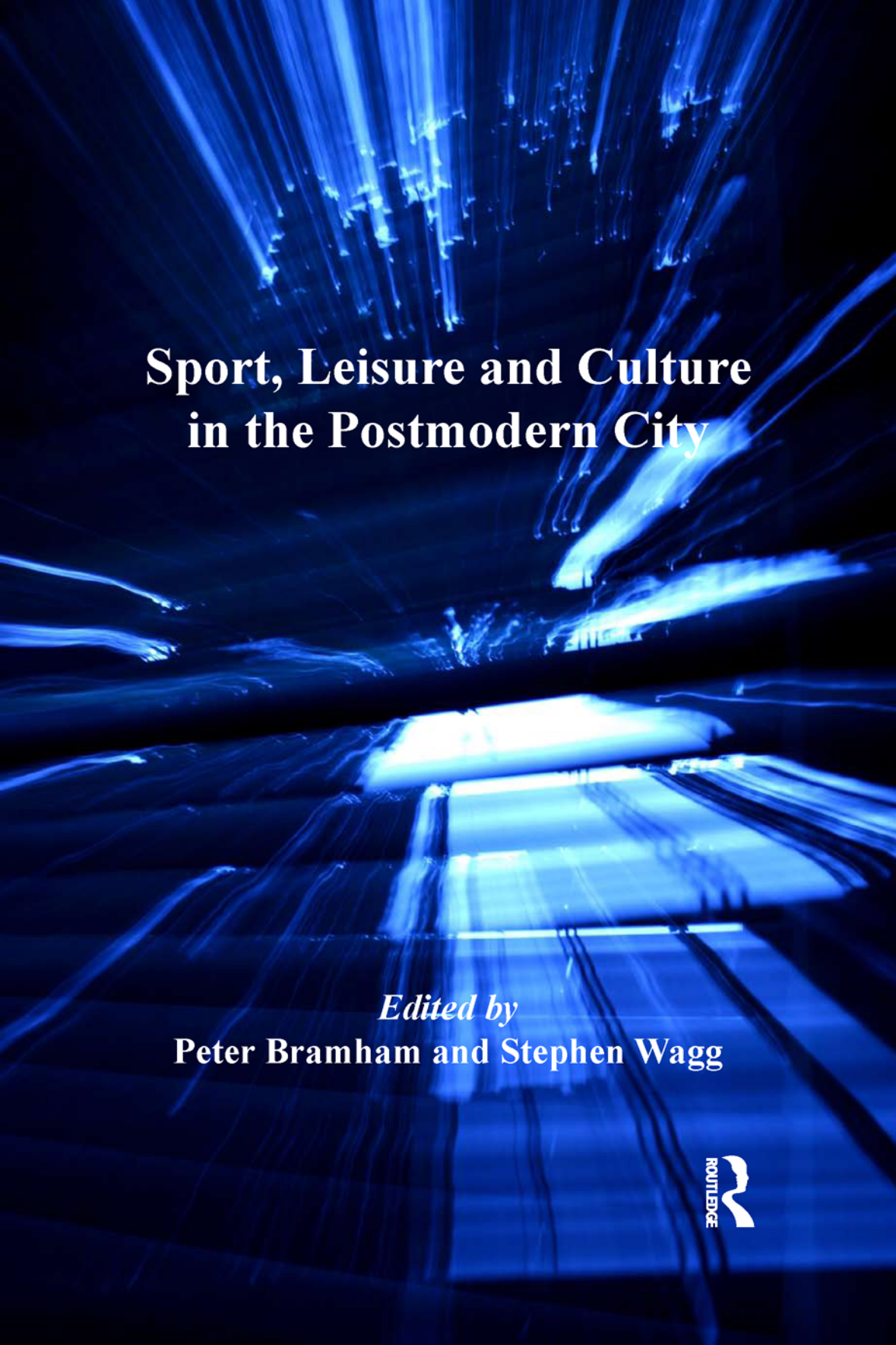
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in the Postmodern City
Edited by
Peter Bramham and Stephen Wagg
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# Sport, Leisure and Culture in the Postmodern City

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# Contents

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# Chapter 1
# Introduction

Peter Bramham and Stephen Wagg

> There is a strong predilection these days to regard the future of urbanization as already determined by the power of globalization and of market competition. Urban possibilities are limited to mere competitive jockeying of individual cities for position within the global urban system. Harvey, D. (1996: 420)

