Culture Cities: Planning or Branding?

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The designation of the cultural city and the use of the arts and entertainment as tools in urban regeneration is now a universal phenomenon which has accelerated in the era of the city of renewal. The branding of commercial entertainment products and leisure-shopping – functional and flaneur - together present a synthesis of the physical and symbolic economies of urban consumption spaces and which public culture has now emulated. Hard branding the city through cultural flagships and festivals has created a form of Karaoke architecture where it is not important how well you can sing, but that you do it with verve and gusto. At the same time the notion and practice of cultural planning has emerged as a response to competitive city and place marketing, but in the absence of traditional planning norms for ‘culture’, in contrast to other aspects of amenity and infrastructure provision (Evans, 2001). This paper reviews the phenomenon of culture cities and their branding through flagship cultural facilities - the archetypal art museum.
Introduction

The extension of global leisure products and popular entertainment into city retail and public realms has been a familiar exploitation of the corporate brand and the *fantasisation* (Hannigan, 1998) of the everyday. The frequency and reach of this process has been fuelled by predictable competition and copycat corporate routines (following the brand leaders), but also by the growing recognition of the symbolic value ascribed to brand spinoffs and the intrinsic economic values they can possess, however long established in the product life-cycle. Hard branding is therefore a specific attempt to capitalise on “commodity fetishism” and extend brand life, geographically and symbolically. The transformation of essentially private consumer products into places of collective consumption and identity also extends the traditional lifestyle or image-based advertising associated with fashion and other consumer products, into an experiential and entertainment dimension which has been limited in the past to Disney and other cartoon characters (e.g. *Asterixland*, France) and Hollywood/TV spin-offs (studios such as MGM, Universal and Granada). These themed entertainment centres have in the past tended to be located in out of town or urban fringe locations. However, the presence of Nike Town, Sony, SegaWorld, and Warner Studio “Villages” (sic) and countless smaller brands in town and city centres, presents a challenge to mainstream entertainment venues, *edutainment* centre and museum alike, since they attract as many sightseers as shoppers. Since opening in Oxford Street, London in 1999, NikeTown has described itself as “more than a store, to us it is a place to come for inspiration, information, opportunities to play, first-class service and very best sports products”. Their physical form and brand reinforcement also makes particular impacts on local distinctiveness and the urban landscape, and therefore represents an extreme example of the commodification of consumption spaces.

This particular manifestation of globalisation is on the one hand the physical representation of product promotion and placement already transmitted through advertising, sponsorship and broadcast media, as well as a rational economic strategy to “cut out the middle men” (general retailers) and reduce distribution and transaction costs. It also presents an opportunity for enhancing customer loyalty and synergy between the physical and symbolic value of brands, but bypassing the political economy. It is the twin value systems of the political and symbolic economy that according to Zukin (1996 p.43) provides the most productive analyses of the built environment of cities. However the branded entertainment-retail emporium challenges normal planning-use, design and vernacular preferences - is it a shop, a venue, an arcade, advertisement, public art or monument? Their prominence and scale thus accelerates the hard branding of cities already struggling to resist a(nother) McDonald’s, Wal-Mart, mall or multiplex, which are generally developed at the cost of existing, independent or at least more widely distributed outlets and town centres (e.g. cinemas, speciality retail stores and restaurants - Evans, 1998b). As Klein’s manifesto No Logo observed: ‘We live in a double world: carnival on the surface, consolidation underneath, where it counts. Everyone has..witnessed the odd double vision of vast consumer choice coupled with Orwellian new restrictions on cultural production and public space. What Kunstler calls “the geography of nowhere”’ (2001 p.130).

