

## **Creative Industries in City Spaces: the case of art in public places**

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### **Abstract**

**Purpose:** to survey the creative cultural industries impact in urban spaces and their quality in particular art in public realm in cities

**Methodology:** The article reveals the preliminary findings of the study of art in urban spaces and artists contribution in forming and transforming public realm of cities

**Key Words:** creative city; cultural industry; public spaces; quality of space; public art

### **Introduction**

Cities are manifestation of the culture and traditions of a people, a historical period, a region, an environment and a climate. Therefore city, its architecture and features had an unbroken relationship with the culture of a society and people's lives and Changes in it often accompany changes in life style, views and art.

With the rapid scientific, technological and economic development, cities grew faster and unbalanced and unplanned development lead to design strategies affected from the paradigms such as mass production and standardization.

The consequences of modernist planning were responsible for homogenous urban fabric rather than heterogeneous urban texture, zoned land use instead of mixed land use, indirect communication rather than direct communication, space rather than place and most importantly segregation rather than integration. In other words, as some critics like Natrasony emphasize, modernist approaches and internationalist style caused placeless urban environments.

It is a well established argument now that Good architecture and environmental planning not only respects the natural environment, but also pays attention to the continuity of culture, highlights the local features and stresses the order of space organization. Every city should have its own character in which elements of politics, society, economy, history and culture directly affect the overall layout, image, structure and facilities of the city. Only when the city's unique features are defined can an excellent urban image be created.

Considering the impact of the quality of city spaces and public realm of cities on all the people of the city and moreover the fact that visitors of a city first see and are influenced by the city's look make the environment and public spaces' design of even greater importance. Paying enough attention to the design of the city environment and urban landscape helps to improve the socio-cultural fabric, the tourism industry and the national image overall, the main and most important influence however is on the quality of life of the residence of the city.

In this regard it is important to revise public realm concept, the importance of liveable successful in between spaces and its complication as well as the path urbanists have been through and theories experienced in order to achieve that immensely vital concept.

### **Public Space**

In urban life the in-between space, public space, has an important role in terms of social interaction and behaviour. They are the vital parts of cities where social life, integration and communication between residents and strangers take place. Organization of this space embodies social interactions or vice versa. Sometimes a composed social phenomenology can shape this space.

Public space has a broad concern and defined by various authors as places accessible to all, used by all, activity nodes and gathering points, places where common or different beliefs are shared, where people meet each other or come into contact with total strangers. Madanipour (2003) defines public space as “a site for display and performance”, “an arena of recognition”, “an exploration of difference and identity”, “the in-between space that facilitates co-presence and regulates interpersonal relationships” (Madanipour, 2003, p. 235). It is the place of common world, shared experience and where tolerance grows between citizens. It is a tool for managing pedestrian movement and it has a function for various purposes (Madanipour, 2003).

There are three aspects of the public realm which are considered by researchers to be spatial, managerial, and temporal. Firstly as a spatial aspect, spaces between places, left over spaces that are disregarded by policy and design supply amazing opportunities for social uses and the street life. Secondly as a managerial aspect, between public and private institutions; there is an overlap of different spatial control and access. Hence there should be negotiation among the users. Lastly as a temporal aspect, between tenancies; this implies the change of urban space in terms of its character and use when it is in the period between the occupations of different occupants. Hence urban design should reconsider the uncertainty and challenging opportunity of this in-between space (Stevens, 2008).

The concept of public spaces has a crucial impact on community. Successful public spaces are the tools for place making. Their design and form also have an impact on the coherence and continuum of the whole region. Vivid and usable public spaces are important for the healthy society and environments. It makes these urban components important in planning process and urban regeneration and to investigate the basic element that gives character to cities and its public spaces and tools that have been used during years to form these spaces. Morris (1994) says that it is the outcome of a process that is formed under the determining forces and classifies these forces under two; firstly geographical factors such as climate, topography, and local construction materials. Secondly, man-made determinants like socio-political and economical powers, culture, and religion. Creative class always known as the society's expressive engine and cultural industries as tools to express, form and transform the second group into spatial dimensions and more tangible features of cities and form the characteristics and identity of space through artistic expression. Acknowledgment of the creativity and creative city theories and attempt to understand the role of cultural industries in place making is the first step of a broader understanding of city spaces, public realm in particular, and how to achieve successful, livable public places.