Both in his seminal book *Conditions of Postmodernity* (1989) and in an earlier article, 'Down towns' published in *Marxism Today* (1989) David Harvey argued that late capitalism results in the 'serial reproduction' of malls, pedestrian city centres, plazas and waterfronts as capital markets reinvest and restructure, moving away from industrial production and shifting into the service sectors, financial services, marketing and retailing. Global firms in retailing, tourism, hotel accommodation and fast-food outlets have invested in urban prime sites with the result that the mix of shopping and leisure experiences varies little from one city to another. This has led some commentators such as George Ritzer (2004) to suggest particular distinctive places disappear only to be replaced by universal homogenous 'non places'. Everywhere is nowhere; all places are pretty much the same. Globalisation gradually erases distinctive localities and local identities.

This book provides an explicit focus on sport, leisure and culture because local politicians and policy communities in recent years have identified these areas as crucial sites for public policy and local agency. In the UK the local state has been 'hollowed out' by the centralising policies of Thatcherite and Blairite regimes. So in the face of globalisation and centralisation, cities look towards postmodern cultural forms, branding and lifestyles to differentiate themselves from other cities.

In the UK experience, London Docklands and Canary Wharf represent the archetypal postmodern city: conceived by a central government quango with planning powers and budgets to reconstruct and redevelop derelict industrial locations into commercial waterfronts. The vision is one of private enterprise, high-tech, and an integration of work, home and leisure within the city. Its icons are postmodern architecture, a mass transit system, water-based developments and heritage conservation (retaining dockland cranes for aesthetic purposes, for example), alongside cultural investments in cinema, art galleries and festival events.

The backdrop to such urban redevelopment remains in social divisions of class, race, gender and locality. What is to be done with existing local working-class

communities rooted in conditions of industrial modernity? Where are they in terms of employment, housing and leisure? How do local established industrial lifestyles shaped by race and gender fit the new cosmopolitan postmodern city? What are the politics of the postmodern city and what public policy do local politicians favour? One of the major problems associated with urban redevelopment is that local people and communities demand involvement, democratic participation and may actively resist these postmodern plans and cosmopolitan 'new times'. In the UK, Urban Development Corporations, harbingers of a neo-liberal project to energise market forces in the 1980s, were for the most part unprepared for the resistance of people in London's Docklands and have tended, since Docklands, to favour developing 'people-less' areas elsewhere.

London Docklands highlighted the pressing dilemmas of urban development with all its usual suspects, both on centre stage and lurking in the wings. Tensions in the postmodern city have played out in the face of a changing economic climate, whether the credit booms of the 1980s, the fears of recession in the 1990s or the spectre in the 2000s of full-blown global depression. Major players tend to act out their stereotypical roles: footloose international capital searching out profitable locations and niche markets; central government providing subsidies for relocation[1]; and local involvement stage-managed by local politicians in *ad hoc* partnerships and pragmatic alliances, demanded by new business models.

But there is also a growing voice of 'white racism', with the British National Party winning local elections on Isle of Dogs and gaining footholds elsewhere. Here blossom fascist parties which address fears and concerns of local working-class communities which 'dare to say what you are thinking',[2] seeking "to withdraw from the EU, protect British jobs for British workers and to say no to immigration". Even before the May 2009 media and public outrage at MP's expenses and accusations of sleaze, mainstream parties had been unable to mobilise an increasingly disenchanted electorate, particularly at a local or more global European level. During the past decades in its quest to modernise, the Labour Party has redefined its relations with traditional working-class communities; it has reneged on Old Labour's shibboleths in defence of welfarism and social reformism. One consequence of the neo-liberal project and its global politics of marketisation and privatisation has been emergence of single issue, community-based groups to promote or resist new developments, many formed in response to cuts in local public expenditure on collective consumption, often informed by an environmentalist perspective to tackle broader 'green' issues related to overpopulation, global warming and overconsumption.

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1 See for example the Department of the Environment guaranteeing occupancy of Canary Wharf and regional authorities such as Yorkshire Forward providing funding to build the Leeds Arena in 2012 much to the dismay of politicians in competitor and neighbouring cities such as Sheffield.

2 See for example the headline slogan of the BNP in the June 2009 European Elections for the Yorkshire and Humberside region.

