

Call for papers Belgeo 2014/2

Cultural flagship projects in restructuring industrial areas : from urban renewal to metropolitan strategies ?

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In a context of increasing global competition between cities, culture has become in recent years an essential component of urban policies (Evans, 2001 ; Swyngedouw and aliter 2002). Culture is seen as an indispensable instrument for the cities post-modern transition to innovation-oriented activities in the context of the knowledge-economy. Since the pioneering initiatives from Baltimore or Bilbao, museums and large cultural facilities such as libraries or major event complexes are playing a significant role in the assertion of cities on the global scene. These “flagship projects” often entrusted to top names of the global “starchitecture” (Jenks, 2005, Gravari, 2009) are used as emblems for broader projects of urban regeneration. Ambitions go far beyond the mere development of new cultural or touristic services: the aim is not only to renew the image of the city, but also to rethink centralities, to reshape public spaces and to define new relations between the city and its region. Since the “Bilbao effect”, building major cultural facilities has become a global urban paradigm which has been largely mobilized by industrial cities in search of a new destiny (Ingallina et Park, 2005): the Imperial War Museum in Manchester, the Design museum in Essen in the Ruhr conurbation, the centre Pompidou in Metz and more recently the Louvre in Lens.

More than 15 years after the Bilbao experience, we suggest to analyze the uses and the urban effects of these major cultural facilities in restructuring industrial areas. Indeed, beyond showcase effects and marketing strategies, their actual impacts remain poorly known and difficult to evaluate (Evans, 2005; Orueta, 2009, Lusso). If the immediate economic effects of major cultural facilities have sometimes been explored, few studies have analysed their urban consequences. This is a crucial point, especially in restructuring industrial areas. In such regions, shaped by mining conurbations or polycentric urbanization corridors considered as badly integrated by planners, large cultural projects are used to sew up the built-up fabric, create new polarities and, in a word, produce urbanity. Like the cities of the Ruhr’s conurbation, which, several years after the end of the international architecture and urban planning exhibition IBA (Internationale Bauaustellung), have collectively candidate to the label of European cultural capital 2010 to assert a “Metropole Ruhr” on the international stage, these projects embody the ambition to build metropolises. **Do major cultural projects really help bring structure and urbanity to industrial areas-? Are they really a driving force for metropolization processes?**

Besides this urban focus, we also suggest to develop a reflective and critical approach. Beyond official discourses and territorial marketing, recent studies have stressed the growing manipulation of culture by neo-liberal urban policies, whose one of the most

impressive manifestation would be represented by flagship projects (Swyngedouw, Moulaert et Rodriguez, 2002 ; Rousseau, 2009 ; Smyth H., 1994). Major cultural facilities are part of a strategy of “producing a valuable resource” (Fagnoni, 2009), and often generate land and property valuations, which can lead to processes of gentrification or social filtering. In old industrial cities which have long been associated to a strong working class image and spatial Keynesianism policies, , they can be used to reshape identities in order to attract new middle or creative classes (Rousseau, 2009). Thus, large cultural projects often introduce new elites in the game of urban power and imply a growing role of local and regional public stakeholders as well as an increasing recourse to public/private partnerships within a context of growing merchandization of culture and museum institutions.

This urban and critical approach will focus on 3 over-lapping key areas.

Theme 1: Major cultural facilities as tools for regional planning and local development

Papers will first explore the new governance models associated with economic oriented cultural policies. Which players are involved in major cultural developments? Faced with the withdrawal of central governments, the rise of local powers and the increasing role of private entities, the question will be asked whether museums and other cultural facilities can still play a role in regional planning and reduce territorial inequalities?

Papers will also analyze the economic impact of major cultural facilities in industrial areas. How do these large projects fit into their local economic environment? Do they remain mere transplants with no effect on other economic sectors or can they create a dynamic of development and economic restructuring for a whole region?

Third, methodological approaches will be discussed. Many works have analyzed the direct economic impacts of museums, mostly in the tourism and culture sectors, and using quantitative methods and data (number of tickets, of new jobs, occupancy rates of the surrounding hotels and restaurants...). But exploring the relationships between cultural facilities and their economic environment requires broader and cross-sector approaches, both quantitative and qualitative, in order to catch the effects of flagship projects on the image of the cities and their interactions with the local economic system as a whole, including traditional and new industries.

Theme 2. Major cultural facilities and the remaking of the city in manufacturing areas

Museums and other major cultural developments do not have solely economic objectives, they also form part of large urban regeneration programs.

First, papers will analyze the effects of cultural facilities on the city image and identity, focusing on the concept of “project” which of late has had an increasing importance in urban planning. Can “cultural projects” be used as a basis for strengthening broader “city projects” in old manufacturing areas, that is to say can the development of collective projects be designed to create a new local identity and international image?

The consequences of cultural facilities on urban centralities and public spaces will also be explored. Indeed, large cultural developments are often symbolic emblems for the

building of new central areas in industrial conurbations where public spaces are scarce or absent. How do cultural facilities fit in with their surrounding area, both in terms of aesthetics, morphology and functions? Are they well connected to the rest of the city, and do they reshape the residents' urban practices and their movements in the urban environment?

Another key issue is the impact of cultural flagship projects on the social geography of manufacturing cities. Indeed, cultural facilities can create new public spaces, but they can also generate new forms of social segregation and processes of land and property valorization. Are they associated to gentrification or other social filtering processes? As some recent studies have pointed out, can cultural projects be seen as parts of symbolic policies designed to redefine working class cities for the new middle class and creative groups?

Theme 3. Major cultural facilities as driving forces for metropolization?

Major cultural developments are often part of metropolization projects aiming at enlarging urban organization and governance on a wider national, international and cross-border scale. This is the case of the recent Emscher valley cultural project, which involves all the cities of the Ruhr conurbation. In the old manufacturing areas, where urbanization is often extensive and polycentric, can major cultural facilities help form integrated urban regions that may have more influence in the increasingly competitive global context?

Papers will explore the new sets of relationships that cultural developments generate between cities of the same local manufacturing area, and between industrial urban regions and large tertiary metropolitan areas on a national or international scale. The positioning of flagship projects in the regional or national cultural market will be discussed, as well as the new regional cooperation policies that cultural projects invariably generate.

Proposals, with a short presentation (less than one page), has to be submitted to both guest editors (bernard.reitel@univ-artois.fr et thopfirsch@hotmail.com), with a copy to the co-director of Belgeo, Christian Vandermotten (cvdmotte@ulb.ac.be).

The deadline for the proposals is end of October 2013 and final papers, ready for submission to the referees, are awaited before the end of April 2014 at the latest.