### **Creativity theories and creative industries**

The creativity discourse and creative city is not a new idea and different cities in the world been famous and flourished through being art and culture centres during the history, from Athens to Florence, Paris and Vienna (Hall, 2000). During last decades the new economy formed due to 'the shifts in technology, structures of production, labour markets and dynamics in locational agglomeration' (Scott, 2006)-so called 'creative economy'- changed the social, cultural and spatial aspects of urban development process through restructuring modern cities. Experts believe for successful cities art and creativity plays an important role in this reconstruction and they emphasize on the importance of investment on creativity, locality and cultural heritage (Sassen,2001; Sharp,2005; Montgomery, 2007).

### **Creativity**

If creativity is 'any act, idea or product that changes an existing domain or transform it into a new one' it is possible to indicate the link between creativity and cities as 'a creative milieu is a place that contains the necessary preconditions in terms of hard and soft infrastructure to generate a flow of ideas and inventions' (Landry, 2000). This link becomes more important considering the strong correlation pointed out between creative places and economic growth and the link between creative industries and the development of creative urban regions become popular research topic (Durmaz, 2009). The concept of 'Creative city' developed by Landry by conceptualization of this link: 'a creative city is an entity that could only be

developed through well designed creative strategies (policy); with a strong presence of creative industries (economy); and by a creative community (society) (Durmaz, 2008).

### **Cultural and creative industries**

Adorno and Horkheimer first used the term ‘cultural industry’ in criticizing commercial mass production of art and culture and lack of its independency from economic and political conjuncture (Adorno and Horkheimer, 1947). But it was a surprise that when governmental institutions started to use the term in 1980s as a policy circles vehicle, they used it to address the whole range of cultural products and services people consume (Durmaz, 2009), in the way Adorno and Horkheimer critiqued. For Adorno the contradiction of art and culture and economic activities was crucial whereas in this new conceptualization ‘cultural industries’ tied them together. In 1990s ‘cultural industry’ was the short way of ‘defining various sectors with art-related outputs’ (Montgomery, 1990).

The ‘cultural industries’ concept led to ‘creative industries’ by arriving of ‘creativity’ theories and ‘creative city’ notion and these industries include key sectors such as: ‘advertising, architecture, the art and antiques market, crafts, design, fashion, film, crafts, performing arts, publishing, television and radio’ (DCMS, 1998). This report though distinguishes cultural industries as artist centred from creative industries as technological reproduction and wide accessibility.

Creative industries are important part of creative cities, generating economic activity to the city. Landry reports that attention to creative industries increased between urban planners, policy makers and developers in recent years (Landry, 2000) and theories of creativity provided base for many cities’ spatial and economic growth (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002). Landry believes that creative industries also create positive images of cities, help social cohesion, attract talent and investment while contributing the liveability and quality of place and life of residents (Landry, 2000) and promote sustainable urban development and tourism (Richards and Wilson, 2007).

On the other hand Oakley express that the role of cultural and creative industries in economic growth of cities is exaggerated (Oakley, 2004).

Roodhouse writes ‘creative industries are wider definition of culture to encourage cohesion, participation and ownership’ (Roodhouse, 2006) and Evans et al. indicates the importance of creative industries in enhancing place quality and formation of urban identity. And this is the link which makes creative industries, culture a and its

manifestation forms important in urban planning and place making. In order to be able to discuss the importance of these tools in urban related disciplines the understanding of the quality of place and its indicators is vital. And understanding of their mutual impact.

### **Place quality**

In urban related literature the 'quality of place' refers to the assets that make a successful urban space where people prefer to live, work and play. Understanding the characteristics of such places and what makes a place successful and the destination to live, work and visit has been the focal point of urban research and forms an important part of it.