Manuel Castells' (1977) (1978) initial neo-Marxist analyses were overoptimistic about the emergence of new urban social movements which he predicted would shift agendas and create a 'new politics' of identity, reflecting issues about gender, race and 'green' lifestyles. Not only did those in receipt of public subsidy (in essence the powerless, marginalised and unemployed) fail to mount a defence of collective consumption expenditures in the face of retrenchment from the neo-liberal project but neither did local government professionals and public sector unions. Some cities did resist central government 'interference' and cuts in local state autonomy whereas others did not and were able to accommodate local policies within the thrust and direction of neo-liberal or New Right central government policies. Indeed Ian Henry (2001) has written extensively about Right- and Left-Post Fordist policies to deal with these times and the tensions between the central and the local state. Whereas traditional Fordist policies defended high levels of expenditure on collective consumption, Right-Post Fordism accepts the central state's neo-liberal project and looks to the local state to be more entrepreneurial and managerial, contracting services out to the most efficient and effective provider. In contrast Left-Post Fordism, demands that the local state offers progressive new cultural services for a 'rainbow alliance' of excluded and neglected citizens, such as racial and ethnic minorities, gay and women's groups.

It is clear from Peter Bramham and John Spink's first chapter here about postmodern cities and the detailed city-centre case study provided in the second chapter by Janet Douglas, that Leeds is just one of many northern cities that have experienced the Docklands strategy: namely, the redevelopment of waterfronts, derelict warehouses, canal sites into an integrated city-centre environment. There are other examples in northern UK cities with Manchester, Liverpool, Sheffield and smaller industrial towns Bradford, Wakefield, Halifax, Barnsley and Doncaster in South and West Yorkshire.[3]

Leeds became a postmodern city in its patterns of employment and labour migration as the past generation for thirty years witnessed a decline in primary and secondary sector jobs and a growth in tertiary sector employment in education, insurance and financial services, tourism, arts and cultural services. All these were designated as 'qualities' in the City's new unitary plan *A Vision of Leeds*, first published in 1992.[4] Hence, there were several zones or prime use quarters: Civic Quarter, Prime Office Quarter, Prime Shopping Quarter, Hospital Quarter, Education Quarter, Riverside Area and Prestige Development Area. There were key developments and the areas of city which symbolised these dimensions of

3 West Yorkshire's five towns are Leeds, Bradford, Huddersfield, Wakefield, and Halifax – all at the heart of industrial modernity with local economies dominated by coalmining, textiles, engineering, printing and railways.

4 This Vision has been renegotiated with the then new leader of the Leeds City Council, Brian Walker, putting out the original plan to be renegotiated and relegitimated by a new consultative process in 1997 and since then has updated – see for example, Leeds Unitary Development Plan (June Review 2006) and the Vision for Leeds 2004-2020.

economy and policy – such as Lisbon Court; Corn Exchange; St. James Hospital and Thackray Museum; the University; Canalside; Armouries; West Yorkshire Playhouse area and so on.

Since 1979 the city administration had until 2004 been controlled by a Labour council and the local economy had remained buoyant compared with other northern industrial towns. Nevertheless, a Thatcherite central government imposed an Urban Development Corporation on the city during 1987-1995 with an annual £15 million budget and planning powers to encourage capital investment and regeneration in inner-city areas (free from some local authority professional and bureaucratic planning control). The slogans were for 'new realism', entrepreneurialism, leaving the private sector to develop those areas which had been 'failed' by local authority red tape, blanket subsidies and inadequate market intelligence and data. The Labour Group responded to the UDC in Leeds by setting up its own Development Corporation (Leeds City Development Corporation) and transferring its land ownership and assets so as to isolate or minimise the impact of the Leeds UDC. The Board of the LCDC included a partnership of Chamber of Commerce, local politicians and leading experts and planners.

The traditional service committee structure and divisions of local authority officers and departments experienced substantial changes. Like other local authorities, Leeds was subject to new legislation from central government (e.g. Rate Capping, Community Charge, Urban Development Corporation, Compulsory Competitive Tendering) to curtail or restrict local powers of expenditure and policy direction. Leeds' local political system, whether controlled by the Conservatives or Labour, has historically been dominated by a 'rate-payer' ideology. Here, emphasis is focused on constraining budgets, gaining accountability and value for money, and political pragmatism in response to local political demands and pressure groups. The Leeds policy system was already well-positioned to develop Right-Post Fordist strategies to go with the political plans of central government policies.

