"A Special Kind of City Knowledge": Innovative Clusters, Tacit Knowledge and the 'Creative City'.

Justin O'Connor

School of Performance and Cultural Industries, University of Leeds

Abstract

**That the cultural industries are highly networked and operate in clusters is now well established. The notion of cluster is linked to the idea of place-based advantage with cultural industries gaining competitive advantage from mobilising the resources of places to compete in global markets.
'Place' in the cultural industries is frequently taken to be the city where city is seen as the key resource for cultural industry clusters and a primary point of intervention for cultural industry policy in creative city policy making. In this article I want to look at some of the implications of these moves for both academic research and policy discussion. The reasons for this emphasis on policy relates to some large questions of urban governance and cultural politics surrounding the proactive government of clusters which are raised by recent work on the cultural industries, notably by Alan Scott.**

The Symbolic Economy of Cities

The notion of the localised 'cluster' is now well established in academic and policy fields (Porter, 1998a; 1998b; 2000; Storper, 1997). It has been used to understand how particular places manage to retain competitive advantage in a globalising world – and indeed how they might aspire to a stronger position within this. Much of the literature on cultural industries[1] coming from an economic geographic perspective has used the concept of 'clusters' - along with the related ones of 'industrial district' and 'innovative milieu' - as a key concept in coming to terms with this emergent sector (Pratt, 1997; 2000;2002; O'Connor 1999: 2002; DCMS 2001).

Alan Scott's work is particularly significant here as it represents one of the most cogent and influential statements about the centrality of cultural industries for cities. For Scott (2001), 'commodified cultural production' is characterised by high levels of human input; clusters of small companies operating on a project basis; dense transactional flows of information, goods and services; benefits from economies of scale in skills sourcing and know-how; and complex divisions of labour (driven especially by new ICT developments) tying people to places: 'Clusters like these are

replete…with agglomeration economies (i.e. increasing return effects), and agglomeration economies in turn give rise to…potent competitive advantages.' (Scott, 2001:3).

In cultural industry literature the cluster and its attributes tend to be mapped onto the city. All the evidence indicates that the great majority of companies are firmly located in metropolitan centres and are likely to remain so (Pratt, 1997; O'Connor, 1999; Scott, 2000). 'Place makes a difference' here means 'cities still matter'. Indeed, much of the cultural industry research and policy agenda in the last twenty years has been driven at the level of the city (O'Connor, 2004). There are certainly other spatial scales having profound impact on the sector (not least in the sphere of legislation and regulation), but it is clear that the city has become a key spatial level for policy intervention. More so than other sectors, the cultural industries are seen to draw vital resources from city life and from city cultures. The city – and most often those with a compact metropolitan core – emerges as the effective horizon of place for the cultural industries. However complex it might be to theorise, cultural industries, in the main, *inhabit* the city.

Agglomeration effects are certainly crucial to this linkage of cluster and city, but cities are seen to add something more than geographical proximity in their 'untraded externalities' and networks of collaboration and trust etc. Central to the debate on clusters is that the competitive advantage to be gained from learning and innovation is to be found in tacit, locally embedded skills and know-how. This emphasis on the *genius loci* has found great resonance in cultural industries research. The cultural industries are seen to be highly sensitive to embedded cultural knowledge whose mobilisation depends on being 'inside' a place. Hence the intimate links to the image, identity and cultural capital in particular cities.

> They thrive on easy access to local, tacit know-how – a style, a look, a sound – which is not accessible globally. Thus the cultural industries based on local know-how and skills show how cities can negotiate a new accommodation with the global market, in which cultural producers sell into much larger markets but rely on a distinctive and defensible local base. (Leadbeater and Oakley, 1999:14)

Scott, reflecting a growing consensus, has made a strong case for the connection of the cultural industries to the city. He is clear that, ultimately, the knowledge effects of the city provide the key factors in their competitiveness. These effects refer both to city life *per se* as well as the qualities of particular cities. Scott points to the speed and complexity of city life as central to innovation: 'the rapid, ever-changing circulation of information through the social and economic networks of the city, and the intensity and variety of human contact' which ensure that there is an 'ever present tendency to destabilisation of prevailing norms and practices and a certain propensity for new insights and new ways of proceeding to arise' (Scott, 2001:3). On the other hand there is a persistence of tradition in that cities represent 'collectivities of human activity and interest that continually create streams of public goods – both as a matter of conscious policy and as unintended outcomes of social and economic interaction – that sustain the workings of the creative field.' These are informal in the traditions and conventions that 'ordinarily inhere in any community of workers', in the 'socialization dynamics which ensure that local knowledge is preserved and

transmitted from one generation to the next'(i.e. family, social groups, 'the urban community at large'); and in the formal physical and institutional infrastructures (such as schools, colleges, innovation centres etc.) (Scott, 2001:3)

For Scott the 'entire local system of production, employment and social life makes up a geographically structured creative field that under appropriate conditions acts as a fountainhead of learning and innovation effects'. The pinnacle of such a creative field is represented by Soja's (Soja, 2000) notion of Synekism which Scott represents as: 'the increment above the simple sum of the parts which holds any urban-industrial cluster together as a geographic cluster, whilst enabling the products of the most successful clusters to achieve mastery of national and international markets'. (Scott, 2001:7)