The contemporary version of commodified cultural experience has resonance with earlier forms of entertainment and collective consumption, as rural gatherings and pursuits were recreated by entrepreneurs in towns and cities. Examples include the fair (today the festival, “boot fair”, to the World Fair and Universal EXPO); the pleasure garden (today’s garden festival, theme park, open air concert); the circus (stadium, arena) and the music hall and its derivatives, the gin palace and early cinema. At the same time, theatre design and location had more in common with popular entertainment including bear baiting, bull fighting, open air shows, and a less conscious hierarchy of audiences between high brow and low brow, stalls and balcony. The
imposition and control through licensing, censorship, and enclosure which broke the visceral
relationship between audience/participant and performer, ended the vibrant pleasure garden
which was forced indoors, e.g. to music halls, and presents the other side to municipal urban
entertainment - that of class divide and crowd control, and the promotion instead of “dry”
alcohol free, educative cultural provision, manifested particularly through museums and
galleries, people’s palaces, all-seater theatres and concert halls.

The Great Exhibitions – notably in London 1851 (and its French forerunners) - in their
celebration and synthesis of industry, technology and fine art, are a particular milestone which
accelerated the separation of the “arts” and popular entertainment, and cemented the high art:
popular culture dialectic: ‘Ideologically the Great Exhibitions acted as a break point in both
the narrative of museum history, and in the wider economies of material culture, presenting an
opportunity for the new ‘Products of Industry’ to merge with art and entertainment in a
previously unimaginable new leisure space’ (Cummings and Lewandowska, 2000 p.54). After the
1851 Great Exhibition which attracted over 6 million visits to the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park,
attendance at the British Museum peaked at 2.5 million (today it receives 6 million, but over
half of these are from overseas). The monuments and structures they and their modern
contemporary - the Universal Expositions (EXPOs) - left behind, created such cultural icons as the
Eiffel Tower (1859); the museum quarter, Kensington (1851, 1871-4, 1883-6); Kelvingrove,
Glasgow (1901) and the Festival Hall and South Bank Arts complex (Festival of Britain 1951); as
well as the ubiquitous twentieth century convention centres (Spokane, Knoxville USA; Brisbane;
Vancouver). But in the late twentieth century they have also produced a series of less successful
post-event facilities and under-developed sites, notably EXPOs in Montreal 1967, Seville 1992,
Lisbon 1998, Greenwich Millennium ‘Dome’ and Hannover in 2000, as well as the British garden
festivals which failed to capture either the regenerative effects or the spirit of their German
originators, the post-War “bundesgartenschauen” (PACEC, 1990). Many parts of these urban
sites remain undeveloped for decades, their public investment seldom recouped. Despite their
track record, Japan plans to host the EXPO in 2005 at Aichi, themed around an Eco-City and a
“rediscovery of Nature’s Wisdom”. Unlike the EXPO made up of temporary stands from
participating countries, permanent multipurpose facilities will be integrated with long-term
regional plans for subsequent use. This optimism is not however, entirely misplaced - Japan had
hosted the most successful EXPO in 1970 in Osaka (64 million visits) and in Tsukaba in 1985 (20
million), albeit in more stable times.

City branding

Towns and cities have long been identified with major corporate headquarters, factories, or
sporting venues and clubs, and particular producer associations, e.g. Silicon Valley, Motown,
Nashville, Hollywood, “Guinness World” Dublin, much as rural towns associate themselves with
their agricultural produce and annual harvest festivals, but these are more marketing and civic
imaging devices than wholesale city repositioning and place-making (Ward 1998). Culture cities
also seek to develop this association amongst visitor and resident, since as Mommaas observes:
‘Brands derive their attraction largely from the fact that they introduce a certain order or
coherence to the multiform reality around us. Brands enable us more easily ‘read’ each other
and our environment of places and products. Seen in this way brands are not purely a source of
differentiation, but also of identification, recognition, continuity and collectivity’ (2002 p.34).
According to Simmel, branding city quarters in the past provided a link between the diverging
individual and collective culture and identity, reconnecting the locale with a sense of socio-
cultural “belonging”, whether to a city, neighbourhood or nation. Increased mobility, wanderlust and search for new products and experiences were already apparent in the seventeenth century, and as Zukin maintains today: ‘the cultural power to create an image, to frame a vision, of the city has become more important as...traditional institutions - both social classes and political parties - have become less relevant mechanisms of expressing identity. Those who create images stamp a collective identity. Whether they are media corporations like the Disney, art museums, or politicians, they are creating new spaces for public cultures’ (1995: 3).

