



**The Maison de l'Europe de Paris and the City of Paris have organized a preparatory seminar of the conference entitled:**

**The creative metropolis**  
February 16th

This was the last in a series of symposia organised by the city of Paris and the Maison de l'Europe that looked at European cities from a comparative point of view. Following the debates on different themes that had taken place in the previous meetings, this one focussed on metropolitanisation and its diverse potentialities. Do cities carry within themselves the principles of their development? To what extent are their density and multicultural dimension conducive to dynamism?

The first workshop took up the question from the viewpoint of creative industries. Are fashion, design and other creative sectors taking on board new logics of development, research and innovation? In France, the importance of design in small and medium-sized firms is increasing, but it needs to become more specialised if it is to address the requirements of business and local bodies. As to fashion districts in European cities, their success does not depend on a logic of planning. The "model" of districts such as Le Sentier in Paris or Hoxton in London, which are tolerated rather than genuinely supported by the authorities, is difficult to reproduce elsewhere. And when artists start being driven out by higher rents, the creative gives way to the residential, and fashion districts turn into fashionable districts. There is a certain mutual independence between metropolitan innovation and public policy, just as there are forms of urban development that are not directly linked to voluntaristic urban policies, which can nonetheless play a role, albeit passive, if they have the right intentions. But public policy may also give rise to creative, gentrifying impulses, as for example in the Wedding district of Berlin, where an explicit policy of development through art and fashion is being carried out.

For cities faced with a planning crisis, incapable of integrating into their region (and this is the case, par excellence, with Paris, but also Marseille, Berlin and other cities), it is important to reconsider the role of art and design as pioneering activities. Networking through NTICs makes it possible to track the phenomenon of urban extension, and this can be a source of immediate economic development, in that it allows the community to observe public opinion in the making, and to reflect in real time on connections and interrelations between different actors. This is the resource upon which planning, innovation, fashion and intelligence are founded. In fact the sphere of the non-material, which is never totally codifiable or commercialisable, is the crux of innovation. It has to be understood that where the production of value takes place is exterior to the traditional market economy; and it is not enough simply to draw on exteriority without knowing how to reconstitute it. The housing problem has a bearing on this question, in that it entails a loss of creativity and a tendency to gentrification. It is vital to come up with urban policies that can tackle this problem.

The innovative metropolis also raises questions of governance. It is important to think about the privileged link between the metropolitan and European levels of politics. Whereas

cities are demonstrating a tendency to autonomy, in the sense of evolving into metropolitan entities, the national level is becoming ever less relevant, and a certain number of problems that are crucial for the metropolis appear to be soluble only by a strong federal Europe.

The second workshop of the day was devoted to the notion of public space, and the position that cultural and artistic experience can occupy in public policy. Public space is both the totality of transitional space that is available to everyone, in other words common space where one spends public time (a concept that is nonetheless problematic, given that common space is subject to private logics, and that there exists a degree of uncertainty, a vagueness about its boundaries), and, in a more philosophical sense, the process whereby a body of rational individuals take over the public sphere and turn it into a sphere of criticism against the power of the State – a space of discourse, enunciations and debate, but also representation, visibility and invisibility. Public space is always political space.

In cities across Europe and elsewhere – in Zagreb, Berlin, Sheffield, Paris, Saint-Denis, London, in wastelands and urban interstices – the next ten of twenty years should see the development of hybrid, transversal projects by architects who have adopted a socio-cultural approach, but also town-planners and artists, militants and activists developing new relationships with the city and its inhabitants, its users, and indeed those who are excluded from it – those who work in it, and those who work *on* it. These new practices are closely articulated with civil society, and are often co-generated with the population. They contribute to urban innovation and renovation on scales that are sometimes micro-local, across time-frames that are variable, and sometimes, though not always, highly restricted. They raise questions about losses of "savoir-city", and the crisis of urban space, but they also envisage the fabrication of innovative urbanities through new relationships between art, culture, populations and territories, new ways of producing and occupying public space – public space that is often criticised as being ossified, privatised and ever less public, gnawed away at by commercial logics, and labouring under a certain form of "symbolic destitution" (Bernard Stiegler). These experiments reappropriate the city, and engender civic stances in a reinvented public space.

The last workshop looked at the potential of immigration for innovation and urban development from the viewpoint of trade and culture. The role of immigrant populations in the commercial life of cities is obvious. But there are two ways of interpreting immigrants' propensities to entrepreneurship: either as an indication of insertion, integration and a contribution to the city, to the economy and to commercial innovation, or as a consequence of socio-economic marginalisation, with migrants setting up businesses and making a precarious living in sectors abandoned by the native population. Thus the commercial creativeness of immigrants is not necessarily correlated to their integration, or to the success of multicultural urban environments. And in this respect, the importance of national frameworks should be pointed out: the dynamics at work in cities depend on immigration policies, which have a decisive influence on immigrants' opportunities. But business creation by immigrants would also be impossible without the social capital generated by shared origins, minority status and the bonds of "ethnic" solidarity. As economic history shows, trade can be a vector of intercultural contact, and it has often contributed to building bridges between individuals and communities that previously had nothing in common. Economic activity illustrates processes of socio-cultural recomposition that characterise multicultural cities. From the immigrants' point of view, there are forms of cosmopolitanism that can embrace situations of social and cultural homogeneity. And the cosmopolitan "competence" that has long been associated with transnational elites should be recognised as an important contribution to the creativity of cities that are targets for immigration.

This contribution is, however, also strongly marked by its better-known cultural aspect. The competitiveness of cultural industries relies on the constant renewal of creativity, which in turn relies, in part, on the cultural diversity created by immigration. World musics are traditional and contemporary art forms that provide a new way of looking at the cultural and self-identifying references of other people. Immigration is a source of innovation and competition for these forms, which throw down the challenge of openness to difference. Commercial, economic, cultural and artistic contributions are real and important, and they need media outlets. But by the same token, media forms deriving from diversity, and recognised as new sources of information, should reflect plural societies and the value of the intense cosmopolitan relationships that exist in European cities. They should go beyond mere window-dressing, contaminated by the colonial mind-set, and allow the multicultural metropolis to represent itself to itself as a place of world-proximity.

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