Montgomery argues that cultural industries and creativity should be an important part of planning strategies, particularly in providing infrastructure for qualitative improvement in the quality of life of residents and enhancing the experience of visitors. He believes in approaching higher quality of everyday life by cultural planning strategies using intangible values and characteristics of urban space such as diversity, choice, flow, safety, sense of place, identity, aesthetic quality and legibility as base to improve the quality of the place (Montgomery, 1990).

Landry indicates conditions for a place that it can be judged on: economical, social, environmental and cultural characteristics of the place. Florida introduces new dimension to the quality of place by using the creative city theories in definition and stressing that certain qualities of place which is defined as 'place quality' fosters creativity and attracts creative people and creative industries: big ticket amenities, easy access to outdoor activities, night life experiences, healthy environment, participated activities, social events, lifestyle activities, accessibility, active young people and the environment that they can fit in (Florida, 2005). Another approach to place quality is from urban design principles and management strategies aspect. This approach believes that there is three main ways to achieve place quality: planning, development and people (Parfect and power, 1997).

Considering different approaches to place quality in different disciplines and literature, it is possible to sum it up that the quality of place related to tangible and intangible assets that space offers and it is possible to present these assets in three different categories: built, social, and environmental assets. This categorization gives us a framework to assess and study different places and how cultural industries involve in this assessment.

The point that almost all literature agrees on is the fact that creating high quality places is crucial both to generate economic activity and providing spatial, aesthetic, cultural needs and well being of people.

As mentioned before one of the manifestation forms of the intangible assets of the space and the society is through cultural industries in particular art in city spaces.

### **Art in public realm**

Art as a form of creative industry during urban history has been used as a tool to improve aesthetic of urban landscape and provide character and uniqueness to a place. Art in urban spaces have become increasingly central to the definition and experiences of the post-modern city, In particular, because it is such a powerful tool to address timely issues. Hence, it is time that art in public realm along with the importance of cultural industries role in creative cities become subject to such critical interrogations.

### **Public Art**

During last few decades, traditional distinctions between sculpture, painting, drawing, photography and installation have blurred. Conceptual catholicity, openness, and flexible categorization have provided the base for the galvanization of a new art: the complex world of public art.

The term public art refers to works of art in any media that has been sited or staged in the public domain, accessible to all, often outside but also includes any art exhibited in publicly accessible buildings. It is possible to say different aspects of the built environment are seen as nominees as location for public art, including, street furniture, lighting and graffiti. Public art is not confined to physical objects; dance, procession, street theatre even poetry have proponents that specialize in public art. Architectural sculpture and even architecture itself in urban fabric is widespread form that fulfils the definition of public art.

In traditional urban fabric introducing art into everyday life has been seen as an inherently good thing and art has been placed in public spaces to enhance aesthetic, memorialisation and so on. The last few decades have seen a 'renaissance' of public art particularly in the cities of Europe and the USA.

Public art has been included in different urban regeneration programs and it has been advocated as contributing to the alleviation of a range of environmental, social and economic problems locating within the urban design process and the integration of artists into the urban regeneration. Goodey writes "Since the 1980s public art has been increasingly implicated in processes such as the rejuvenation of decaying urban

spaces, the development of flagship projects of urban regeneration, the stimulation of central economies and the enhancement or transformation of urban images” (Goodey, 1994).

It is possible to say nowadays mostly there are art works in major city centre regeneration programs that endorse ‘official’ views of the city, for example local authorities, which celebrate and enhance the spaces produced by these interests.