The notion of clusters has thus profound implications for local policy making; and this is more so when, as with the cultural industries, it is mapped directly onto the city. Scott – in an argument with Adorno and Jameson to which we shall return – makes the case for the possibility of diverse centres of global production. The logic of contemporary commodified production and consumption is such that global markets are very much niche markets. They are as volatile as the opportunities they open up. Local production sites, drawing on their own distinct cultural resources can identify and exploit these niches. Such possibilities are enhanced by new information and communication technologies which open up distributional economies of scale to these localities. But this also calls for local policy intervention to ensure competitive advantage:

> Their survival can be further assured where policy makers at production locals are able to work out effective systems for the provision of co-ordination and steering services directed to the amplification of these agglomeration economies. (Scott, 2001:10)

This certainly points us to those local economic development and business support strategies which have been a central element in the spread of the cultural industry agenda, and which we will discuss below. But there is more to it that this. The intimate mapping of city and cluster means that the flow is not unidirectional; the cultural industries work symbiotically with the city. Cultural production and consumption transform the landscape of the city through its 'shopping malls, restaurants and cafés, clubs, theatres, galleries, boutiques'. This 'revitalisation of the symbolic content' of cities draws in city governments, who link these transformations with 'ambitious public efforts of urban rehabilitation in the attempt to enhance local prestige, increase property values and attract new investments and jobs'.

> When the landscape develops in this manner, whether as a result of public or private initiative, significant portions of the city (though rarely, if ever, all portions) start to function as an ecology of commodified symbolic cultural production and consumption… in which, in contrast to the classic industrial metropolis, the functions of leisure and work seem to be converging in some sort of (historically specific) social equilibrium. (Scott, 2001:7)

This urban ecology also involves 'those meanings that adhere to the urban landscape' and which are used as factors in the production of cultural commodities; these

meanings are re-assimilated into the 'urban landscape of the producing centre', acting as 'a source of inputs to new rounds of cultural production and commercialisation', and 'a further enrichment of the urban landscape' (Scott, 2001:7). While a full confrontation of issues arising from this discussion is not possible here there are some issues that can be considered in more detail.

Tacit and Formal Knowledge in the Cluster Debate

The notion of cluster involves the idea of tacit as opposed to formal, codified knowledge. Tacit knowledge is embedded locally - you have to be inside it to know it. Formal knowledge is codified and thus is not tied to place or to a particular cluster – it is therefore transferable. Thus local, endogenous factors are counter posed to more global, exogenous factors to explain the success, to use the now classic example, of industrial districts such as northern Italy and the Ruhr. This aspect of the cluster argument has been subject of considerable debate, only some of which can be addressed here.

The cultural industry sector more than any other has been associated with intuitive practice, situated learning-by-doing, non-transferable skills. It thrives in networks which allow access to the range of local cultural capacities (Crewe and Beaverstock, 1998; O'Connor, 1999;Raffo et al, 2000a). Cultural producers are 'inside' the circuit of knowledge because they are embedded in local cultures and networks. This is what makes cultural industry places particularly 'sticky'. Here innovation comes from the creative consumption of global signs – 'a style, a look, a sound'. These signs are plugged into global circuits the local culture transforms these into something unique and thus able to be re-sent out into the world. Crucially this local culture is that of the city, the vibrant metropolis. This is the crucible where innovative consumption meets ear-to-the-ground production; where the ideas, skills, rivalry, part-time jobs, support networks and distribution outlets of the 'innovative milieu', the 'art world', the 'creative field', come together.

Questions emerging from the cluster and innovation debate challenge this picture somewhat. There is no denying this locally fixed 'creative field' and its ability to transform its global inputs of signs, images and sounds. Rather the question is whether the full range of knowledge is necessary to do this. The ability to transform an idea and turn it into a commercial product has evolved from 'learning by doing' (Raffo et al, 2000b) into a process that demands increasing inputs of formal knowledge. These things can be learned, codified and transferred. Whilst creative ideas might spring up from many places (and be linked to local 'atmosphere'), increasingly the ability to exploit these--to turn them into viable cultural commodities--is to be found in only a few key urban clusters and in large global corporations.

The mixing of formal, codified knowledge with the local and tacit is underscored by recent research into innovative cities and regions. Simmie (2003; 2004) argues that innovation is not only produced by endogenous capacity. Indeed the most innovative firms are the ones that trade beyond the region. And it is precisely these exogenous clients who provide the main source of and spur to learning for the company. In turn, this learning produces greater trading effects. Thus firms that have global clients are also the ones most engaged in sourcing formal knowledge – from publications, and

from universities and research institutions which are themselves mostly non-local. That is, innovative regions tend to be globally trading regions which incorporate formal learning as central to their operations. More recently, this work has further suggested limits to clustering:

> Contrary to the local clustering hypothesis, market-leading innovative firms seem to be more a part of an internationally distributed system of innovation….The knowledge and information they employ in innovation are concentrated within the firms themselves or gathered from non-spatial sources. (Simmie, 2004: 1111)

Simmie (2004:1111) concludes that parts of this international innovation system are concentrated (due to agglomeration effects) in a limited number of city-regions and that 'proponents of clustering dynamics need to be able to explain the relative significance of both concentration and international linkages'. Within cultural industry clusters the mix of formal and tacit, urban agglomeration and internationally distributed factors has hardly been broached by research, and still less by local cultural industry development agencies. But the evidence of increasing concentration of activity in a smaller number of urban centres suggests that a growing emphasis on formal knowledge favours those clusters with already functioning global trade networks and who have access to networks of knowledge and expertise. It also benefits large, global corporation and their subsidiaries.