Leeds was already seeking strong partnerships with the commercial/financial sectors of the local economy. It had set up Leeds Waterfront in the early 1990s with a £500K budget to develop the waterfront and increase tourism spending by 12% and visitor numbers by 10% in the three year period. The Leeds Initiative was another attempt to co-ordinate the public, private and voluntary sector response to redevelopments, events and festivals. It was headed by a flexible taskforce (and initially using Urban Aid money from central government), it introduced 'Landmark Leeds', which sought to conserve heritage architecture in Leeds and refurbish or reconstruct central city Victorian Leeds street furniture. It was also involved in urban event 'pump priming' such as sponsorship for City of Flowers, for festivals – film, jazz, piano as well as co-ordinating events like Opera North, rock concerts in the park – in the early days boasting global celebrities such as Madonna, Michael Jackson and the Rolling Stones, but recently with more local celebrities, such as Arctic Monkeys and Kaiser Chiefs topping the bill at the Leeds Festival.

There has been discussion amongst urban theorists regarding city tourism and 'boosterism' in postmodern debates. David Harvey has argued that the relocation and restructuring of city forms around the post-modern is a 'carnival mask' to conceal deep-rooted class divisions with ensuing privatisation of social, cultural and political forms and spaces. If post-modern buildings are the precursor of postmodernity, then Leeds has its fair share. Indeed, architects refer to the 'Leeds style' – decorative brick, a bricolage of styles Greek, Gothic, Victorian – glass, steel and brick. Traditional buildings from industrial modernity have been transformed into postmodern restaurants and conference centres. The Corn Exchange has been refurbished as exclusive niche market shops, Granary Wharfe becomes 'specialty shopping' – 22 highly individual gift shops, art and craft stalls in a festival market and new cultural forms have emerged such as the West Yorkshire Playhouse, Opera North and the Phoenix Dance Theatre boasting an international reputation for audience development and community dance education.

Leeds offers a Chicago skyline, but the facades of modern industrial functional office space have been reclad in post-modern glass and colours (see for example Leeds Metropolitan University Library and the iconic Rosebowl which houses the Leeds Business School and opened in May 2009), shopping mall and precincts have emerged such as Bond Street Centre and the Victoria Quarter and the city council has taken ownership of the Elland Road complex, home of Leeds United's football ground which has been refurbished to house national and European competitions.

The success and appearance of post-modern buildings have helped convince city business and politicians that revitalisation and urban renaissance are on the way and civic boosterism is actually working. City politicians take credit for developments that would have happened anyway, and claim that changing cityscapes with new investments, especially new leisure opportunities, benefit every citizen. The postmodern discourse persuades doubters that it attracts new businesses. Newcomers to the region and locals themselves, it is argued, benefit from new employment, new buildings and a refurbished environment. Within these policy communities, urban marketeers convince themselves and others that they have made a 'difference'. Indeed, the key Leeds Urban Development Corporation slogan was '*Making Things Happen' – The Delivered Future*, but in reality, many UDCs have failed (and all have been wound up) and the Leeds UDC may have taken credit for planning processes which were embryonic and agreed *before* their incorporation. City politicians and policy communities have been swept along with the euphoria of urban renaissance, pressing for urban involvement and New Right-Post Fordist developments, even though they have little concrete evidence that festivals, heritage events, sports and cultural industries and such like generate extra investment and are central factors in relocations. Politicians were prepared to believe these were important issues in the city's strategy and in consultative documents. City boosterism and mega-events become important ingredients in city politics, leisure and tourism strategies. This policy shift is perhaps synonymous with a significant loss of civic power and municipal effectiveness in more important

areas of urban life. Maurice Roche (2000) has argued that the benefits of such sports and leisure strategies have been problematic and his case study (Roche 1994) of the Sheffield Student Games in the early 1990s convincingly argued that both conventional and situational rationality in local political processes have been the first casualties when preparing, deliberating and costing civic bids.

Indeed, rather than studying tourist multiplier effects of mega-events, there should be more detailed empirical research on political configurations that lead to such decision-making. The third chapter in this book by Jonathan Long and Ian Strange makes such a contribution to understanding the development of cultural policy in Leeds. It has often been that it was political 'autarchies' and struggles for power within city policy systems that best explained decision-making processes and outcomes, rather than other political, economic or cultural assessments.

