Urban compactness |
| Neometropolitanism | Centre vs periphery Spreading out | Polycentrism/archipelago model 'Networks for land' |
| Urbanity | Material productivity 'Solid' culture | Creative city 'Liquid' culture |
| Urban critical mass | Megacities Business efficiency | Medium cities New ecological approach |
| Urban character | Urban icons | Slim cities |
| Urban commons | Public space scarcity | Public space diversity |
| Urban metabolism | Linear metabolism High energy costs | Circular metabolism High metabolic efficiency |
| New mobility matrix | Collective transport offer | Individual transport on demand Hectometric transport systems |
| Housing model | Social housing | Affordable housing Work and live |
| Design methodology | Plans | Projects and strategic thinking |

The Politics of Urban Cultural Interventions

Professor Timon Beyes and Professor Simeon Nelson

Prof. Timon Beyes expressed amazement that in the modern discourse on urbanity, creativity and the role of art, the virulent and conflict-laden artistic ways of intervening in cities and urban life are often neglected. He cautions against approaches that see the ‘summoning’ and ‘uses’ of art as smooth, unproblematic processes of urban redevelopment.

While the city and city life have become a subject matter of art once again, there has simultaneously also been a trend towards what the sociologist Sharon Zukin has called “the artistic mode of production”, meaning that art and the aesthetic have become important fields of urban development. Prof. Beyes tentatively distinguished three current modes of ‘summoning art’: the “flagship mode”, the “grassroots mode” and the “social work mode”. Flagship projects refer to art that is meant to deliver some sort of spectacle, often with the aim of location promotion and city marketing. The “grassroots mode” describes artists and culture workers being offered affordable temporary uses of buildings in order to upgrade a certain district or area, but also to give artists the opportunity to work and live in comparatively cheap surroundings. Local governments hope that the bohemian and arty scene will bring about some bottom-up urban development which then could be capitalised on. The “social work mode” refers to urban policy calling on artists to deliver intervention to provide social cohesion. These are artistic projects in the public interest, bringing together different communities. Here, art is framed as a catalyst for solutions to social problems.

Reflecting on these trends, Prof. Beyes considers it profoundly strange that art “is called on to integrate itself into, and contribute to, a dominant understanding of urban organisation and development”, and he found the assumption behind these kinds of attempts

to summon art problematic. To him, it is “an odd manoeuvre” by local authorities to instrumentalise artists to deliver urban regeneration and to mend the social bonds, as artists are the ones who supposedly live and work in a world that has the least constraints and the most open possibilities to experiment with different ways of perceiving and expressing oneself. Prof. Beyes also cautioned against “art that is done under an ethical imperative of bringing regeneration and mending the social bond”. This runs the risk of being ‘bad art’ as it is done under contradictory premises. Finally, he raised the question whether the creative potential of the art world can be harnessed at all if it is summoned.

The politics of aesthetics in general and of urban artistic interventions in particular hinge upon art’s unique ability to unsettle our grid of intelligibility, to provoke a perceptual or affective reconfiguration of the ways we see the city and our ways of inhabiting it. After all, conflict and antagonism are an intrinsic part of the city and the struggle for public space, and even of urban innovation. Historically, the development of great cities is marked by struggle and turmoil, and it may even be these struggles that made them successful.

Prof. Simeon Nelson presented an ‘interior track’ based on his personal experience of involving his art in the nexus of regeneration, place making and urban social sustainability. This encompasses grappling with instrumentality, the irritant of keeping various stakeholders happy, and negotiating conflicting situations at times, while preserving artistic integrity when attempting to contribute something “for the world”, in the words of Charles Landry.

Creating public art requires questioning how art is consumed, finding out what happens when members of the public from different cultural, religious and

The Politics of Urban Cultural Interventions (continued)

ethnic backgrounds are confronted with a new interventionist urban fabric. Conceiving everything as encounter, akin to Martin Buber, Nelson feels that the ordinary public should be credited with 'urban' intelligence as well as innocence.