Other economic geographers have argued that an over emphasis on tacit, locally embedded knowledge can ignore the way in which local traditions can have damaging conservative effects. Here incremental learning based on tacit knowledge can fail to respond adequately to rapid global shifts. Traditional local networks can also be exclusionary, locking firms into fixed practices and trading relations, penalising those who do not confirm and thus discouraging innovation. This points to the wider 'learning culture' of the cluster – not just the mix of tacit and formal but how learning itself is structured.

Amin and Cohendet (1999) show how local organisational culture plays a key role in innovation. Certain clusters continually assess fundamental goals rather than incrementally responding to external changes. They contrast 'procedural rationality' to 'reflexive rationality. Procedural rationality is suitable for 'a volatile environment', is based on 'cognitive and behavioural adjustments to the external environment by economic agents' and favours the 'incremental adjustment and adaptation to what is perceived to be an environment that cannot be transformed'. By contrast 'reflexive rationality' involves 'strategic and goal monitoring cognition and behaviour on the part of economic agents'. It assumes the environment 'from markets to technologies' can be activity shaped. It is 'inside' this external environment and 'therefore able to shape it'. To separate codified and tacit knowledge is an error:

> it could be argued that the key to success in complex environments…might lie with those management cultures which encourage a variety and mixture of competencies, in order to secure adaptability of the widest possible sort. (Amin and Cohendet, 1999: 93)

Significantly the second half of this article concentrates on how global corporations manage the creative and innovative – and more locally concentrated - dimensions of its activities alongside its routine, codified – and more mobile and distributed - aspects. The question of changing knowledge strategies or formations is something we need to look at in more detail.

'Rationalising the Irrational'

The relationship between cultural creation and the exploitation of the commodity has been central to debates around the cultural industries since Adorno coined the term (Adorno, 1991). For him the demands of the commodity form determined cultural content. This view has been routinely criticised. Rather than being an 'industry' on the Fordist line, as Adorno had it, the cultural sector instead relies on a scattered, fragmented, fluid network of creative producers. A key plank of the connection between the cultural industries and the local is precisely the small scale, heterogeneous nature of this creative innovation. It is at the local level that the creative work gets done, and it is here that insiders' knowledge and immersion in the local scene produces the vital innovations and mutations. Jonathon Raban, writing in 1974, identified a (then) new urban industrial process which he called a 'pure bedsitter-entrepreneurialism'which 'supplies a demand for commodities whose sole feature is their expressiveness of taste'. He continued:

> The stylistic entrepreneurs who make their living out of this curious trade go, along with gangsters and dandies, into the bracket of people possessed of a special kind of city knowledge. (Raban, 1974: 102).

It was this 'special kind of city knowledge' which would make real cultural innovation impervious to the big dinosaurs of the corporate world. This was also one of the key messages of Lash and Urry's (1994) highly influential *Economies of Signs and Space*. The cultural industries were post-fordist *avant la lettre*. Rather than being a marginal activity they were the template that other industries would follow into a new regime of flexible accumulation.

The volatility and highly niched nature of the new post-fordist consumer markets meant that a new organisational flexibility was needed. This was nowhere more so than in the most volatile of commodities, those whose function is 'expressiveness of taste'. The cultural industries are a risky business. Often in the face of current trends, they gamble on the future cultural value of a product. These markets are difficult to predict, they demand nibble-footedness, the ability to get in and out very quickly (O'Connor, 2000). This leads to a number of consequences. First, an emphasis on the intuitive, on the emotional investment in the creative field, on an aesthetic reflexivity sustained by a fragmented and scattered cluster of small scale producers thriving on the global signs circulating and mutating in the space of the city. Secondly, the larger companies were content to let this cluster take the initial risks, do the R&D, and move in when the cultural product seemed ready for a wider market. The precise dynamics of this differed between product genre – a film is much more highly capitalised than a tee-shirt, a record, a book, a graphic design etc. – but the general shift has been towards a proliferation of smaller companies and free-lancers at the creative end of the production chain (Hesmondhalgh, 2002). And, as we have tried to show, the

rationale for the clustering of these in the city is not just that of agglomeration but of that 'special kind of city knowledge' which will lead to innovation.

One of the central problems in this sector has been how to deal with risk (Raffo et al, 2000a). For the smaller companies this involves the balancing of creativity and business rationality, sometimes within one person, sometimes within the company, but most of the time with real tension. This is also the case with the larger companies. Dealing with the volatility of creative clusters, managing the inherent risk of a cultural product within their own financial and corporate strategies – all these have posed real problems for these big corporations. As the literature shows, they are by no means able to set the agenda for the consumption of cultural product as Adorno suggested. Rather the mechanisms for selecting product, for deciding priority of promotion, etc. are extremely complex and volatile. Simon Frith once described this process as trying to 'rationalise the irrational', where, using the music industry as example, both the supply side (musicians) and demand side (consumers) are irrational: 'record companies, which make their money from bringing supply and demand into line, are thus organised around the bureaucratic organisation of chaos' (Frith, 2001: 33) This was part of a wider sense that the demands and conditions of creation presented the cumbersome 'corporates' with a near impossible task: the day of the independent had arrived. Clusters would now thrive at local level and this was central to the condition of innovative cultural production. Indeed, there was a further sense that the inevitable lag between creation and innovation, and the exploitation by the larger corporations meant that a space was opened up for localised, low capitalised cultural goods. In that lag many their money and their mark.