Critical writing on public art and its integration in urban regeneration process has derived from a number of perspectives: of artists, arts advocates, cultural theorists, and urban and cultural geographers. As Jones indicates artists and art advocates have been mainly concerned with examining the process of public art production (Jones, 1992). These works shows the concern of writers for quality in the production of public art works. Whereas critical writing from a cultural studies or cultural geography perspective mostly seeks to situate the specific iconographies of public art works in the multiple contexts of their production and reception and generally these critics have been critical of the involvement of public art in projects of urban regeneration (Miles, 1997). In their point of view public art is a part of broader processes of uneven urban development. They see public art within the politics of urban transformation, criticize how this on-going process has an uneven impact on the different social groups of social spectrum’s lives and even call the culture and public art in this development process as a ‘carnival mask’ which is presenting selective versions of history, or myths of harmony, offering another layer in the composition of elite images of the regenerated city (Hall, 2003).

Reviewing the critical literatures on public art shows that the voices of the public are largely absent and writing on public art has focused on the meanings inherent in public art works and the influence of the contexts within which this art is produced but, they ignore the meaning derived from the incorporation of art into the experiences of the public’s everyday lives.

Loretta Lees says: “this (semiotic) interpretation strips the built environment of the meanings it is given by the people who live in it and of the transformations, however modest, that they make. ... Contemporary architecture architectural geographies do not emphasize enough the fact that ‘urban meaning is not immanent to architectural form and space, but changes according to the social interaction of city dwellers’”. She argues that architecture (and urban design and regeneration in my point of view) is about more than just representation. Both as a practice and a product, it is performative, in the sense that it involves ongoing social practices through which space is continually shaped and inhabited.

## **Background**

Many believe that the term 'Public Art' born in 1960s as a paradigm to reunite segregated modern art with urban spaces. It is possible to say public domain became more attractive for artists during 1970s, under-explored and even abandoned public spaces provided artists from different disciplines a pure, untouched stage to present their new works. They were experiencing new forms and media, their work moving out of galleries and museums into the public realm. So since the late 1970s interest in public art and the scale of local, regional and national commitments to it have grown considerably and contemporary public art started to have an increasingly visible presence throughout different countries in particular, Britain.

During this time expansive claims are made for public art. It is claimed to be a cultural investment, vital to the economic recovery of many cities; contribute to local distinctiveness; attract companies and investment; feature in cultural tourism; add to land values; create employment; increase the use of open spaces; reduce wear and tear on buildings and lower levels of vandalism. 'Conceivably as a response to preoccupations with architecture and the environment it is supposed to humanise and otherwise improve the environment; bring about safer areas and encourage greater care of areas by residents whose pride in their locality has increased' (Public Art Consultancy Team 1990:25). In 1988 the Cabinet Office endorsed its contribution to urban regeneration (Cabinet Office 1988:25) and officially public art became a tool in improving urban fabric in regeneration schemes.

Considering the lack of evidence about the impact of public art in Britain, it appears that many organisations in the public and private sectors promote public art and commit resources to it largely on the basis of traditional, social conventions. However by the end of the 1980s some of the constituencies involved in funding and promoting public art were beginning to consider whether they should adopt a more critical approach to public art and at the same time local authorities were beginning to question their own promotion of public art, and started to develop 'new understanding of the true scope and function of public art and the link between cultural and economic regeneration' (Roberts and Salter 1992:8).

Walker (1989) and Dormer (1992) have asked what good public art does and in 1984, a Professor of Government examined the public funding of the visual arts, including art in public places, from the standpoint of its benefits to individuals and the public interest (Banfield, 1984). In 1987 Stalker and Glymour proposed that 'public contemporary sculpture does little or nothing to enhance the quality of life generally...

Whatever legitimacy there is to government support of such displays derives from the tradition of serving the special interests of a very limited group of citizens. But this justification is overwhelmed by the fact that publicly displayed contemporary sculpture causes significant offence and harm, and does so in a way that intrudes repeatedly into peoples' normal living routines' (Stalker and Glymour, 1987).

The 1841 House of Commons' Select Committee appointed 'to enquire into the state of the National Monuments and Works of Art in ... Public Edifices', these should contribute to 'moral and intellectual improvement for the People'. 'Similar aspirations informed the funding of other cultural amenities in the public realm, such as the new museums, libraries and parks' (Conway, 1991). Galleries echoed 'civic aspirations, regional prosperity' and parks were built with statues, buildings, drinking fountains and sundials which celebrated 'royal visits and the achievements of local heroes and promoted local and national pride' (Selwood, 1995).