Cities seeking to be both inclusive and project their multicultural “rich mix” (Worpole and Greenhalgh, 1999) now re-label their ethnic quarters which had come to be associated with deprivation and decline - Jewish ghettos and immigrant neighbourhoods such as Greektown, Little Germany and Little Italy (Taylor, 2000) - which are now branded through cultural association. Examples of these ethnoscapes (Appadurai, 1990, 1997) include Banglatown, East London; Curry Triangle, Birmingham; and the ubiquitous Chinatowns. The latter are both recreated and multiplied such as in Toronto, or even used as a generic tag to indicate a bohemian quarter prior to regeneration such as the Barrio Chinois in the Raval area of Barcelona, which never actually hosted a Chinese community.

**Grands Projets**

Prior to the post-industrial culture city and regeneration phenomenon which gained force in the late-1980s, Tuan observed that: ‘Past events make no impact on the present unless they are memorialized in history books, monuments, pageants, and solemn and jovial festivities...on which successive citizens can draw to sustain and re-create their image of place’ (1977 p.174). As the fin de siècle also passed into the new Millennium in a self-conscious frenzy of cultural events and buildings, two iconic manifestations of what is a primarily urban cultural renaissance and the most visible examples of public culture, are the contemporary mega-events and the monumental *Grands Travaux*. In particular, the post-War *Grands Projets Culturel* associated with presidential ‘megalomaniacs’ Pompidou and Mitterand, which have been mirrored in provincial French cities and also francophone Québec (Laperrière and Latouche, 1996). The *Grands Projets* are in many respects a particular French affair although they follow the tradition of the celebration of monarchical glory which saw the first art galleries and museums open to the public. The Louvre for instance was built as a palace for the Royal family (and like in Berlin its picture galleries had already been opened to the public), but within ten days of the French Revolution it was declared a “public museum”. Two hundred years on, the *Centre national d’art et de culture* on the plateau Beauborg was launched shortly after Georges Pompidou’s election, and rechristened the “Centre Pompidou” after his death in 1974: ‘the Pompidou Centre was decided against all planning authorities, whose discourse or speech was “no more institutions” and “no more Paris institutions”. Nevertheless, Pompidou decided to go ahead’ (Girard, 1987 p.10). A similar decision was taken by President Mitterrand over the Opéra Bastille, ‘which related either to an historical tradition or an intuition, or vision, of the monarch, (which) could not by definition be rational’ (ibid.). The French system is said to be a “cultural monarchy”, ‘where he pleases, the minister in office defines his options and takes his decisions in the fashion of a sovereign, according to the principles of “enlightened despotism”’ (Wangermée, 1991). The Louvre was the first of Mitterand’s *Grands Projets* (to match Pompidou), and with the Opéra-Bastille, La Défense, and Bibliothèque nationale, was the most extensive public building programme in Paris since Haussmann’s new city layout of the 1870s.