This logic has been one of the key premises of city based cultural industry strategies; that space for local clusters has been opened up by this shift to post-fordist, flexible specialisation. This was central to the Greater London Council cultural strategy, though this latter was less naïve and more political in its intent than most subsequent strategies (O'Connor 2004). The employment statistics indeed show the growth in local cultural industry employment, and a proliferation of cultural SMEs and freelancers. They can often make up a fairly significant proportion of local employment, 4% - 9% depending on location and definition (Pratt, 1997; O'Connor, 1999). But, as hinted in the last section, we need to be more critical of this benign narrative.

A key component of that narrative is that the intuitive, 'irrational' nature of the skills involved protects these local clusters—indeed they are crucial to the whole production chain. However, it could be equally argued that 'the suits', derided for their lack of intuitive, emotional understanding of cultural creation, have long been operating this way too. The attempt to annex heroic modernity to business practice goes back (in the 20th century at least) to Schumpeter. But the process whereby the specific knowledge skills of the artists - and increasingly the avant-garde artist - are claimed for business practice starts in earnest in the 1970s. Against a wider background of an 'expressive revolution' (Martin, 1981), whereby the marginal values of a cultural avant-garde move to the mainstream, management literature also began to adopt notions of 'risk', 'intuition', 'emotion', 'permanent revolution', 'symbolic knowledge' etc. which had previously been anathema to the rational world of business discourse. The increasing supremacy of 'creativity' as a central value in one's personal and working life, almost a contemporary sign of grace, points in the same direction. Paul Du Gay and others

have shown how the emotional, the intuitive, the creative have been incorporated by companies into their operations as part of a new mode of performativity linked to new forms of the exploitation and control of the workforce (Du Gay, 1996; Heelas, 2002) . McRobbie has suggested something similar for free-lancers in the fashion and design sector (McRobbie,1998; 1999)

Management gurus such as Kevin Kelly (1999) take the mode of action of the modernist artist-hero to the furthest extremes. Here we see the attempt to deal with a chaotic world by learning to live with chaos, to make it work for you, to systematically challenge all fixed rules and conventions - all of which brings back the benefits of higher rates of economic growth. The privileged mode of knowledge here is as much intuitive and emotional as rational. In many respects it recalls Featherstone's (1991) 'controlled de-control of the emotions', this time not linked to clearly circumscribed hedonism but to the gaining of new knowledge.

Don Delillo's *Cosmopolis* (2003) can help us here. A billionaire drives across Manhattan to his (and his company's) death. His mode of operation is not rational analysis – he has people to do this – but to intuit patterns. These are patterns of biology, of physics and, most significantly, patterns of the international money markets (see also Johnson 2001). Looking at multi-screened presentation of global exchange rates he searches for the pattern, the meaning, the deeper structures. In William Gibson's *Pattern Recognition* (2003) Cayce Pollard, the heroine is a trend spotter, her job to 'hunt "cool"'. She wanders through the great market places of the world's cities – Roppongi, Shinjuku, Camden Town – to pick up the first emergence of a new trend or fashion. This is done by total physical immersion into not only the city but also into the swirling signifiers. She waits for a pattern to emerge. Once identified she then (and this is the economic moment) 'points a commodifier at it'.

These are fictional accounts – but the way in which intuitive and aesthetic reflexivity is being built into the formal structures of the larger organisations is clear to see. In fashion, as many independents complain, the gap between innovation and mainstream is now shrinking to zero. In music the A&R scout structures are such that new bands become big names in (from the point of view of an earlier era) an inkling. Clusters are now linked in a highly efficient manner to the larger global companies whose management of the process of risk, innovation, R&D is increasingly sophisticated. In short, these companies have used reflexive rationality to incorporate tacit cultural knowledge, to manage it, to make it work more efficiently.

This does not mean that small companies or localised clusters are giving way to global corporations. Rather it suggests that these companies are increasingly managing the relations between themselves and creative innovation in new ways - ways that incorporate intuitive knowledge, tacit local knowledge within overarching schemas of formal knowledge systems. As such the current emphasis on 'creativity' as a key factor in the competitiveness of the local cultural cluster (and, as we shall see, the city write large) is something of a red herring. Successful clusters are increasingly predicated not on 'creativity' but on the access to a range of formal knowledges – about global markets, about the larger companies, about clients, about distribution etc. Clusters and the firms of which they consist can be seen to have emergent working practices which involve both 'procedural' and 'reflexive' rationality. The sources of this knowledge can be both indigenous and exogenous in

the sense of coming from contact with clients, with global companies, and with other clusters. Indeed, the literature on innovation points to the need to bring in external knowledge, to mix formal and tacit in ways that are currently little understood within local cultural industries strategies. These strategies and the agencies set up to implement them are increasingly widespread; but there is very rarely the knowledge or the structures to deliver the required mix and the required level of expertise. Despite the emphasis on developing local 'creativity' cultural industries appear to be gravitating towards the larger urban centres, because that is where the skills and the knowledge reside.