He aligns his own position with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological approach, whereby the artist is mirroring the external world inside himself and projecting it back up, a process repeated by the audience which is feeding its encounter with art back to others. It is almost like a co-creation between art work, creator and public. He showed a number of examples to illustrate his existential position and his way of dealing with topological aesthetics.

His work encompasses multimedia, multidisciplinary manifestations, large metal sculptures in the public realm, and more abstract pattern research based on mathematics and interaction with the public. The installation on Melbourne's Olympic site created with choreographers, using voices of Commonwealth visitors, triggers thoughts about cooperative art. His large tree-like sculptures on a motorway, inspired by Owen Jones's ornamentalism as a bridge to British sensibility, are a critique of Australian mechanisation, use of energy and appropriation of landscape.

His work, sponsored by the Wellcome Trust, connects exploration of city form and spread into the countryside with growth patterns of cancerous cells



From left to right: Prof. Timon Beyes, Judith Ryser, Prof. Simeon Nelson. © FDFA/Presence Switzerland

filtered through complexity theory. He concludes that cities, despite their metaphoric plans with large trunk roads and suburban culs-de-sac, are not discreet objects and impossible to confine spatially and materially. Instead they are emerging networks in constant, never ending flux.

The artwork, embedded in an EU-funded shared space scheme in Kent, involved engineers, traffic managers, ecologists, community groups and the artist in mapping storm water and the sewage system into a diagrammatic river engraved into the streetscape.

Nelson considers that public space is not confined to streetscape, but includes public institutions such as prisons, town halls, hospitals. He is working on an art project with the medical research centre of Guy's Hospital involving cancer patients. His visual results reproduced on hospital walls are based on textual intervention related to medical terminology and exchanges with patients.

Discussion

Responding to each other, the two artists shared unease about 'instrumental art'. Nevertheless, they agreed that it has a place in cities and is not necessarily 'bad art', provided it does not compromise artists' ethics and freedom of expression. They both acknowledged the importance of art in contributing to the public realm by offering more enjoyable forms of encounter, while remaining intriguing and thought provoking. Central to visual arts, aesthetics brings its own contradictions: the colourful beauty of squatter settlements, the seductive perfection of malignant human cells. Yet again, the issue of measurement arose. Is it possible to quantify the impact of the arts in cities, on economic success, on social cohesion? This may only become apparent in the longer term, in terms of better health, less conflict, 'social positivism', less of a chasm between contentment and misery, more opportunities for all to enact their creativity in the city.

Conclusions

Judith Ryser

Concluding the conference on *Cultural Policies Towards Economic and Social Urban Sustainability* needs some clarification. Firstly, the debate was not meant to be on technological fixes. Secondly, it excluded the purely ecological dimension of 'sustainability' which had been addressed by previous dialogues.¹ This leaves a vast array of interconnected concepts – culture, policy, economic and social sustainability, and the urban – understood in very different ways by politicians, artists, urbanists and city makers who made up the speakers.

Sustainability

In *Solutions Towards Sustainable Development*,² focusing on its techno-ecological aspects, the premise was that "cities have the greatest potential to improve sustainability". Moreover, politicians, academics and practitioners are convinced that cities are the locus of economic competitiveness, a key driver of growth. Yet, according to Alistair Fuad-Luke,³ growth includes non-material values, meaning mental space and social practice, a cultural dimension, which is also assumed to drive the urban economy. Hence the notion of culture needs clarification in the policy context proposed here.

