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# Cities and Culture(s)

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## Introduction

- Cities have always had **cultural functions** as places of encounter, exchange, struggle for power & representation
- The 21st C has seen a marked **convergence** between the spheres of cultural and economic development
- This has resulted in a trend towards **privileging** cultural activities with the potential to generate **economic** returns
- This lecture will consider the role that culture plays in cities, the way culture is produced and consumed, the economic implications of such processes and the questions they arise in terms of **social justice**

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## Cities and Culture(s)

### the cultural dimension of Cities

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## The city as an event, a performance...

- Miles, Hall & Borden (2000)
  - "The city is an **event**, a performance in which the roles of actor and spectator are interchangeable. Like any performance, the city is a **product of culture**. Culture, in this sense, means a process of intellectual development through which ideas are formed and changed; it also means the way of life produced by such ideas and the forms, such as art, architecture, film and fashion, in which they take shape. But if the city is a product of culture, it is also **where most culture is made and received**. The urban character of this culture may be revealed or concealed by its form." (p 3)

**cultural dimensions**

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## All city processes are cultural...

- Miles, Hall & Borden (2000)
  - "... the processes which produce a city are cultural.... One of the challenges of the new century is to **democratise** this 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**." (p 4)

**cultural dimensions**

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## Notions of culture in the city

- Zukin (1996) building on New York City experiences
  - Three notions of culture are reshaping urban politics
    - culture as ethnicity (diversity, the city as mosaic)
    - culture as aesthetic (shapes, senses, public art)
    - culture as a marketing tool (place promotion, images)
  - There is not a single urban culture nor many subcultures but rather constant renegotiations of cultures in the city's central spaces
  - The above is embedded in the notion of a new "symbolic economy" based on tourism, media and entertainment
    - connection between real state developments & popular expression
  - Key questions:
    - Who occupies city spaces?
    - Whose culture is imposed as public culture?

**cultural dimensions**

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**Cities and Culture(s)**

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producing culture +  
consuming culture

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**Cities as centres of production**

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producing + consuming

- Density of interaction is key to stimulate cultural production
  - The production of culture tends to be rooted in unique communities of workers anchored to particular places (Scott, 2000: 32)
  - "...place [is] a privileged locus of culture [because of the continued importance of] massive urban communities characterized by many different specialized economic functions and dense social relationships... Large cities are... sites of leading-edge economic activity...nodes of location-specific interactions...in which the stimulus to cultural experimentation and renewal tends to be high" (op cit: 4)
- Urban cultural centres act as poles of attraction for talented individuals.
  - homogeneous rather than hazardous communities (Scott, 2000)
  - the concentration of the 'creative classes' (Florida, 2002)

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**Localised production vs global distribution**

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producing + consuming

- Effects of a global economy
  - "the production of culture [tends] to become more and more concentrated in a privileged set of localized clusters... while final outputs are channeled into ever more spatially extended networks of consumption" (Scott, 2000: 4)
  - "stark division between...cities integrated into this 'fast-world' [of production and financial power] and those that are excluded and relegated to the 'slow-world'" [of dependant consumers?] (Miles et al, 2000: 5)

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**Localised production vs global distribution**

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producing + consuming

- Are global cities able to retain a distinctive local character?
  - Scott argues they exhibit "well-developed individual identities... rooted in the fact that cultural-products industries compete increasingly on...global markets" and need competitive "branding" (Scott, 2000: 9)
  - On the opposite end, city branding exercises could be seen as artificial makeovers that tend to eradicate any authentic and/or unique sense of place (Kearns & Philo, 1993)

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**Tensions + reflections from the field**

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producing + consuming

- While marginal to production, peripheral areas can act as a source for the subversion / reinterpretation of meanings
  - the case of 'slow-world' cities and marginal states of 'fast-world' cities
- Consumers demand 'unique' experiences and identities
  - ie. adventure tourism, farmer markets, individualised e-offers
- Some case-specific tensions
  - UK's 'high street' vs independent retailers (Glasgow's city centre)
  - the theme park approach: area branding and invention of traditions (new 'vintage' shops in Barcelona, Aboriginal experiences in Sydney)

