

# Rich Mix Cities

## From Multicultural Experience to Cosmopolitan Engagement

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When I visit different larger cities in the European Union today I quite often get a feeling of being in several cities all over the world – at the same time and in the same place ... The diversity with respect to languages, urban architecture, cultural and social activities, shops, etc. makes our cities more interesting... today cultural diversity is also a necessity in order to make cities and societies more attractive and competitive in a global economy. There is no doubt that cultural diversity enriches our cities and societies with social, human and economic capital ... (Bertel Haarder cited in Hamburger 2003:2).

“The cosmopolitan perspective is an alternative imagination, an imagination of alternative ways of life and rationalities, which include the otherness of the other. It puts the negotiation of contradictory cultural experiences into the centre of activities: in the political, the economic, the scientific and the social” (Ulrich Beck 2002:18).

The rich cultural mix of cities in Europe, as elsewhere, is beginning to be constructed as an asset. Bertel Haarder (Danish Minister for Refugees, Immigration and Integration) describes in the *Forward* to a manifesto on *Cultural Diversity in European Cities* (2003) a direct, personal experience of cultural enrichment. This is matched by an acknowledgment of the economic contribution migrants make and recognition of the potential ‘ethnic’ business has not only to revitalise urban economies but also to create attractive locations for global

firms. Nevertheless this appreciation of cultural enlivenment is voiced against a backdrop of the poverty and social exclusion experienced by many migrants from within and beyond Europe’s borders.

This paper looks at both the past influences on and present formations of this rich mix multicultural city. Our focus is on the impact of ethnic and cultural groups on the cultural and material landscapes of cities. These city landscapes, both semi-permanent (such as buildings, public spaces and cultural institutions) and transient (arts events and festivals) have been claimed as key signifiers of the ‘new’ multicultural urban experience and are becoming the objects of city planning, urban design, place making and (multi)cultural consumption (Christopherson 1994; Shaw, Bagwell & Karnowska 2004; Zukin 1996; Worpole & Greenhalgh 1999). Yet cities have their roots in a long, though often obscured, history of exchange and their landscapes have been, and continue to be, contested sites of cultural production and consumption. Much of this history can be excavated from the unacknowledged presence of cultural representations of ‘Other’ ethnic groups in the architecture, artistic movements and cultural institutions of cities. It can also be found in the ‘hidden’ everyday landscapes of city life.

As the benefits of acknowledging cultural diversity are promoted, particularly across Europe, the underlying assumptions of a multicultural city remain unexamined. The term ‘multicultural’ is often used, somewhat benignly, to describe the increasing heterogeneity of city societies (in Europe particularly

post 1945) and the result of global political economic changes and rapid migrations from former colonial regimes in Africa, the Caribbean and Asia. It also asserts cultural diversity as the norm and identifies a proliferation of relative cultural values. Whilst this may present a welcome challenge to exclusionary ideas of national (European) cohesion, this prescriptive version of multiculturalism does foster celebration of cultural diversity. It places ethnic identity, claims for rights and cultural acknowledgment at the centre of city politics. However it also creates a contest between relative cultural values – a contest that cannot be ‘won’ but which permanently pitches one set of values and practices against another. This postmodern relativism separates and isolates communities/social groups into cultural silos and, therefore, limits the potential for wholesale cultural transformation in which the ‘the otherness of the other’ can be acknowledged and used to generate transcultural exchanges.

In order to move beyond these limits of multiculturalism, this paper draws on the recently renewed debate on the nature of cosmopolitanism. As Beck (2002) argues, cosmopolitanism is a method for approaching how societies, especially urban societies, change from within through the influence of migrations. His concern is with the interplay of cultures and values – locally as well as globally – that create hybrid identities able to negotiate the contradictions of different cultures in everyday life. The cultural and material landscapes of cities are the sites of these everyday practices of cosmopolitanism.

In this paper we document the presence (and absence) of different cultural representations within the cultural and material landscapes of cities and explore the tension between on the one hand, the claims for the multicultural city to represent and celebrate diversity and on the other, diversity to be the basis of an active cosmopolitanism which facilitates the cultural interplay of strangers.