Culture

Culture can refer to 'highbrow culture', the fine arts,

the great masters, haute couture, opera, and much more: taste as determined by the elite. It also forms an integral part of human life, its system of beliefs, social mores, emotional behaviour, its socio-culturally constructed knowledge. In a more utilitarian sense, culture refers to 'corporate culture', or culture related to political groupings.⁴

In 18th century Europe culture meant 'cultivation', namely improvement of nature, while in the 19th century it signified 'betterment and refinement of the individual'. Thus culture referred to both anthropological phenomena and human attributes. Yet, culture also relates to representation and meaning, including its symbolic or spiritual sense. Cultural expression ranges from non-material aspects to social rules and values, language and artefacts.⁵ The latter encompasses architecture, the building blocks of cities. During the 20th century, social anthropologists argued about the distinction between culture and society, two notions used in the title of this conference. Clearly, culture is not static. It evolves in contact with nature and other cultures, be it through social conflicts, technological innovation, or new ideologies, such as feminism or multiculturalism. The 21st century shines a new light on 'popular culture',⁶ capitalist 'mass culture', and 'everyday culture'. All these dimensions contribute to the shaping of cultural policy.

¹ 'Urban Sustainability: A Contradiction in Terms?' in *A Swiss-UK Dialogue: Solutions Towards Sustainable Development*. Reader of Events on Urban Sustainability, Waste Management and Public Transport, 2008–2010

² Judith Ryser, 2011. 'Urban Sustainability: A Contradiction in Terms?' in *A Swiss-UK Dialogue: Solutions Towards Sustainable Development*. Reader of Events on Urban Sustainability, Waste Management and Public Transport, 2008–2010

³ Alistair Fuad-Luke, 2009. *Design Activism*. Earthscan

⁴ In institutional terms, culture is often associated with the media and sports (i.e. the British Ministry). Paradoxically, culture is segregated from sports during the 2012 Olympics, which stages a "cultural Olympiad", claiming to be "...the largest cultural celebration in the history of the modern Olympic and Paralympic Movements". This conference forms part of this four-year inspiration of "...creativity across all forms of culture". It includes the arts, film and digital, literature and libraries, museums and galleries, music, outdoors and events, theatre, dance and comedy and the London 2012 Festival, 21 June to 9 September 2012. Funding is secured by public bodies and private sponsors, despite the fact that, in times of severe austerity, culture is the first sector to be curtailed, making it somewhat dispensable and certainly subordinate to economic necessity

⁵ Linked to cities; see, for example, Simon Rycroft, 2011, *Swinging City: A Cultural Geography of London, 1950–1974*. Ashgate

⁶ Pioneered by Stuart Hall's Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies, Birmingham

Conclusions (continued)

Cultural Policy

Which interpretation of culture is appropriate for urban cultural policy? A mainstream assumption of the conference is that the benefits of culture and artistic creativity can be captured in top-down cultural policies to harness innovation in urban regeneration and spatial planning. Conversely, the creative community sees cultural policy as part of bottom-up participatory processes, involving diverse interest groups whose cultural expression and critique strengthen cultural policy in turn. A London example is the Critical Cities festivals,⁷ invented and curated by TINAG,⁸ enabling culture-based rethinking of 'urban sustainability'. There, emerging urbanists and artists exhibit their innovative, critical and political initiatives – in the sense of *polis*: city and body of citizens – and generate new creative resistance networks, such as Spirit of '68.⁹ This rich material may become an inspiration for political leaders of cultural policies when trying to improve simultaneously economic and social sustainability of cities.

The conference showed that culture remains a very broad church, to some extent an ambiguous notion, interpreted in many different ways by the 'urban industry'.¹⁰ The professionals of the built environment, together with the many cultural groups who live, work, play and learn in increasingly multicultural cities – such as Zürich and London – understand and practise culture in very diverse ways.

This is not new. Suffice to look at the conference venue, Glaziers Hall, which is an historic seat of

artisan culture. Next to it London Bridge represents technology culture which dates back to the early days of London, its first crossing of the Thames and genesis of London south of the river. The river itself generated culture of movement, discovery, entrepreneurship, besides artistic culture, inspiring painters, film makers, novelists, designers and many more. Religion drove the construction of Southwark Cathedral, still standing for spiritual cultural values. The Globe Theatre, a resurrection of Shakespeare's contribution to entertainment, recalls the naughty culture of the city, which flourished alongside the utilitarian culture, embedded in the oldest market of London, set up to fill the stomachs of Londoners opposite. Next to it, the 'Shard' is going up into the sky, a symbol of 21st century star architecture culture, technological prowess and neo-liberal ambition.