More than a century later, public art is not anymore consist of memorials and monuments to people, events and common aspirations and when it is, it often is inevitably imbued with ironies. Robert Melville believes that 'the significant statuary of our time' is unlike that of our Victorian predecessors, in that it 'serves no sacred, commemorative or symbolic purpose and has practically no validity as architectural decoration' (Melville, 1954). Art in our time is regarded as playing a part in urban improvement, If not as an integral part of it at least as a tool to planning process (Sudjic, 1993) and it is been assumed to have economic benefits, although several writers have declared doubts about the rhetoric of the economic impact of cultural approaches on urban regeneration where public art projects usually reveal (Booth and Bloye, 1993).

Gordon Hughes writes in his critique of John Myerscough's report on *The Economic Importance of the Arts in Britain* (PSI 1988) that Myerscough's attempt to 'measure the arts in terms of their success in the market are flawed both methodologically and intellectually, and their results exaggerated' (Hughes, 1989). He also challenged the 'value of measuring the economic value of the arts *per se*.' And writes: 'both odd and unconvincing if the strongest argument for public spending on the arts relied upon its employment impact', rather than its other, 'less tangible', benefits. He then introduces three ways to assess 'non-market value of the arts'. First, the arts' option values, 'people place a value on the opportunity to enjoy artistic activities, even if they choose not to take advantage of that option at given times'. Second, 'the benefits of the arts could be considered in respect to the externalities or spillover benefits which they generate' and the third, 'art as comprising merit goods - goods or services

whose consumption is thought to be desirable for the community as a whole' (Hughes, 1989).

## Conclusion

There is a war going on between people who don't like Modern art pieces popping up in public spaces of our cities and people who accuse them of being culturally deprived. As mentioned before although the use of art and so called cultural industries was a common practice during the urban history taking part in providing, identity and character for the city in which elements of politics, society, economy, history and culture manifested through the overall layout and image of the city, with arrival of theories seeking to find a link between cultural and economic regeneration and development of new understanding of the scope and function of public art which led to its presence in most of the major regeneration projects particularly in current economic circumstances, the question of the priority in public expenditure fired up the ongoing debate in related urban disciplines.

Despite being a popular debate lack of research in the field and evaluation of projects after completion is evident and therefore a comprehensive understanding of the polemical paradigm of public art and the perceived social, cultural and Political benefits of its practice is not possible.

Reviewing the critical literature on public art shows that the voices of the public are largely absent and writing on public art has focused on the meanings of the public art works and the influence of the contexts within which this art is produced but they ignore the meaning derived from the inclusion of art into the experiences of the people's everyday lives. According to some critics it is reasonable that the origins of an objective critical approach to examine questions of meanings of public art, its roles and functions in the context of fashioning new cities might focus on the audience as a site of meaning and how they engage with it, rather than the contexts of production and the works themselves. (Hall, 2003; Miles, 1997; Burgess, 1988).

On the other hand, the strongest argument for public spending on the arts relied upon its employment impact and attracting investment which could led to economic recovery of cities. Whereas as Hughes argues 'it is both odd and unconvincing ... measuring the economic value of the arts *per se*', rather than its other, 'less tangible', benefits (Hughes, 1989).

In the attempt to enliven dull and empty public spaces of modern cities, the reunion of segregated modern art with urban spaces could play a positive role but along with other factors contributing in successful place making. Relying on putting art



installations without considering context and the harmony of the environment or the spatial and semiotic function of the piece won't facilitate the liveable public space. After all, it is the author's personal opinion that public art's mission is rooted in a broad movement: to foster artistic experimentation, enrich public space and the everyday experience, and forefront artists as key contributors to democratic society and for an objective study of this complex world investigation of semiotics, socio-cultural meanings, professionals and audiences view is required.

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