## The ‘Other’ in European Culture

Fontana (1994) has documented how the European identity, especially modern European

identity, was constructed against ‘barbarians’ of different kinds and origins. Europe’s self-image has consistently been defined in opposition to a mythical less civilized non-European ‘Other’; and as Said points out: ‘Most histories of European aesthetic modernism leave out the massive infusion of non-European cultures into the metropolitan heartland during the early years of this [20th] century’ (1994:292). This is evident in the absence, camouflaging and erasure of non-European styles, references and forms in the histories of art and architecture, urban design and city planning, despite their undeniable hybrid influences (Jardine 1996). Kwesi Owusu contrasts the symbolic exclusion of the Black male in modern European art with that of the early periods and forms:

“Europe’s collective identity is bound up with the cultures of the global south. It has always been thus. The ancients knew this and were particularly comfortable with it. Medieval generations came to accept it. In the paintings of the Adoration of the Magi, the image of the black magus attending the Madonna is dignified and expressive of human equality. Modern painters e.g. Van Dyke, however transformed him into a diminutive figure, either standing behind his mistress or kneeling at her feet. Such symbolic emasculation is a part of a recurrent phenomenon of misrepresentation and marginalisation in European history” (Owusu 1993:86).

However re-presentations of the European Renaissance (Gombrich 1950) do not acknowledge, as Owusu does, the acceptance of the Black ‘Other’ in medieval art. Rather a narrative has emerged of an internally coherent artistic process, devoid of any external influence or historical memory. This has reinforced a belief in Europe’s deliverance from the cultural wasteland of the Dark Ages by the (secular) rediscovery of classicism. However, as further re-workings suggest:

“it makes more sense to think of the Renaissance as a culmination rather than a rebuttal of certain medieval tendencies...If no attempt is made to understand the mixed origins

[Christian, Moorish, pagan]... then the richness and much of the beauty of its art will remain unappreciated and misunderstood” (Graham-Dixon 1999:13).

The linear model of European art history and visual styles therefore reflects the modernist propensity to forget its own history and reject whatever went before (Berman 1982). Writing about Vasari’s 1550 seminal text *The Lives of Artists*, Smith (2000) notes that ‘in order to exalt the art of his own time, (he) found it essential to derogate the Gothic that preceded it as the art of the barbarians who destroyed the classic Roman art he admired and his renascita revived’ (2000:81). Similarly, the Dutch architect, Van Eyck has observed: ‘Western civilization habitually identifies itself with civilization as such on the pontifical assumption that what is not like it is a deviation, less advanced, primitive, or, at best, exotically interesting at a safe distance’ (1962:22).

This view of a hermetically sealed European artistic and cultural tradition, devoid of transcultural influence, is further taken up by influential commentaries on the history of cities. Notably Peter Hall’s *Cities and Civilization* (1998) celebrates the *creative milieu* of European cities as central to the evolution of civilisation itself. Massey (1999) criticises Hall for his universal claims and, in particular, points out that the cities used as a basis for his evolutionary argument are both selective and Eurocentric. He not only largely ignores other civilisations from Mesoamerica to Eurasia, but also the reality of late-twentieth century urbanisation that has shifted south and east. These are the cities that are influencing cultural change now. Their expansion has its own dynamic, but at the same time they are integrally tied to Europe through global transnational migrations of people, ideas and aesthetics (King 1991, 2002; Conley 2002).

In a similar vein, Cohen argues that currently, ‘the most prominent examples of cultural fusion in the arts do not come from global centres but rather from the world’s periphery; they represent primarily an attempt at localization of global stylistic trends - the fusion of West-

ern artistic styles or forms with local third or fourth-world cultural elements’ (1999:45). For Werber (1999) the exchange goes both ways. For her migrants from the ‘periphery’ bring and develop a knowledge and openness to other cultures that creates new hybrid opportunities *within* the metropolitan core. Writing about the British Pakistani community, she argues that this cultural group has engaged in a complex traffic of ‘objects-persons-places-sentiments’ which has altered the perceptions of ‘Britishness’ and enabled the creation of a British Pakistani culture. Such transcultural exchange builds on long histories of interconnection between Asia and Europe.

## Multicultural City Landscapes

It is therefore immigration and settlement of people from the ‘periphery’ that represents the principal agent of cultural ex/change in cities. The comparative advantage of multicultural diversity in cities is dependent upon the continued ebb and flow of ‘objects-persons-places-sentiments’ (Werber 1999) between the ‘periphery’ and ‘core’ and between cities.