Glaziers Hall, which will be the venue of the Swiss presence during the Olympic Games 2012 ('House of Switzerland'), was a pertinent choice. Hosting this conference on the inaugural day, when the 'House of Switzerland' was officially presented to the public, symbolises the importance of culture and urban sustainability as part of the Swiss activities in the UK. Branching out into the surroundings with a photographic exhibition – ReGeneration – is a further indication of how much importance the conference and its protagonists attach to culture in the city. It is hoped that its exposure in the public realm will give rise to further reflections on the role of the arts and culture in cities, and especially their contribution to the public realm.

⁷See publication series *Critical Cities: Ideas, Knowledge and Agitation from Emerging Urbanists*, Deepa Naik and Trenton Oldfield (eds), Volumes 1–3, 2009, 2010, 2011 (Vol. 3 forthcoming). Myrtle Court Press

⁸Deepa Naik and Trenton Oldfield, creators of TINAG: This Is Not A Gateway

⁹Spirit of '68 (an offspring of the TINAG festival 2010), a catalyst of interaction and networking, is studying urban resistance movements and applies lessons to happenings involving local activists and the general public to raise awareness of social and spatial injustice in cities

¹⁰A term borrowed from TINAG

Conclusions (continued)

Outcomes

The conference produced rich pickings for further elaboration by speakers and the audience alike. The topic was explored from four different perspectives:

- urban governance by the two politicians from Switzerland and the UK
- urban civic creativity by an unconventional urban thinker and activist
- the politics of urban cultural intervention by an art entrepreneur and an artist, and
- reflections on the role of design in a global world in crisis by an architect.

While Charles Landry, a hands-on interventionist in urban creativity, attached growing importance to the creative bureaucracy as a crucial force for enhancing the cultural dimension in urban regeneration and development, Timon Beyes in his role as ‘cultural entrepreneur’ resorted to his organisational knowledge to work on aesthetics and politics of urban space.

The artist Simeon Nelson based his reflections on broader urban as well as human regeneration in his pursuit to create topological spaces inspired by science, while the architect Josep Acebillo produced a comparative conceptual framework to capture ‘disruptive urbanism’ in understanding how cities have changed from their industrial past to their role in what, in his view, is a doomed ‘post crisis’ context.

Ultimately, it is in the gift of the politicians, represented by the Deputy Leader of Southwark Council Ian Wingfield and the Deputy Mayor of Zürich Martin Vollenwyder, to take the lead in incorporating all these experiences, reflections and wisdoms into cultural policies and programmes to progress urban sustainability and to enhance its economic and social dimension. Their respective standpoints are driving their ways of incorporating culture into a broader urban development strategy, but they share the aim to turn cities into more economically



View of the audience and the Court Room, Glaziers Hall. © FDFA/Presence Switzerland

Conclusions (continued)

competitive magnets, attracting, retaining and nurturing talent. Yet, they both have to address increasing social, material and spatial polarisation which affects so many cities when they expand and regenerate at breathtaking speed.

No matter how diverse and excellent the cultures are in a city, they will not be able to come into their own unless the city is open, unless there is tolerance, trust and respect, something that cannot be legislated for. Often in multicultural cities, especially where the divides between the various groups are wide, cities produce not only social but also spatial segregation and injustice. Urban regeneration tends to displace and isolate local communities, putting the regenerated areas out of their reach, sometimes turning them into enclaves, into gated communities which raise envy and frustration. Liveable cities are aspiring to a climate of openness, encouraging exchange and understanding, providing opportunities to demonstrate the tangible merits of diverse cultures and their concrete contribution to the city's economy and wellbeing. These are the features of genuine urban sustainability.