What many of these *Grands Projets* and other national equivalents also have in common, is an exorbitant cost, often turning out to be overdue and overbudget (some overrunning by over
100%), and a defiance of public planning and choice. Over £3 billion in capital investment has been made in Paris with over 600 provincial Grands Travaux projects costing in excess of a declared £200 million, and by now these totals have been exceeded by ongoing and additional spending, such as the final phase of the Grand Louvre project. Despite their financial burden and uncertain impact, Mitterand used these Grands Projets to ‘rally behind a certain idea of the city’ (1989: 5). In particular to reconcile what he saw as the divorce of architecture from town planning which had given rise to two undesirable urban phenomena: tower blocks and as a reaction to this, “dispersion”. According to Scalbert however, these projects have actually reinforced the centre-periphery divide: ‘whatever their value as architectural set-pieces, they are not the much-vaunted harbingers of a proclaimed urban renaissance. On the contrary, like circus games, they direct attention from the inexorable erosion of Paris and the brutal neglect of its suburbs (1994 p.20). It was hoped that the scale and prestige of the Grands Projets and related infrastructure such as transport would act as exemplars of civic renewal and by example encourage local authorities to emulate them. Nevertheless, by 1985 the so-called decentralised cultural budget had gone down by 50%, and of the national culture budget the Paris flagship projects took 58% leaving the provinces only 31% (compared with 40% in 1981). Grands Projets here as elsewhere were established primarily to enhance national international prestige and in this case Paris's tarnished image as cultural capital of the world (Looseley, 1999: 139), a rationale and formula now replicated in capital cities, and in regional capitals who seek both autonomy from the centre and international recognition in order to compete in global economic activity (Castells, 1989, 1996).

What the Grands Projets have engendered therefore, is a response from regional cities and an international competition which is now played out amongst the major cultural institutions in which power has been invested to both maintain and improve their culture city ranking. This is not limited to their city hosts, but major museums, galleries, performing art houses and their star directors and performers, are now fêté by other cities, as culture becomes footloose, much the same as post-Fordist industry and major league sports teams are tempted by new facilities, corporate sponsorship and investment incentives. Their local and regional identity and loyalty is thus challenged when the historic connection between place and tradition is ultimately broken. Even where regional cultural development has been supported by the centre, in Europe often aided by Regional Development funding (Evans and Ford 2000), and where national cultural policies stress decentralisation and devolution, in France for instance this was ‘accompanied by an inverse tendency to recruit those with specialist talents and abilities from national level, often [the capital] Paris’ (Negrier, 1993 p.142). The development of new art centres as “multiples” or satellites from the capital city has been another mechanism of regional development, particularly in the more centralized states of Europe, whilst maintaining control of collections and resources at the centre – for example the Tate, V&A, Getty and Guggenheim “families” of galleries and loan/touring schemes from national museums and galleries.

Hard Branding the European City of Culture

Whilst the culture city has been imagined and engineered as a representation of city, region and national identity, sometimes consonant across these levels, sometimes in opposition (i.e. seeking regional or ethnic autonomy and decentralisation), the notion of European common cultural heritage has added a supra-national dimension. European Union (EU) cultural policy and development has until recently been subsumed into various regional development and common market (free trade) instruments, however the promotion of European Cities of Culture
and the investment of substantial regional development aid into cultural projects has acted as an effective “Trojan horse” by which structural economic adjustment policies and funding have been diverted into arts-led regeneration and rural development (through crafts, heritage and tourism based projects), generally bypassing national and even city cultural and economic development policy and preferences (Evans and Foord, 2000). 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. The brand in this case is manifested by the EU logo and packaged as the European culture city-break and contemporary Grand Tour (Evans, 1998a).

The bidding process for the renamed European Capital City of Culture parallels the build up and optimism surrounding Olympic, EXPO and major event competitions driven by geopolitics, commercial sponsorship and the high risk associated with aspiring culture cities which lack the scale, image and infrastructure necessary to achieve success. This winners and multiple losers game has created a growing tier of peripheral and regional cities who repeatedly enter such competitions and justify major public investment in new venues and transport in terms of the regenerative benefits of branding that will accrue. Cities such as Manchester and Toronto have staked the regeneration of major sites on such failed bids (Olympics), often despite popular resistance, whilst others have been burdened by the financing and failure associated with undeveloped post-event sites, in some cases long after they occurred (e.g. Montreal 1967 EXPO and 1976 Olympics: an ongoing extra tax on cigarettes; Sheffield 1991 Student Games: closure of local and community sports and leisure facilities, higher entry fees for new facilities – Evans 1998b). As in the Grands Projets in Paris, these cultural flagships have in practice crowded out provision in other parts of the city, and in other regions, and substituted a particular version of culture - the heritage and monumental art museum and performing arts and sports complex, for contemporary cultural activities and facilities which reflect more diverse, contemporary and participatory arts and entertainment activity.