In talking about the creative dynamism of London, Philip Dodd, Director of the Institute for Contemporary Arts (ICA) however suggests that it is from within settled ‘ethnic’ communities that new artists are able to galvanise cultural capital, unite cultural practices and develop a creative edge through transforming art forms. He claimed that ‘the second and third generation of Asians (are) the city’s leading impulse, from music to street fashion, from new slang to video production...all high intensity economic activities’ (cited in Biswas 2000:70). Speaking from within the ICA’s neo-classical ‘white’ façade, Dodd appears to dismiss the cultural risks taken by first generation Asian migrants and their lasting impact on the cultural and urban landscape of London. These parents of the new artists were the shopkeepers and market stallholders, restaurant and sweatshop owners who transformed the retail landscape, inner city economies and culinary tastes of a nation. These early settlers were pioneers of cultural change. They adapted

Victorian city premises and created new places (both temporally and spatially) for everyone to meet, shop and eat. They brought the corner shop – open all hours – and the local ‘ethnic’ restaurant to nearly every neighbourhood. They infused moribund street markets with new energy and goods. This is the foundation of the everyday multicultural landscape of British and many other European cities (Rodgers 2002). Yet it is increasingly clear that even these well established ‘ethnic’ communities exist within cities that ignore their cultural participation and have no means of including their aesthetic contribution, personality and aspirations. As British-Asian architect, Rajan Gujral comments from Southall, west London:

“Ethnic communities are a permanent part of the society in the major cities of the country. There is no mistaking the areas favoured by the various ethnic groups; the writing on the shops, the rhythm in the streets, the faces, the dress. But somehow the communities live in spite of their environment rather than shaping it” (Gujral 1994:7).

The regulatory frameworks of urban planning, further restrict the claiming of space and transformation of place by migrants and ethnic communities. For example, in London, Birmingham and Leicester the extended family groups of some communities would benefit from the lateral conversion of terraced housing. However this runs counter to planning and building regulations, property market norms and mortgage company protocols.

This clash between the inventiveness of cultural innovation and institutional rigidity can be seen elsewhere. In Montreal, Quebecois three story houses where residents share social and domestic space accessed by external balconies and stairs (Gehl 2001:102) are no longer permitted by the city’s planners. They are considered dangerous, particularly in winter weather. New housing must conform to an assumed norm with privatised, atomised and anonymous points of entry and exclusive domestic space. In New York, the South Bronx had been reduced to a frontier zone, culturally and spatially ‘on the

edge’ and inhabited by the ‘savages, the low, the Other’ (Sciortta 1996:60). The areas’ Latino and African-American working poor were largely excluded from the political and economic processes that shaped their daily life and physical living conditions. Responding to the growing number of derelict sites and buildings in the South Bronx, in neighbouring East Harlem and the Lower East Side, Puerto Rican residents appropriated municipal-owned land and property, cultivating community gardens and constructing wood framed shelters: ‘These transformed sites serve as shelter for the homeless, social clubs, tenants associations, cultural centers, summer retreats and entrepreneurial ventures’ (ibid.:63f). The three room *casita de Madera* constructed by *puertoriquennas* recreated the vernacular Caribbean form, raised off the ground with *balcon* (veranda). The repetition of this building form has created an urban village, *El Barrio* connected by walkways representing, what has been termed, ‘landmarks of memory’ (Lynch 1990:190).

However, such direct attempts to stamp identity and presence onto the urban landscape always takes place in opposition to dominant economic and political systems. Environmental and design professionals, who ostensibly claim to reflect and respond to community need, often resist or stereotype cultural influence and identity.

These embedded Eurocentric aesthetics and regulatory processes limit the active creation of state supported local ‘ethnic’ cultural landscapes and institutions. Although the ‘ethnic quarters’ of most European cities now have Afro-Caribbean and Asian cultural centres, Jewish museums and multi-cultural arts centres these spaces are predominantly independent and alternative to mainstream white-European cultural institutions. Few of these ‘ethnic’ cultural spaces are flagships in the manor of the established museums and theatres of high European art (one exception *might* be the ‘Arab Monde’ *Grand Projet* in Paris). As Owusu observes:

“For many black artists working in the city, the city itself is a terrain of contested spaces, and

that changes the whole equation for many of them, because one does not assume one's own space within the city in the way that a white or European artist might" (Owusu in BAAA 1993:22).

Making a mark on the city landscape through cultural institutions, creative practice and community centres serves not only to fulfil a group's own needs but also to make that group visible. Wartime refugees from Poland and Czechoslovakia set up cultural community centres in London and other cities, which served as meeting places for existing populations and new arrivals, serving national food and drink, hosting gatherings, dances and events. Early centres were run in homes, only gradually moving to visible locations in the urban landscape. In time these more public settings became open to strangers, and today the Czech club and Polish centres in London generally serve their mixed locals communities. Irish, Chinese and more recently Vietnamese communities have established similar community centres, but many of these have become quasi-commercial enterprises offering food and drink and entertainment for cultural tourists.