Incidentally, dangers of divide also apply to the rivalries between the professionals of the built environment and their restrictive practices, as opposed to "creative city making" in Charles Landry's sense. Conversely, openness presupposes curiosity for the new, for the other, something which cities have been fostering since time immemorial.

The temptation for cities is to compete on the world scene, attract world players and commission buildings from star architects. Yet, responsible politicians know that these newcomers have to find their place in the city and among its citizens. They have to be aware of the city's historic assets and drawbacks – I call it "archaeology of spatial memory". Most importantly,

they have to fit into the city's specificity. It is only by building on these city-own characteristics that cities will remain sustainable and culturally dynamic. This means combining economic growth with immaterial growth and cultural diversity, while reconciling social divides and caring for the physical urban environment.

Not a subject of this conference, the physical fabric of the city is a crucial attractor though, a key cultural asset of the city. The material city constitutes a precious value, defining its urbanity and providing the setting for creative action. Especially the public realm, the street as Charles Landry prefers to see it, is the city's shared commons, the place where culture generates economic and social sustainability. Art and creative activities are intervening and transforming urban spaces, but they are often subjected to the political agenda of cities. In their exchange, Timon Beyes and Simeon Nelson dealt with art as an add-on of large developments or public sector interventions, the proverbial planning gain, the 1% for artistic works, the philanthropic financial contribution with its own constraints for artistic expression. However, the energy, imagination and dedication invested in democratising urban change by local communities, nomadic bohemians, or urban activists rarely yields lasting results for these place makers. They merely prepare the ground for value added by mainstream development. Gentrification is but one manifestation of this phenomenon. Urban change is continuous, thus these processes have been taking place for a long time, before cities sought a position in the pecking order of global urban attractiveness, before cultural policies graduated to their role in urban competitiveness. Then as now, the design of cultural policies should include those who provide the input and let them share the benefits of their creative contribution.

London, September 2011

Biographies

Judith Ryser, Chair. Qualified as an architect and urbanist with an MSc in social sciences, Judith Ryser is dedicating her cosmopolitan professional life to the built environment, its sustainability and its contribution to the knowledge society. Her research activities in Paris, Berlin, Stockholm, Geneva (United Nations), Madrid and London in public sector posts, private practice and universities focused on cities and development strategies with emphasis on Europe. Based in London, she researches, edits and writes books and articles, produces reports for international organisations and works on regeneration projects also with community groups. She speaks at

international professional conferences and carries out consultancies. She was vice-President of Isocarp for which she led an Urban Advisory Planning Team and is joint editor of the International Manual of Planning Practice. She is a member of the Chartered Institute of Journalists serving on the International Committee, a member of the Urban Design Group and its editorial board, and Editor and member of the International Advisory Council of the Fundacion Metropoli with which she engages in projects and writing.

For further information go to:
<http://www.urbanthinker.com>

Cllr Martin Vollenwyder is Deputy Mayor of Zürich and Head of the Department of Finance. He is, amongst others, a member of the Management Board of Tonhalle-Gesellschaft (Zürich Concert Hall) as a Delegate of the City of Zürich. Prior to his election to the Zürich City Council in 2002, he was a member of the Zürich City Parliament (1985–1996), and in this capacity held the position of Parliamentary Head of

the Radical Liberal Party (FDP) (1990–1994). Martin Vollenwyder was also FDP President for the City of Zürich (1994–1996) and for the Canton of Zürich (1996–2000). From 1982 to 2002, Martin Vollenwyder worked for Credit Suisse, where he was in charge of the SME & Association Unit. He studied law at Zürich University and graduated with the degree of lic.jur.

Cllr Ian Wingfield, Deputy Leader, Southwark Council, studied at Cambridge, London School of Economics and Imperial College London. Holds a BA degree in Modern History, a Masters degree in Personnel Management and a PhD in Industrial Sociology. He is a Chartered Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Personnel & Development and a Life Member of the Institute of Management Studies. He is a member of the Loriners Livery Company in the City of London.