Tuan had also observed 25 years ago that: ‘the civic leaders of the new cities and modern city-states were required to speak with a loud voice. Strident boosterism was the technique to create an impressive image with munificence such as large-scale public works and the subsidization of art, and where symbolic means had to be used to make the large-nation state seem a concrete place’ (1977 p.174). This is no longer confined to the “new” cities, those emerging from economic or political decline, but established regional and capital cities are required a change to their image (e.g. Glasgow’s [S]Miles Better campaign) and their industrial base, in order to prevent further job and population loss arising from structural employment and industrial change. In the case of world and large cities, their status nationally is challenged by regional centres and autonomy and internationally from tourism and convention trade and the projection of “quality of life” - all manifested through a cultural branding which attempts to reconcile leisure, business and community demands and aspirations, in a competitive environment. Key factors to the success of European cities therefore include ‘a high quality environment - built, public open space and urban life’ (Gospodini, 2002 p.60; and see CEC, 1992; Jensen-Butler, 1997). The environmental factor in securing economic prosperity, inward investment and urban (re)settlement, places culture alongside traditional urban infrastructure and amenity such as transport and housing. Myerscough had discovered this in his study of the Economic Importance of the Arts in Great Britain (1988) - that cultural facilities and urban quality were valued highly in employer location preferences. Moreover the cultural industries and the visitor economy not only offer comparative advantage for economic development generally, but present a growing economic sector in their own right. What Zukin refers to the ‘artistic mode of production’ (2001) is now a dominant or sought after post-industrial form, whilst the imperative for aesthetic distinction, style and the designer label led Lash and Urry to
argue that today ‘all industrial production, being design-intensive, is increasingly similar to cultural production’ (1994).

**Pompidou**

One of the first major cultural facilities to be deliberately located in a less prestigious city district has been the Pompidou in Paris. The preference for form and architectural impact over function was evident early on: ‘Although...iconic and provides Paris with a new landmark, it has proved like Wright's Guggenheim or van der Rohe’s Neie gallery in Berlin, less of a success as far as the display of art is concerned’ (Schubert, 2002 p.60). Open plan layout and free standing temporary walls made it almost impossible to show sculpture and painting satisfactorily. Part of problem was due to its huge success with the public - the number of visitors was twice as high as the most optimistic forecasts with the building looking like a busy airport than an art museum. Its high maintenance structure and usage meant that a major overhaul was required after only eight years, with more conventional, solid galleries created (the original high tech features, such as electronic signage, movable floors were dropped from Rogers’ original “Times Square” museum concept). Whilst the Pompidou Centre, re-emerging from a £55m second refurbishment has undoubtedly impacted on the Place Beauborg and is likely to continue fulfilling its symbolic and touristic role, its artistic/functional purpose is less valid since less than 20% of its 25,000 daily visitors actually entered the “art museum” facilities themselves, preferring to just meet, hang-out and walk-through. The Pompidou like so many public art centres and museums serve in large part as culturally legitimated amusement parks and culture cafes (Heinich, 1988). Their proponents and city sponsors argue that this is one step to the democratisation of culture, that the casual visitor may in time be encouraged to enter the institution proper (on re-opening, the Centre's President lowered the gallery entry fee but introduced charges for ‘freeriders’ use of the popular outside escalators). Willis on the other hand sees that: ‘the new temples of High Art...may enjoy some corporate popularity, but as a public spectacle not private passion, as places to be seen rather than to be in. The prestige flagships are in reality no more than aesthetic ironclads heaving against the growing swell of Common Culture. Let's follow the swell’ (1991 p.13). Museums thus represent a particular litmus test of community culture, given their longevity and role in bridging representations of the past with the present, and hope for posterity and the future - the Museum Time Machine (Lumley, 1988). Once a lodestar by which the citizen could navigate the uncertain depths of cultural value, the museum today is, as Giddens writes in The Consequences of Modernity ‘no longer certain of its role, no longer secure in its longevity, no longer isolated from political and economic pressures or from the explosions of images and meanings which are, arguably, transforming our relationships in contemporary society to time, space and reality’ (in Irving, 1998 p.26).