Other groups do tend to use their religious buildings as the location for community activity, artistic and cultural expression. Black (African, Caribbean, South American) evangelical groups now represent the only growing congregation in the Christian church with highly developed voluntary and cultural programmes providing front line services as well as meeting places. Yet, they generally occupy second hand buildings in marginal locations, rather than purpose built churches and meeting houses. Local mosques, again usually located in adapted industrial, cinema or church buildings, house cultural and education centres where languages are taught (English and mother-tongue), community, women's and children's groups meet, and political and cultural exchange takes place.

Many communities still repatriate surplus income to their places of origin, limiting capital accumulation for enterprises and cultural investment in their location of new settlement. This lack of accumulated resources further

disadvantages such groups in public funding regimes where matched funding, sponsorship or support in kind (buildings or land) is often required. Only where diasporic groups are well-established or connected and can draw on community wealth can private support for cultural and religious projects be mobilised. The largest traditional Hindu temple outside India – Shri Swammarayan Mandir – is located in Neasden in the Brent, north-west London. In the 1990s Brent became one of the first local authorities in the Britain to have a majority Black and Asian population. The temple was financed by the local Hindu community and is located opposite the local community school. Indian craftsmen and masons were flown to London to work on this sacred structure. They came on a pilgrimage but fell foul of local employment and planning legislation.

The development of cultural facilities by ethnic minority groups relies overwhelmingly on individual subscription, entrepreneur and community support. As a result, such facilities are marginalised and often linked to community or religious activity and therefore excluded from the arts funding system. Moreover such provision is exposed to the whims of powerful individuals or a dominant group or caste. Relegating ethnic cultural activity to quasi-religious and community functions has several consequences that reduce the legitimacy and visibility of 'ethnic' cultural practice. First the association ensures that cultural expression remains hidden from public view and scrutiny; second professional and amateur cultural practice takes place in inappropriate and inadequate buildings; third such activity is neither recognised nor legitimated as creative (or professional) arts practice, and therefore, is denied both audience and appropriate resources for professional (and amateur) creative activity; finally communities risk isolation through a lack of engagement with others cutting off cultural exchange and potential sources of creativity.

This depiction of a multicultural landscape emphasises the hidden nature of cultural expression and a separation of cultural and ethnic groups. This has been reinforced by both state strategies and some of the self-help

regimes adopted by communities to fill the void in cultural provision. It incorporates is ‘... a neat and well-established distinction between the private and the public, where you can say “Go and practise your religion, your cultural differences, your ethnic oddities and so on behind closed curtains. Once you come into the public sphere you have to obey a different regime”’ (Hall 2000:46).

### “Ethnic Festivals” for the Multicultural City

Exceptions to these hidden, privatised cultural expressions are the growth of ethnic arts festivals building on religious celebrations (Diwali, Chinese New Year, Carnival Mas). Though promoted in tourist itineraries they are also opportunities for community celebration and display (Smith 1995). Nevertheless the growth and popularity of some of these festivals has created tension over policing and planning. These tensions have resulted in the re-scheduling and re-siting of some high profile festivals away from core inner city neighbourhoods. Such relocation breaks long held associations with and memories of place.

In New York weekend road closures for festivals had proliferated and a ban on new festivals has been enforced. The effect of this is felt most by new migrants who are less able to assert their claim to a festival than long standing groups with more power and influence. Authentic<sup>1</sup> cultural celebration and representation is perhaps most evident in the *carnival mas* carried out each summer in major cities with Caribbean populations. Two notable festivals are in London (Notting Hill) and Toronto (Caribana). The opportunity to shake off the European mask is taken with gusto:

“Since (Columbus) Africans have worn European clothes. We wear them to work, to school, to church, to the penitentiary and to bed. We dream in them. At Carnival time the process is inverted for you connect the silver line and make your own clothes. You make it special, load it with a baggage of your own treasures and make it speak your language. You make

what you want and call it your own” (Owusu & Ross 1988:15).