Elected to Southwark Council in October 1989. Chief Whip, Labour Group (1990–2002); Leader, Labour Group (2002–2004); Deputy Leader, Labour Group & Council and Cabinet Member for Housing since 2010.

Has also been employed as a Political and Research Officer with the Communication Workers Union since 1988. Has twice been selected as a Parliamentary Candidate, and has also worked in Parliament both in the House of Lords and House of Commons. He is involved in many local charities and community associations. His main hobby is family history and he has traced his family back to the English Civil War in the 1640s. He has travelled widely around the world, including Switzerland both for skiing and on business. Aged 52. Married with two grandchildren.

Biographies (continued)

Charles Landry is an international authority on the use of imagination and creativity in urban change. His aim is to help cities become more resilient and to future-proof themselves. In his work a cultural perspective is central, as the culture and distinctiveness of a place can help invigorate and revitalise its economy as well as enhance its sense of self and confidence.

Charles helps cities identify and make the most of their resources and to reach their potential by triggering their inventiveness and open-minded thinking. He acts as a critical friend working closely with decision makers and local leaders. He inspires, facilitates and stimulates so cities can transform for the better. He helps find apt and original solutions to seemingly intractable dilemmas, such as marrying innovation and tradition, balancing wealth creation and social cohesiveness, or local distinctiveness and a global orientation.

Charles undertakes tailored research and facilitates

complex urban change and visioning processes.

He takes on short- and long-term involvements with cities. He also develops his own projects, often in collaboration with cities, such as 'the creative city index', the 'intercultural city' project and the ongoing 'creative bureaucracy' research, looking at how public administrations can be accountable, flexible and entrepreneurial.

Charles studied in Britain, Germany and Italy and in 1978 he founded Comedia, a highly respected European consultancy working in creativity, culture and urban change. He has completed numerous assignments for a variety of public and private clients, worked on several hundred projects and gives talks around the world.

For further information go to:

<http://www.charleslandry.com>

Prof. arch. Josep Acebillo. Prof. Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, AAM-USI, Switzerland; Principal of Architectural Systems Office, Switzerland; CEO, BcnSuS and Barcelona Regional; Former Chief Architect of the City of Barcelona; Technical Director of Barcelona 1992 Olympic Holding.

He obtained his architecture degree in the Escuela Técnica Superior de Arquitectura de Barcelona (ETSAB) and an art history degree in 1975. From 1975 to 1981 he worked as an independent architect in Barcelona and as a Professor at the University (ETSAB). At that time he won two urban planning and two architecture competitions. From 1981 to 1987 he was Director of Urban Projects of the City of Barcelona, a position that involved projecting and directing all infrastructures, monuments and urban projects promoted by the city. For the quality of the

urban spaces designed and built under his direction, the School of Graduate Design of Harvard gave the 1990 Prince of Wales Prize in Urban Design.

From 1988 to 1994, Prof. Acebillo was Technical Director of the Olympic Holding of the city of Barcelona, in charge of leading the projects and building of the main infrastructure for the 1992 Olympic Games. For his contribution to the urban transformation of the city, he was a recipient of the Honorary Medal of the City of Barcelona (1992) and in 1999 was a recipient of the RIBA awards Barcelona with the Royal Gold Medal for Architecture.

In 1993 he founded Barcelona Regional (BR), the metropolitan agency for the strategic development of urban projects and infrastructure of the city, where he continues to be its CEO. His efforts were awarded the

Biographies (continued)

Special European Prize of Urbanism 1997/1998 from the European Commission for Project Infrastructures and General Metropolitan Systems. In 1998 he became Commissioner of Infrastructures and Urban Planning of Barcelona, and in 1999 was promoted to Chief Architect of the city of Barcelona and became honorific member of the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA).

Acebillo is currently a professor at the Accademia di Architettura di Mendrisio, in which he was Dean of the Faculty during two consecutive mandates (2003–2007) and where, since 2004, he directs the Institute for the Contemporary Urban Project (i.CUP). Prior to his appointment as a professor in 2001, he taught in several architecture schools, among them the Faculty of Yale, the Graduate School of Design (GSD) of

Harvard, the architecture school of National University of Singapore (NUS) and the International Architecture and Urban Design Laboratory (ILAUD).