Here we can point to another aspect of the cluster debate concerned with their internal composition. The classic 'industrial district' where clusters of small firms transform inputs into a unique and competitive output is only one particular model. Markussen (1996), for example, identifies two others. First, there is the 'hub-and-spoke' district where one or two large firms act as a hub for a cluster of other smaller firms. Second, there is the satellite platform district, made up of clusters of branch offices with little local decision making. The details need not concern us here – the key point is the precise make-up of the cluster needs to be known if we are to understand what actually happens within it. The mix of local and global, large and small, command, innovation and routine functions – all have a profound effect on the potential for growth and sustainability and the scope for local initiative and intervention.

Such questions – suitably adapted – can be asked of any cultural industry clusters. Turok (2003), for example, shows how the Scottish television and film industries, clustered in Glasgow, simply lack some key components to make them competitive beyond their immediate locality. The most successful businesses in the cluster operate trans-regionally (i.e. they have offices in London) and have no overwhelming need to be located in Glasgow. Hesmondhalgh (1999), tackling the issues of post-fordism and 'independents' in the music industry, argued persuasively that tendencies in the global music business meant that the potential for local music industries outside London – in the sense of a viable industry structure not music making – were not good and getting worse. In short, locally embedded tacit knowledge or 'creativity' may no longer be good enough, even in as sensitive a case as culture, because key components of the industry are missing and are unlikely to be found so easily.

For local cultural industry strategies this makes the task much more difficult. It is not simply about promoting 'creativity' or even creative business skills; they have to be about both promoting and strengthening networks and finding ways to link these networks with more national and international circuits of trading and expert knowledge. Some of the larger agencies are beginning to identify this and implement strategies in a much more sophisticated way. The Creative Industries Development Service in Manchester is a good example of this in its move away from business support to network development. But economic development strategies of the level required are hard to come by for many industrial sectors, let alone the cultural.

The consequences of the Thatcher government's dismantling of 'corporatism' means than there are very few tools available for systematic and sustained local sectoral development strategies in the UK. This is even more pointed when it comes to the cultural industries, which are still seen as relatively peripheral to the core systems of economic development. However, one clear point of leverage for the promotion of the

sector does exist in the urbanistic strategies of the local city. Here, the close connection of cultural industries to the city make for the potential of more symbiotic development – where they act as both input and output in the wider regeneration of the city. This brings us back to the question of the city itself as a factor of innovation and competitiveness.

The Creative City

The 'creative field' as outlined by Scott and others makes many of the issues raised by the innovative cluster debate much more complex. Along side the embedded physical and institutional infrastructure of the city there are informal, tacit local traditions and practices, and the intensity of city life itself. This presents a formidable challenge to the theorising of just what it is that gives a particular city an advantage. It also presents challenges of equal intractability to policy makers: how are such factors to be identified and mobilised around a cultural industries strategy? This is even trickier when it becomes clear the cultural industries are deeply implicated in a general urbanistic strategy as both input and output where they are sometimes beneficiaries and sometimes contributors to the wider vibrancy of the city. And we must add to this the notion that the local agents of governance involved in such strategic endeavours – let us say those attempting to use 'reflexive rationality' on the city as such – may themselves be enabled or constrained by those framing traditions and structures which underpin the propensities, the resources of potential upon which the local cultural industry sector itself draws. In current terminology – in order to promote the 'creative industries' the city itself (its agencies of governance but drawing on a wider local culture) has to be a 'creative city'.

Identifying the springs of this creativity has proved easier to do retrospectively. In *Cities and Civilisation* (1998*)* Peter Hall struggles in over 1,000 pages to come up with answers as to why certain cities should emerge as centres of innovation at any particular time. But in a more recent article (2000), Hall tentatively concludes that creative milieux do have certain common features. These cities are chaotic, often structurally unstable, many sided entities. They are cities undergoing social and economic transformation. They are wealthy usually but with an abundance of creative talent drawn from social outsiders, often from migrant currents (another common factor), needing, like the cities themselves, to react against something, 'kick over the traces'. These creative cities were 'societies troubled about themselves'; they were in a state of tension, of 'transition forward to new and unexplored modes of organisation… societies in the throes of a transformation in social relationships, in values and in views about the world'. Hall concludes that creative cities and creative milieux 'are places of great social and intellectual turbulence: not comfortable places at all' (Hall, 2000:646).

Hall seems to be suggesting here that great innovative milieux cannot be planned or predicted – unless one had the ability to mould global historical forces on a huge scale. The creativity of a city's golden age is like grace – it comes unbidden and leaves at will. But Hall's reflections on these white hot outbursts are tacked onto a policy discussion pitched at a much more mundane level. Whereas he talks of moments of turbulence, of transition, of the disappearance of certainty, the cultural industry discourse to which he points is concerned to promote a creative milieu on a regularised, predictable and controllable basis. Those factors such as the presence of

the socially marginal, migration, turbulence, tension and transgression – these are to be contained within an overarching strategy for the production of cultural commodities (as Florida (2002) makes abundantly clear). Whilst all of these 'golden ages' – love it or hate it as they might - have been caught up in commodity production (see also Jardine, 1996) none of these outbursts were celebrated and promoted because of their economic contribution to the city, or separated from other considerations of taste, and of social and spiritual values. Until now.