The engagement of these increasingly large festivals with the city has however remained tense and fraught. Attempts to recreate them as benign sponsored arts festivals and as tourist events have failed. Their size and popularity have grown with their importance as places of cultural expression and identity formation. A festival event is the outcome of year long preparations and off-site cultural development within communities and schools. The meaning of a festival is negotiated and created through these preparations as well as in the performances of the festival itself. Such popularity has fuelled the tension with city authorities. They are perceived to represent a threat, yet in comparison with other more regularly violent mass popular (‘white’) gatherings (football). Indeed the handful of incidences are negligible given the degree of concentration of people in space and time.

In Toronto, the Caribana was relocated in the early 1990s away from its city centre neighbourhoods and streets, onto an island in Lake Ontario, and spread over a week-long event, rather than a symbolic bank holiday. In London, Notting Hill carnival will move in 2005 to Hyde Park, out of the narrow (now gentrified) streets of west London. The organising committee continues to be subjected to annual scrutiny, police interference, power shifts and pressure from funders. Such levels of surveillance are rarely experienced by white cultural organisations – even when they receive large state subsidies (Evans 2000).

The current social production of multicultural city space, represented in both the semi-permanent built environment and the temporary spaces of festivals, does not make cultural expression easy. There are few mechanisms available to ethnic minority communities to influence the design and form of city space and the opportunities to take control of its public spaces and streets are declining. Likewise the opportunities to shape everyday multicultural encounters, though street markets and in neighbourhoods with an ethnic identity

have decline through regulatory controls and 'improvements' in the urban fabric. There is instead a growing trend in multicultural cities to create contrived ethnic quarters. By enacting planning mechanisms to regulate frontages and street furniture and insisting on the use of decoration embodying stereotypical symbols of particular ethnic identities (for example in Little Italy, Chinatown and Banglatown) *faux* neighbourhoods are created as business and tourist destinations. These spaces are often animated by staged ethnic festivals, funded or sponsored by local businesses, local authorities, lottery and other charitable grants. They are often presented as cultural showcases for visitors. Such interventions are a long way from the permanent cultural infrastructures and self-determined events to which communities aspire.

### Rich Mix Urban Arts

With these constraints it is no surprise that ethnic cultural expression finds its voice largely outside the material landscapes of the European city. This is out of necessity but also to some degree due to cultural preference and practice. Performance and display through music and the visual arts and crafts have become central platforms for self-expression and cultural exploration. Stuart Hall has noted that black young people are the 'dominant defining force in street-orientated British youth culture. Without them, white youth culture would not exist in the form it does today' (in Jaggi 2001:1). Popular culture in Britain has unquestionably been transformed by Black and Asian artists creating new musical genres, styles of fashion and food. While Black artists have sought out forms of expression and media that were more accessible and less susceptible to the gatekeeping control of others, they have been labelled by cultural intermediaries of aesthetic taste as 'natural', 'untutored' and 'primitive' or judged to be wholly responsible for the 'dumbing down' popular culture (ibid.).

Not all interventions from Black and Asian artists are in street culture. Many Black artists have worked within the disciplines of

visual arts since the 1950s but they have been 'quietly written out of the record. Not British enough for the Tate, not international enough for Banksie' (Hall in Jaggi 2001). Similarly, Black novelists working in London in the 1960s and 1970s have been excluded from the current debate on role of the novel. Though Jaggi notes the increasing visibility of Black and Asian British artists and writers in the mainstream arts events held in London – the Booker prize (Salman Rushdie, Ben Okri, Zadie Smith) and the Turner Prize (Chris Ofili and Steve McQueen) – she also laments that they are still subject to restrictive value judgements which label them as 'ethnic artists' and exotic adjuncts at the edge of British art.

Both the innovative creators of popular genres and those working within the visual arts and literature are faced by a cultural establishment that attempts to limit their creativity to documenting the assumed 'Africanness' or 'Asianness' in their British experience. In other words it wants to confine these artists to documenting the white establishment's black 'Other'.

Black and Asian British artists have also pursued the project of creating Black and Asian arts centres and cultural facilities. However this has been a particularly difficult endeavour. In the few cases where this has been possible, their marginal locations, fragile financial prospects and parsimonious or tokenistic state and charitable support has confirmed their secondary status of such projects in the arts funding system.<sup>2</sup> Where new or redeveloped ethnic arts centres have survived, they have done so with low levels of subsidy, in poorer, inaccessible locations, and in inadequate buildings by comparison with their white counterparts.