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**Cities and Culture(s)**

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economic implications +  
implications for social justice

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**Effects of the global economy on cities**

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**economy + social justice**

- Increased urban competitiveness
  - the "increasingly networked, interconnected world economic system... has involved and aggressive redefinition of city identities and images and the pursuit of private sector and tourist investment.... A turn to entrepreneurialism amongst former industrial cities" (Miles et al., 2000: 5)
- Change from managerialism to entrepreneurialism in urban governance (Harvey, 1989)
- Struggle for reinventing industrial cities into creative and knowledge economies (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002)

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**Implications for social justice**

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**economy + social justice**

- 'Selling places', a critique (Kearns & Philo, 1993)
  - the 'selling of places' is the process by which managers of large urban areas (*authorities + entrepreneurs*) manipulate cultural resources (*symbols, ideologies, identities*) for capital gain (ix-x)
  - the 'discourses' that sustain these practices (*in advertising, public events*) try to engineer consensus amongst local citizens
  - the need to present 'consistent' + 'appealing' images leads to 'styling' local culture and its history. This tends to result from a top-down approach that often disregards grassroots consultations

In focus: the experiences of cities becoming 'post-industrial'

- which cultures are sought as a tool for urban regeneration?

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**Cities and Culture(s)**

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**Using culture for urban regeneration**

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**Models: culture as a tool for regeneration**

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**culture + regeneration**

- City models
  - US trend in the 1980s: Baltimore, Minneapolis, Seattle
  - Glasgow, Barcelona, Bilbao as European symbols of the 1990s
- Key elements
  - changing images, accelerating inward investment, attracting leisure and business tourism, appealing to the media
  - enhancing social cohesion, local pride and confidence
- Vehicles for change
  - hallmark events (Olympics, City of Culture)
  - hallmark infrastructures (Guggenheim museum, water front developments)

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**Implications for social justice**

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**culture + regeneration**

- How is culture used? By who?
- Key tensions (Bianchini & Parkinson, 1993)
  - Centre vs periphery - spatial distributions, risk of gentrification
  - Ephemeral vs permanent activity - legacies, long term vs short term effects - influence on policy, strategy vs opportunism
  - Local vs international focus - participation, ownership & representation
- Reflections from the field
  - Glasgow, Barcelona, Sydney

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**Cities and Culture(s)**

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**Towards the Future**

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**A fairer approach to the culture(s) of cities**

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**towards future**

- Relationship between culture and urban planning
  - need to widen the agenda towards a more holistic notion of planning
  - "urban planners [20thC] have been influenced by the creative of engineers and scientists...focus on 'hard infrastructures'...today need the creativity of artists...working in social contexts...to see the connections between the natural, social, cultural, political and economic environments... grasp the importance...of soft infrastructures" (Bianchini, 1999: 195-6)
- The notion of 'time planning' (Bianchini & Greed, 1999: 202)
  - "many the problems which confront modern cities are not primarily spatial in nature, but are generated by the way we organise and divide up time for different uses and activities... they are temporal."
  - "time planning is more sensitive to cultural issues"
- The notion of 'cultural planning'

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**The notion of city cultural planning**

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**towards future**

- Bianchini (1999: 198)
  - Diagram illustrating the relationship between Cultural resources and various spheres:
    - economic sphere
    - political sphere
    - social sphere
    - arts/cultural sphere
    - educational sphere
    - environment sphere
    - symbolic sphere

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**To start discussion...**

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- M.D. Higgins, former Irish Minister of Culture, speech in 'Economy of the Arts' conference (Dublin, 1994)
  - "For too long... financial institutions have used their hegemony to set limits to policy in other areas, constantly diminishing the cultural space in which much radical or innovative thinking is possible. One result has been a direct impoverishment of social philosophy. We no longer seem to be living in countries but in economies... *Homo economicus* feels justified by his products, whereas play is concerned with means rather than ends...Hence the major contradiction of our economic arrangements: that a society based on negation of the play-element presents itself as uniquely able to deliver play - but only as an experience of consumption."

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