The coming together of culture and economics, the benign narrative of so much literature on the creative city, might thus appear from this perspective more like Jameson's final annexation of the sphere of culture by capitalism (Jameson, 1992). We shall return to this briefly at the end. But in the first instance Hall's conclusions pose problems for policy intervention. How, then, do you actually produce a creative city?

This issue, previously the concern of a few cultural historians, has now become of pressing concern for city governments everywhere. The economic shifts in city economics to which Scott points means that for many cities, if you are not creative you are in trouble (see also Florida, 2002). But how are these assets to be identified and how are they to be mobilised? The adaptation of existing economic development tools is one thing; but in the end a city needs to adopt a reflexive approach to the city as a whole, and which should include its own understanding and techniques of governance. This has been the approach taken by one of the UK's most long standing and respected cultural consultancies, Commedia.

The formative period for Commedia was during the debates around the work of the Greater London Council before it was abolished in 1986. I don't propose to discuss this in any detail (Bianchini, 1987; Garnham, 1996; McGuigan, 1996), just to state that their cultural industries strategy involved a cultural politics as well as an economic strategy. It was their desire to promote a local cultural industry sector - small scale, 'independent' – in opposition to 'global' and large corporations--that led them to use the language of economic development in the context of non-subsidised cultural production policy. They used concepts such as 'sector' and tools such as 'value-chain analysis' to get a grip on the different stages and factors involved in this complex field of commercial and non-subsidised cultural production. These techniques became more widespread and more sophisticated over the ensuing twenty years. Commedia certainly were at the forefront of developing these as a tool for local policy makers. Beginning with a technique of mapping and auditing the different sub-sectors in terms of origination, production, distribution and consumption they elaborated a 'toolkit' for dealing with urban clusters as a whole. A five stage model for assessing the strength of a local city involved the whole cultural infrastructure (galleries, theatres, etc. but also art schools and places of socialisation) as well as simply the cultural industries *per se* – the scale moving from disparate and fragmented beginnings to a fully fledged global city 'synekism' (O'Connor, 1999). The cultural industries in this model were, as Scott argued, fully implicated as input and output in the wider urbanistic structures. The model was given further refinement as a 'cycle of creativity' which included much wider elements of local 'creativity' feeding in as a self-reinforcing factor of cultural industry sector growth.

The notion of toolkit of course, pointed to the possibilities of different cities actually pursuing a coherent policy to move up the scale. This is not the place to analyse the particular results of this, suffice to say that one clear barrier to this process – apart from the fact that many other cities were also trying to do this and the established leaders fiercely defended their positions – was the understanding and flexibility of the city government itself. The publication of *The Creative City* (Landry and Bianchini, 1995) pamphlet and then the book (Landry, 2000) pointed to an increasingly crucial dimension of the process – the need for a 'creative city', one able to apply reflexive rationality to the CI sector, to the surrounding urban context, and to its own process of thinking and policy implementation itself. The systematic application of learning to learning itself would become the hallmark of the successful 21st century city.

The question then is, as we indicated above, what resources of the city allow such learning? Is this tacit, embedded, or can it be learned (for example, off Commedia)? The importance of the special, unique resources of cities is underlined by most cultural policy and consultancy literature – cities must find their own way just as their cultural industry sector must find its unique niche in the global market. In this sense cities need to mobilise not just a series of policy tools, but a set of understandings, a vision of the future; and this vision needs to include some account, some narrative of how this future is related to the past, to traditions, to its *genius loci*. If the two run together, then you get the beginnings of a creative city.

We could take here Manchester, UK, as an example of how this might work. As the world's first industrial city it was one of the first to de-industrialise in the 1970s and 80s. In the last twenty years it has been seen to take the lead in a renaissance of the UK's provincial industrial cities. The centre of the city perfectly exemplifies Scott's notion of a symbolic landscape – bars, restaurants, clubs, concert hall, theatres, museums and the UK's earliest and largest city centre accommodation boom (Carter, 2004). And culture is acknowledged as being at the heart of this transformation. An emerging consensus across the city explains this, not simply in terms of particular buildings or initiatives, however important these might be, but in terms of a wider cultural capacity rooted firmly in the city itself.

This notion of a wider cultural capacity was given very clear formulation in a book that was, in most others respects, very critical of the transformations at work in the city. In Taylor et al's *A Tale of Two Cities* (1996) the authors try to explain why Manchester was able to deal with de-industrialisation and the new global challenges in a way Sheffield – a similarly affected industrial city – was not. Taylor et al use Raymond Williams' notion of 'structure of feeling' – 'that the definitive cultural character of any one social formation… could best be grasped in the examination of the routine and taken for granted "social practices" that characterised that social formation' (Taylor et al, 1996: 5). Adapting John Urry's work on local class formations they argue that the 'lost world' of heavy manufacturing, the 'shared social memory' of Manchester and Sheffield still persists in contemporary culture, deeply marking everyday practice and feeling in the cities. However, whereas Sheffield, with its single industry monoculture has failed to deal with the challenges of global transformation, Manchester has the 'shared social memory' to allow it to cope better. The history of 'shock city' and the booms and busts of the 19th and early 20th century mean that Manchester has developed a hardy resilience and an expectation of dynamic change: 'local "Manc" culture [is] relatively attuned to the fast-changing boom and

slump of the capitalist business cycle' (Taylor et al, 1996:32). Manchester has long been associated with the promise of a new age of industrial and commercial development. Mancunian culture is based on this historical 'self-confident and even brash form of classless populism, oriented to the pursuit of wealth and personal success through commercial enterprise and cunning' (Taylor et al, 1996: 53):