A comparison of two established arts organisations in Birmingham – the Ikon Gallery and the black arts centre, The Drum – illustrates this issue. Both projects won Lottery and European funds to relocate and upgrade their buildings (Evans & Foord 2000), but with sharply contrasting treatment and solutions. The former was re-sited in the downtown central business and entertainment district, with surrounding café culture; the latter in a less salubrious and non-central location, Newtown (2.5 km north

of the city centre). The justification for these different location decisions 'reveals the need for micro-environmental factors to be taken into account when planning urban investment for White and non-White audiences' (Symon 1999:723). In this sense, the process of and eventual location strongly influences image, access/usage, markets and consequently the viability of cultural organisations. This therefore reflects the hierarchical values ascribed to certain cultural practices over others, even where they exist within the same art form or genre and within the same city and cultural regimes (Evans 2001).

There are several high profile examples of 'failed' Black and Asian arts centres in London including The Roundhouse and Brixton Village. These experiences only serve to confirm the prejudicial assumption that the groups themselves were not able to create and run viable major facilities, nor could they withstand market-tested demand.

This fragile history, which presents black and ethnic arts as terminally dependant and lacking the capacity to survive in cultural and commercial markets, has limited their physical development. Ironically this is at a time when the scope and scale of urban cultural diversity has been expanding – from both within established communities and through the relocation of new migrants. (This market failure is of course in contrast to the commercial mainstream success of black urban culture, notably music and associated fashion).

This legacy led one emerging visual arts group to resist the notion of a building base altogether. The Institute of International Visual Arts (inIVA) was formed in the early-1990s, with Arts Council funding, 'to promote the work of artists, curators and scholars from a plurality of cultural backgrounds' and 'to bring the work of culturally-diverse artists to the attention of the widest possible public' (ww.iniva.org). For the past ten years the organisation has led a peripatetic life, touring, curating and promoting, but without a permanent home. This pragmatic rejection of a fixed space has been reversed recently with a planned building to be located in the heart of London's new (Brit) art

district of Hoxton/Shoreditch, in the city fringe (Evans 2004). Inevitably, the challenge of building a new and permanent home for inIVA has become a pressing and practical issue for the organisation and it also raises questions about identity, space and place that have been recurrent themes in inIVA's artistic programme: 'InIVA emerged from a particular historical and demographic context and a special relationship with London as a multicultural city. By locating our project in Shoreditch, we intend to build on these features and relationships and provide new channels of communication between the different constituencies – artistic, cultural, social and corporate – which currently rarely interact' (www.iniva.org). Whether this and other contemporary rich mix ventures can be successfully established and the spectre of past failures exorcised, tests the very notion of the multicultural city itself.

Another attempt to capture the multicultural city in physical form and place, recognising its absence and marginal position in the past – is seen in *The Rich Mix* cultural centre in East London. Located in the city fringe area of the borough of Tower Hamlets, which contains several of the poorest and deprived neighbourhoods in the UK, and host to past and recent diasporas from Europe and Asia – a new build arts centre designed by Penoyre & Prasad aims to be a focal point for local communities, a meeting place, entertainment and educational centre (resonant of 19<sup>th</sup> century *People's Palaces* and 20<sup>th</sup> century *Maisons de la Cultures/Arts Centres*, Evans 2001). It will also seek to challenge and strive for creative excellence over a range of art forms, a crucial crossroads, dedicated to innovation and integration, working towards a new understanding of British culture. What is being unsaid here is the multicultural basis for this venture, which is only manifested in its multiscreen cinema combining mainstream and Bollywood films and home to a music training agency, Asian Dub Foundation. The centre's location (and funding) seeks to play a major role in the regeneration of its local area – an area that has been subjected to office and residential gentrification and development prior to the centre's formation.



This optimistic cultural development was based on *creative city* principles (Landry & Bianchini 1995, 2000), focusing almost exclusively on creative industries and related retail, hospitality (curry and balti houses, wine bars, designer retail and galleries), visitor attractions and street markets. The multicultural residential neighbourhoods have been neglected by this consumption-led approach, creating a socio-spatial divide with social programmes which promoted training in new media and patronising capacity building, but which ignored the local meaning and memory of place and the cultural knowledge, aspirations and skills of local residents (Evans & Foord 2003). The rich mix in this project has been reduced to a commodified landscape of street retail and entertainment – consumption opportunity for adjoining office workers, weekenders and the new urban professional.