Architectural statement and form over function and the vernacular is therefore a compromise which State and cultural institutions are willing to make, despite the ‘danger that the museum as cultural status symbol can shift the emphasis onto the building and its symbolic meaning to a degree to where what is inside is inside hardly seems to matter at all’ (Schubert, 1998 p.98). This risk is mitigated however not only through the sheer numbers of visitors (especially overseas tourists) and consequent attention these culture houses generate, but by the ancillary spending through bookshops, souvenir stores, restaurants and franchises, which are not a prerequisite of exhibition entry. In fact if the visitors to these larger and themed blockbuster venues all attended the actual shows, their carrying capacity would be breached –
“passing trade” is an economic and operational necessity. Size therefore matters in museum economics and cultural policy (where driven by access and equity objectives). Their retail performance mirrors that of the department store and mall, as is evident in the level of sales in US museums. Remarkably, the key performance indicator of retail sales per square foot is higher in MoMa’s museum stores than in Wal-Mart which in 2002 topped the Forbes 500 most profitable companies.

The globalisation of populated tourist space is a phenomenon common to major cities and urban heritage sites, which Edensor has identified not only as a recent development, but one which can be understood as an expansion of inscribing power through the materialisation of bourgeois ideologies since the nineteenth century. Accordingly, places are now conceived not as nuclei of cultural belonging, foci of attachment or concern, but according to Kearns and Philo as ‘bundles of social and economic opportunity competing against one another in the open market for a share of the capital investment cake’ (1993 p.18). The other process which the cultural flagship brings in its wake, is therefore that of gentrification. When the Pompidou was opened, the Les Halles neighbourhood and its residential profile changed: “Not so much a renewal of the old community but of displacement and wholesale gentrification (Schubert 2002 p.98). This is apparent in the areas undergoing arts and entertainment makeovers and sites of cultural flagships. At the new Tate Modern Gallery in London, receiving over 5 million visitors in its first year (but like the Pompidou Centre, many were non-paying visitors rather than ticket-buying gallery attenders), adjoining artists studios were lost to cultural production as landlords capitalised on the hope value provided by this new attraction, in a rerun of Loft Living documented in New York by Sharon Zukin twenty years ago. Meanwhile up river, the original Tate Britain Gallery has seen its attendances fall dramatically, a possible zero sum game.