> It is this restless flux of the utopias of organised labour and the utopian dreams of urban fortunes, won through free trade and enterprise, that defines the parameters of local mancunian "structure of feeling" – a culture that sees itself as connected up to a larger world and a larger set of possibilities, rather than simply an industrial city caught within a narrow labour metaphysic. (Taylor et al, 1996: 59)

In a series of articles and most recently a book, *City Of Revolution* (2002), Jamie Peck and others have attempted to detail this myth of the entrepreneurial city with which Manchester bedecks itself. Their critique that this 'entrepreneurialism' only pertains to competition for government money and lacks real long term impact has some bite. They also strongly relate this entrepreneurial discourse to that of neo-liberalism, seeing it as a convenient fig-leaf for its abandonment of its radical policies of the early 1980s before Thatcher's third election victory. What Taylor picks up on but they ignore is that this narrative mobilised by the city is not simply political rhetoric – it does resonate with a wider culture in the city.

> The dominant image of the Mancunian of the 1990s, of the street-wise "scally" (scallywag) doing business across the world or profiting from local initiatives in the entertainment business (the pop groups of the 1980s "Madchester" or the Olympic bid in 1992), we would argue is no overnight invention. (Taylor et al, 1996: 53-4)

Taylor's account manages to flesh out the claims for the mobilisation of local culture as an indigenous factor in the regeneration and emergence of a 'creative city'. Whatever theoretical legs 'structure of feeling' might have - and this is open to some questioning (Hill and O'Connor, 1996) - there is little doubt that the agents and networks of governance in Manchester, faced with painful economic recession, were able to draw on a larger set of ambitions than those available in Sheffield and present them as long-standing traditions providing a resource for facing the future. They were able to mobilise a strong narrative of energetic entrepreneurialism that managed to resonate with wider processes of social and economic change. Both Taylor and Peck et al point to the 'masculine' nature of this narrative – Manchester Men' (Tickell and Peck, 1996) - but what neither properly explore is how this narrative was organised around the notion of 'culture'. Culture was out of place in the industrial city – despite a long tradition of cultural innovation this had little efficacy by the 1970s - yet it emerges centre stage in the late 1980s and 1990s. It is a keystone in the powerful orthodox narrative which the city manages to get across in print and broadcast media – that Manchester is the second cultural city in England, that its cultural vibrancy, its creativity and 'attitude' are firmly rooted in a tradition of invention, innovation and energy stretching back to its 19th century heyday (*Observer*, 2004; *Guardian*, 2004) Here the 'revitalisation of the symbolic content' of the urban landscape, as Scott has it, works symbiotically with the transmutation of the landscape of its urban imaginary.

A number of points can be made in respect of this example. The process whereby Manchester learned the language and techniques of culture-led regeneration involved some fairly standard and derivative knowledge sources. The flagship urban regeneration packages of the late 1980s and early 1990s were most imported from North America by the Central Manchester Development Corporation (CMDC), a central government appointed quango set up precisely to circumvent the debilitating influence of local (Labour) government culture and practice (O'Connor and Wynne, 1996; Peck and Ward, 2002). The Olympic bid, seen as the crucial initiative in creating a new public-private elite consensus in the city, came from the example of Barcelona (as did some bad public art initiatives), and was driven by a fairly standard 'growth coalition' of politicians and property interests. The notion of 'culture' at this stage was restricted to the standard flag-ship projects which mark most post-industrial cities in Europe, and by no means distinguish Manchester from these.

What gave the Manchester regeneration narrative more resonance was in effect a 'windfall gain' from the explosion of popular culture in the city, which occupied (with one or two exceptions) a completely different symbolic, physical and economic space in the city from that which concerned the city government (O'Connor and Wynne, 1996; 1998; Savage, 1992; Bracewell, 1998; 2002; Haslam, 1999). Very much fulfilling Hall's notion of a city troubled by transition to something new, the Manchester music and fashion scenes, along with the less well known visual and performing arts, represented the sort of unpredictable and effervescent upsurge of creative innovation that marked many a city's golden age. It was a re-invention of place and identity which gave content to the rather empty narratives of regeneration coming from the agencies of governance. What did mark out Manchester in the later 1990s was the way in which these latter were able to adapt their narrative to this cultural upsurge, and to some extent – especially after the IRA bomb in the city centre in 1996 – open their networks up to those associated with these cultural scenes. In this way, a fairly standard culture-led regeneration – concert hall, museum, art gallery, conference centre etc. – could be linked to local popular culture and wider narratives of renewal and change. The 'scally' and the 'businessman' could now be unified under the banner of culture (see also Blum, 2003). Though problematic from time to time, this popular culture provided the symbolic charge which transformed the landscape of the city from one of production to one of consumption and leisure. Despite the critique of Peck et al there is no doubt that, whilst certainly excluding those who cannot pay, this landscape is not perceived as that of some new middle class but has a real popular legitimacy; it is inhabited culturally by Mancunians.