This experience of practicing culture and attempts to claim space for Black and Asian art illustrates the contested nature of the production and consumption of culture in multicultural cities. Indeed Bhabha goes further by observing: ‘Multiculturalism that is practised in most Western societies is at best only partial. Although there is always an entertainment and endorsement of cultural diversity, there is always also a corresponding containment of it’ (in Rutherford 1990:208). The experiences of the multicultural city are therefore ones of limitation and restriction.

## Towards Cosmopolitan Engagement

For many, globalisation appears to threaten the diversity of cultural representation through an inevitable universalising of cultural reference points and practices. Featherstone (2002) however suggests that, in the wake of globalisation, there is currently a renewed interest in cosmopolitanism in reaction to the emergence of exclusive nationalisms and growth of market relations in every aspect of civic and personal life. This interest takes two forms: one expresses a hope that cosmopolitan groups/individuals will forge transnational values, institutions and lifestyles that will underpin the emergence of

a global democracy in the image of European modernity; the other reviles the cosmopolitan identity as elitist and representative of a mobile middle class, cultural tourists dabbling rootlessly in a variety of cultures in a relentless search for new experiences, aesthetic stimulation and cultural novelty and unable to sustain a sense of local connection nor responsibility for the growing numbers of socially and culturally excluded. Beck (2002), in criticising both these interpretations, sees a more positive role for cosmopolitanism in a globalising world.

Globalisation through migration and the movement of ideas and goods also offers opportunities for the ‘creolising’ of cultural exchange through participation in different cultural practices, consumption and codes. For Beck (2002) this creates a cosmopolitan openness to strangers and ideas, to ‘Others’ and to the ‘Otherness’ within identities. Due to this openness, cosmopolitanism also means a breaking down of the internal and external borders which limit expression and identity formation. Whereas the notion of multiculturalism retains distinctions (and therefore borders) between cultures, cosmopolitanism actively works to blur distinctions between different identities. Cosmopolitan practice is therefore *transcultural* rather than multicultural.

Cosmopolitanism is not a practice of an elite. International economic migration, transnational labour markets and flows of political refugees have created groups of people who have to combine the contradictions of different cultures within their everyday lives. Such groups cannot be part of a single nation state, indeed this dislocation is necessary for their survival. Beck comments: ‘These groups, characterised by their in-between status, demonstrate that neither nation-state nor ethnic group has a monopoly on loyalty ... there is an intermediate space where a set of alternatives might emerge, based for example on hybrid identities.’ (2001:50). He continues:

“Increasingly, people have biographies which relate to more than one place. We might say that a polygamous relationship to place is becoming the norm: and as one is in love with many places,

one develops deep connections to more than one culture. Even when forced to be plurally located, affective relations may follow... This aspect of cosmopolitanization is very important... [and] concerns the integration and transcendence of contradictions between cultures, and at the same time, the preservation of commitment to localities..." (Beck 2001:50).

Importantly, such hybrid identities, for Beck, can emerge from within states (for example Black/Asian British identities) and these groups too can act as 'pioneers of cosmopolitanism' – a cosmopolitanism from below, from within the local.

Jacobsen also observes that there is a 'reinforcing bond' between local identities and international flows which exclude the state and '[t]hus, ethnic groups have secured, at least theoretically, international support in their jockeying for cultural recognition and political influence' (2000:22). This dynamic exchange can serve to bring international and other cultural forms and practices to a local audience, but also enable local artists to reach wider audiences and gain recognition for themselves, their art forms and their cultural practices. Cohen (1999:45) adds: 'The artists thus play an interstitial role, striving to bridge the disparate worlds between which they are suspended, without, however, losing their local voice and identity'. World Music captures this exchange, as has the growing interest in fusion foods and aesthetic styles.

Black and Asian British artists, as other minorities have done elsewhere (for example Native Americans, Australian Aborigines and Maoris), self-consciously combine abstract and concrete symbols of 'Own' and 'Other' cultures. As Said reminds us: '... all cultures are involved in one another, none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated and unmonolithic' (1994:xxix). Rowe (2002) takes this further and assesses how artists effectively 'difference the city' through their work of combining aesthetic styles and creative processes. She cites the *Shamania: Mughal Tent* – an inter-generational national and international textile project initiated by Shireen Akbar through the

V&A Museum and exhibited there in 1997. This work united Asian women and children with women from a variety of other communities in the creation of textile panels. On these panels the women and children created representations of their everyday lives and landscapes. Working in groups in their communities, women learnt and developed textile skills from each other and through the V&A's collections. This artwork grew from a small project into one that was predicated on an exchange of cultures and artistic practices. The final result was 'a tent that covered the world' ([www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/shamiana](http://www.vam.ac.uk/vastatic/shamiana)).