Under the urban leadership of Acebillo, Barcelona has received worldwide recognition for its positioning in the international architecture scene. He is frequently called to assess other cities in their urban transformation endeavours as an international expert in urban strategies. Recently he founded Barcelona Strategic Urban Systems (BcnSuS), an interdisciplinary consortium with technical experts from Barcelona Regional (BR) and other public and private agents. In 2007 he founded an independent professional studio in Switzerland with architect Stanislava Boskovic Sigon.

Prof. Timon Beyes currently directs a large-scale EU project on the future of the moving image at Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany, where he is associated with the Institute for the Culture and Aesthetics of Digital Media (ICAM). He has a background in Sociology and Management Studies and has done his doctoral and post-doctoral research at the University of St Gallen, where he continues to be involved in research and teaching projects. His research is dedicated to non-profit/non-governmental organisations, the spaces and aesthetics of organising and the aesthetics and politics of urban space. His empirical research into cultural-artistic ventures in the cities of Berlin and St Gallen led to a growing awareness of the importance of urban spatial settings for creativity and innovation and his interest to explore the interstices of aesthetics, spatial theory and organisation theory. Fusing his conceptual-empirical interests with practical endeavours, among other things he developed a week-long university project

on the city of the future in collaboration with architect Daniel Libeskind that took place in St Gallen in 2005, and he conceived of and organised an international symposium on artistic urban interventions and their possible consequences for urban democracy and urban enterprise that took place at the Kampnagel Theatre in Hamburg, Germany, in 2007. His research has been published in a range of monographs, edited collections and international journals, which includes *Parcitypate: Art and Urban Space* (with S-T Krempel and A Deuffhard, Niggli, 2009). Recent publications: *Anstand* (with J Metelmann, Berlin University Press, 2011); 'Spacing organization', *Organization* (with C Steyaert, 2011); 'The production of educational space: Heterotopia and the business university', *Management Learning* (with C Michels, 2011); 'The ontological politics of artistic interventions', *Action Research Journal* (with C Steyaert, 2011).

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Prof. Simeon Nelson obtained a BA in Fine Art from Sydney College of the Arts in 1987. After establishing himself as an artist in Australia and Asia in the 1990s, he moved to London in 2001 and is currently working on commissions and exhibitions in Asia, Australia, Europe and the UK. He is Reader in Sculpture at the University of Hertfordshire and a Fellow of the Royal Society for the Arts. He was a finalist in the National Gallery of Australia's National Sculpture Prize in 2005 and a finalist in the 2003 Jerwood Sculpture Prize. *Passages*, a monograph on his work, was published by The University of New South Wales Press, Sydney in 2001. In 2008 he had a solo show at the Royal Geographical Society, London, as their inaugural artist in residence. He has received numerous awards including seven arts council grants in Australia and the UK, a Pollock-Krasner Foundation Fellowship in 2000 and a Leverhulme Trust grant in 2007. In 1997 he was the sole Australian representative to the IX Triennial India, New Delhi.

Simeon has completed numerous commissions in England and Australia including *Ben Chifley*, Sydney; *Desiring Machine*, a monumental sculpture on the outskirts of Melbourne; *Cactal*, the University of Teesside, UK; *Proximities*, a major commission for the Commonwealth Games in Melbourne; and *Flume*, a large-scale site-specific commission for Ashford, Kent, UK. His work is held by a number of public and private collections including the Art/Omi Foundation, New York; The Jerwood Foundation, London; The Museum of Contemporary Art, Sydney; The National Gallery of Australia, Canberra; The Cass Sculpture Foundation, UK; and Goldman Sachs. He is represented by Christine Abrahams Gallery, Melbourne.

For further information go to:
<http://www.simeon-nelson.com>

For further Information



www.spacesofencounters.ch



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