This case can illustrate the extent to which a city can really learn to be 'creative' or whether, as with Hall, it just happens. To what extent is the *genius loci* capable of being accessed and managed by 'reflexive rationality'. At the complex level of the city I would suggest that all such discourses of local cultural qualities come with baggage, and how they turn out in practice is very much a matter of chance. Creative cities are, in this sense, singularities.

On the other hand, a close fit between a local 'structure of feeling' and the regeneration narrative of the city does not necessarily mean that the new urban symbolic landscape will work to the benefit of local cultural production. The forces shaping the new landscape may use cultural capital but not in a way that helps local cultural production needs (or for that matter, innovative cultures of consumption). In

many respects the transformation of the urban symbolic landscape under the sign of a vibrant local popular culture was simply one moment of transition, used to create cultural capital in the city centre which was to be ultimately recouped by larger capital investment – primarily those of residential development and national and international chain brands. The explosion of 'loft living' in the central area – from around 1,000 people in 1994 to 20,000 in 2004 – recalls Zukin's mordant critique of the dynamics of this symbolic landscape (Zukin, 1982; 1991; 1995). Scott refers to her notion of 'landscape' in his summary of cultural production effects, but drops all of the critical baggage which this concept brings with it. The Northern Quarter area of Manchester - an area intermittently designated a 'creative quarter' by the local authority and which has, for the local population, occupied a position of 'alternative', 'cutting edge', even 'urban authentic', since the early 1980s - is now undergoing a classic process whereby cultural producers and small scale, innovative consumption clusters are driven out by capital investment thriving on the symbolic value created by these users. The city's answer to complaints has been that if they can not afford it they should not be occupying such (now) prime spaces. The notion that 'intellectual assets' could play as important a role in the city's future (now re-launching itself as 'The Knowledge Capital') as property assets has made no inroads into the thinking of the local growth coalition.

The benign narrative of culture and economics in the urban core is thus not necessarily as neat as is made out. Mommaas (2004), using case studies from The Netherlands, has pointed to a range of separate policy objectives grouped under the banner of 'cultural cluster'.

> in a situation in which the exchange between cultural and other (social, economic) values has become more complex and unstable, the search for new forms of urban cultural governance can easily be frustrated by a combination of unclear goals, a lack of mutual understanding and involvement, over generalised models and inhibitory attitudes. In order to prevent this from happening, there is a need to develop a more reflexive involvement with cultural clustering developments, more clearly differentiating between possible objectives and programmes. (Mommaas, 2004: 531)

This call for a more reflexive attitudes and clearly defined objectives is something that is yet to take place in the scramble to become the 'creative city'. I would argue that such reflexivity needs to be very clear about the problems, as well as the potential, of the insertion of the city into globalised systems of 'commodified cultural production'. Scott's claim for the potential of multiple and diverse centres of global cultural production is attractive and certainly has some validity. But it also has its limits. And these limits need to be addressed by 'reflexive involvement' – not only clarifying in more detail the precise objectives, intended outcomes and specific tools required to support local cultural production, but also in assessing the overall urban cultural policy in which this cultural production strategy takes place. Scott's benign narrative ignores strong countervailing tendencies of displacement and substitution of local cultural goods for global; and whilst this does generate local production effects it does these in certain ways and on certain conditions which need to be clearly understood. The simple opposition of global and local culture, with the former the inexorable winner, is not sustained by the evidence (Hesmondhalgh, 2002); but 'let a

thousand flowers bloom' also misrepresents the process of profound cultural change currently underway.

These reflections then, are not just about the need to look more closely at cultural industry strategies but also to make us reflect on how far we should annex the culture of cities, their creativity and urbanity to that of innovation and competitiveness in globalised 'commodified cultural production' – throwing in cultural infrastructure, historical traditions and the local 'structure of feeling' for good measure. Aside from the issue of how these can usefully be identified and mobilised there is the question whether we want to do this. As I remarked in relation to Hall's account – no other cultural milieux has been mobilised in such a way. Rather than representing a 'reconciliation' of culture and economics this might be read as the former's final annexation. This should not be seen as a return to the opposition of pure culture and commercialisation—after all cities have always been markets and culture has always been firmly rooted within these. But the ecology of these markets is changing, in ways we have yet to fully understand but which are misrepresented by the benign narrative of urban culture as a new source of economic competitiveness. We do need a cultural politics of 'commodified cultural production' which looks to the life and culture of cities as a thing of value for itself – ultimately – not simply to become factors of production. In this way we can open up a space of critique that allows us to talk about cultural value and cultural commodities – how they circulate within and between cities, how they are produced and consumed, and precisely whose culture is allowed to burgeon in the dense undergrowth of the urban ecology. Reducing, not just contemporary urban culture, but that of past ages to input factors for an emerging global cultural economy presents us with task not unlike that Benjamin outlined in his last writing:

> To articulate the past historically… means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger. ….. The danger affects the content of the tradition and its receivers. The same threat hangs over both: that of becoming a tool of the ruling classes. In every era the attempt must be made to wrest tradition away from the conformism that is about to overpower it' (Benjamin, 1970:257)

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[1] Throughout this article I use the term 'cultural industries'. I am aware that the term 'creative industries' is now widely used in the UK, in Australia and North America. I do not wish to get involved in the terminological debate, though I do have ground for preferring 'cultural' over 'creative' (O'Connor, 2004; Garnham, 2004)); suffice it to say that my comments generally refer to both creative and cultural industries.