Conclusion

This globalisation of edutainment (cf. Disney Corp.) through urban cultural development therefore looks to the transmission of power through a mobile metropolitan elite of museum and gallery directors, signature architects, branded chain stores and footloose performers, all of which require a network of cultural institutions and “houses” through which to circulate their ideas, brand image and to tour collections and product(s) for maximum return in both cultural and economic capital terms. This shift has required a major change in the organisational culture of these institutions, notably in the museum sector where the curator’s role as research-oriented keeper of repository and collection has been superseded by the politically-savvy marketing, education (new markets) and regeneration expert (Evans 1995). This crisis besets old museums unable to reconcile or make this change, such as the British Museum, recently subject to a staff strike in the face of 150 job losses, and more frequent changes of director. The Prado national museum in Madrid ousted its artistic director replacing him with a general in the Spanish military. Some have dispensed with the museum director/curator altogether, such as the Los Angeles County Museum, whilst entire museum services have been under extreme financial and management pressure from governments, such as in Mexico and Italy, countries who rely heavily on their cultural heritage to project national identity and maintain tourism markets (Evans, 1998a). The days when the art museum was the final arbiter of aesthetic quality, if that was ever substantially the case, are over according to Zolberg, and the end to their monofunction and standard form means providing “an elite experience for everyone” (1994). This trend also creates a serial replication of architectural style, blockbuster exhibitions and shows, giving centre stage to a marriage of culture and commerce and providing their sponsors with a high profile in these culture capitals.
This return to the problematic but seemingly irresistible Grand Projet which fuses modernist architecture with a post-modern frame, based on traditional industrial forms - bridges, ferris wheels, funiculars, public utilities, factories and recreated “festival marketplaces” - sees the city as the pre-eminent and strategic site for collective conspicuous consumption and celebration. This confounds the post-Fordist predictions of a dispersal of cultural production and de-urbanisation with these post-industrial city centres now reversing their population decline (e.g. Manchester city centre’s population has increase five fold), and dominating cultural industries employment, to the benefit of the professional-managerial classes. The hard-branding of the culture city is thus being facilitated by the agglomeration of cultural consumption in both spatial and symbolical terms (Evans, 2004; Scott, 2001). Locating new art museums and centres in heritage sites and districts, or physically joining the modern extension with classical and industrial structures themselves, on the one hand seeks to capture the sense of place and symbolism associated with the past and community familiarity (“brand”), however as Ryan observes: ‘the new museum may attach itself physically to the old (part parasite, part life-support system) [but] the contemporary nature of such institutions seems irrevocably to revolve around new photo opportunities, so-called Star Architecture and magnified scenarios for shopping’ (2000: p.90).

The hard branding of the culture city therefore looks to the power and practices of commercial branding and its packaged entertainment. By so doing they benefit from the democratisation associated with leisure shopping (and capture, literally, these same shoppers) and the urban consumption experience. Jackson in particular suggests that the perjorative public-private dialectic may be unhelpful, even patronising and that: ‘notions of consumer citizenship need to be carefully situated in and socially differentiated...Rather than assuming that commodification and privatisation are inherently undemocratic and reactionary social processes’ (1998: 188). Balibrea on the other hand, writing from the exemplar culture capital Barcelona (Monclus 2003) still sees in this situation the erosion of the ‘public’ where ‘the redefinition of the space occupied by culture...is more and more radically commodified and dependent on private producers deciding who has access to their - also private - spaces of consumption’ (2001 p.195). Barcelona’s urban challenge, with further expansion planned - the Diagonal Mar and Poblanou model creative district (Gdaniec 1000) - may also signal the end to its heyday, as residents look to the suburbs to escape from the intense inner urban pressures and onward march of gentrification.

New cultural facilities also suffer the fate of brand decay and the high maintenance required to retain market share. Since substantial public resources are required, sums and levels of risk which few private investors would countenance, their opportunity cost is also high. High because of the scale and scope which political and cultural proponents require in order to assuage resistance to such mega-projects. In previous eras such resistance was muted or minimal (e.g. World Fairs, public museums). As trust in “public man” has fallen (Sennett, 1986), and urban society is no longer deferential or mono-cultural, popularity and impact measured in terms of visitor numbers is crucial in this cost-benefit calculation. The cost which is becoming increasingly evident and common, irrespective of their location or culture, is borne in terms of cultural diversity and production (versus consumption and mediation); in community cultural activity and amenity; and by those who do not have a stake in the gentrification processes which attach to these emerging cultural quarters. ‘What is being branded in these cities is not just the immediate institution, or anything so arcane as a collection, but the city itself. The museum becomes an icon and magnet for post-industrial urbanity’ (Ryan, 2000 p.91).
References