Rowe sees in this work, representations of London 'delineated by a landmark, a symbol of its authority, in this case Big Ben, yet that legibility is simultaneously reinscribed by the inflections of multicultural identities operating within the representational spaces of every day life' (2002:33). Through the creation of this piece the everyday lives of women, living in London, practising cosmopolitanism, are seen to disrupt an iconic symbol of colonial authority, appropriating their its meaning for themselves.

It is this hybrid cosmopolitan practice and cultural fusion that Ulrich Beck, Stuart Hall and Pnina Werbner and others now maintain is (and maybe always was) the norm. It combines criss-crossing rather than one-way diasporic movements. If fluidity is the norm then resistance to the limitations imposed on cultural expression in the 'multicultural city' is to be expected – certainly while the 'Other' exists largely outside of the built environment, public amenities and legitimate (subsidised) arts and cultural facilities. Extrapolating from Beck, new global relationships and a transcultural vocabulary of cultural practices and symbols shapes this resistance and underpins the cosmopolitan city.

## Conclusion

Celebrating cultural diversity in the multicultural city – through the support of 'ethnic' arts and festivals or the creation of 'ethnic quarters' – tends to gloss over, or at least understate the real tensions between notions and realities of national(ism) and cultural identity. Instead

they create palatable representations of different fixed identities and present these for consumption. All too often become extensions of capitalisation and the realisation of property hope values through gentrification, heritage retro-fitting and civic and corporate place-making and branding (Evans 2003).

The experience of multicultural cities reproduces identities of 'Others' while hiding and dismissing the diversity of creative practice. British and other European cities, have not been seriously confronted by these issues, let alone resolved them through either cultural or social policy spheres. Those responsible for the development process and the professional imperatives of regeneration and cultural intermediaries (local, national, European/EU), have proven unable and unwilling to adopt pluralist (cosmopolitan) policies or practices, or to relinquish control over space and its built form. The continued use of multiculturalism – rich mix – as a rationale to guide (or spice-up) cultural/arts/planning policy limits the range and scope of subsidised interventions. It also permits complicity with the process of 'Othering' and therefore the exclusion of individuals/groups and their creative practices.

Adopting the openness to strangers of cosmopolitanism offers a way forward. Cities have long been the sites for trade and the mixing of people, commodities, ideas and cultures. In the cosmopolitan city 'it is imperative to abandon models of binary oppositions which impose fixed ordering and according to which cultural practices are classified in terms of Same or Other. And it is to this end that considerations of art cannot be separated from questions of politics' (Third Text, Ed. 1987/1:4, in Jordan & Weedon 1995:484). In the landscapes of the city this would manifest itself in what Lefebvre termed differential space, a 'space yet to come but which, in contrast to the homogenising powers of the abstract space of capitalism, will be a more mixed, inter-penetrative space where differences are respected rather than buried under sameness' (Borden 2002:114; Lefebvre 1991). Developing this theme further, cosmopolitanism goes beyond respect to active engagement.

In practice this cosmopolitan engagement al-

ready takes place *despite* the planned landscape and the limiting actions of arts and cultural professionals. It takes places in the ad hoc spaces carved out for cultural expression and creative endeavour. It also takes place through everyday encounters in the streets and informal public spaces, in mixed-use/mixed ethnic neighbourhoods of poorer inner city areas, in the streetmarkets and spatial concentrations of ethnically diverse food, fashion, entertainment and retail activity and in homes and playgrounds. These are the organic places of quiet everyday cultural resistance and cosmopolitan exposure.

## Notes

1. 'Authenticity' in a cultural sense is a difficult notion to distinguish in light of culture's natural shifting and fusion tendencies and the effects of 'staged authenticity' MacCannell (1984). Christopherson for example makes the distinction between 'genuine ethnic culture' and 'that which is manufactured for sale' (1994).
2. In London, after the abolition of the ("urban new left") Greater London Council in 1986, a number of "black arts" organisations were jointly-funded by the regional arts board (LAB) and successor regional funding quango, the London Borough Grants Scheme (LBGS). Between 1987 and 1994 and these two public bodies, the funding of such groups supported fell from 120 to 38. The then Director of LBGS observed: 'On the whole (black arts clients) were not established or mature organisations. Their resources were limited...systems were not all that they should have been, financially or managerially. Most were operating from poor premises which were usually rented' (Evans 2001a).

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