The dominant Leeds Labour group has not been immune to post-modern visions of using leisure and cultural policy as part of urban regeneration strategy. In the early 1990s the Policy Resources Committee has stressed the vision of Leeds as a 24 hour European City. At that time, Council Leader Trickett mapped out his European vision to lead businesses, police and policy makers to grant 24 hour licences for bars, restaurants and discos, as well as encouraging property owners to cut rents to encourage late-night shop opening. Founded in 1990 the Leeds Initiative encouraged local partnerships to revitalise Leeds city centre, giving grants for illuminating buildings, street events, festivals, Valentine Fairs in the city centre, as well as Christmas Lights, City Centre Cycling, Kellogg's Tour of Britain and Leeds Classic Cycle Race. This bricolage of leisure and cultural activities is not part of the generic sports, parks, culture and leisure policy but has been organised on a more flexible, pragmatic, annual basis through contingency funds from the Leader's Office. There has been a pragmatic alliance of existing provision and new projects initiated by civic personalities and professional officers. There have been new opportunities in these new times which are heralded at a local and national level, with key policy makers looking towards European cities and cultural renaissance, whilst professional officers remain still quite local and provincial. In the past there has been a local policy officer system with an emphasis on the 'Leeds' way of doing things within a stable and safe 'rate-payer' ideology. So arose an unresolved tension between traditional parochial Leeds style 'mass' leisure service provision associated with previous Leeds Leisure Services and emergent demands from the centre for a vibrant 24hour tourist city. There remains what Raymond Williams called 'a local structure of feeling'.[5] It is this culture that has been celebrated in the writings of Alan Bennett, one of Leeds' few national celebrities. His postmodern celebrity status is discussed by Peter Bramham in the fourth chapter of this collection. The old Leeds industrial culture of modernity

5 This concept was deemed central to understanding Manchester and Sheffield see Taylor, L., K. Evans, et al. (1996). *A tale of two cities: global change, local feeling and everyday life in the North of England – a study in Manchester and Sheffield* London, Routledge.

was going home for 'tea' (the main meal of the day) after work rather than more flexible work patterns around the city-centre restaurants, pubs, bars and cafes in the new 24/7 postmodern city. A similar cultural clash took place when Leeds United entered UEFA Cup competitions for the first time in 1966; programme notes explained to Leeds United supporters precisely how to pronounce strange sounding football teams and where in Europe they were located.[6] It is precisely this juxtaposition of the local and the global, the modern and the postmodern that is explored both in Stephen Wagg's chapter about the Revie era of Leeds football and Karl Spracklen's chapter about rugby league. Local supporters belong to and remain loyal to local teams such as Hunslet and Bramley despite the success of Leeds Rhinos sustained by the media exposure, branding and marketing of Super League.

It is therefore essential for any analysis of the evolving city to present an explanation with a precise level of detail and the present chapters focus on the diverse contributions of sport, leisure and culture. Broad structural processes have been identified in various literatures about economic restructuring, the relocation of spatial forms, cultural change and social divisions. If it is the case that economic, political, social and cultural formations have their distinctive trajectories then these dimensions need to be traced spatially and historically within city case studies. The demands of city images, new experiences, heritage and style focus attention on the construction and rediscovery of new prime sites. These represent the post-modern city and provide raw materials for constructing new narratives about changing spaces and places. It is important to examine historically the process whereby new locations and new forms are constructed within the context of changing economic, political, cultural and social formations. Standing in Millennium Square, Leeds Shopping Plaza, Leeds Waterfront, Temple Newsam or in Roundhay Park, one not only needs to exercise the tourist gaze on new installations, the multiplex cinema, the themed garden and visitor centre, the museum shop and art gallery exhibitions, but also to ask questions about who is exercising the gaze and whose interests are served by such developments.

Such questions come to light in Ben Carrington's chapter which draws upon personal recollections and reflections of key moments of coming to and becoming an outsider in the city, experiencing the dark side of Leeds' 'local structure of feeling' whether through the eyes of the child in Kirkstall, playing cricket in Chapeltown or working at Leeds Metropolitan University. The penultimate chapter by Aarti Ratna's explores issues of negotiating black and Muslim identity in young women's sporting lives, particularly in relation to playing representative football. The postmodern may celebrate difference but its contours are projected onto existing unequal power relations of race and ethnicity. It may feel like postmodern concepts of bricolage, dedifferentiation, hybridity and difference has long been part of social science discourses about the city but there has still been little by way of

6 In the 1966 season, Leeds played such teams as Torino, Leipzig, Újpest Dózsa, Valencia and Real Zaragoza.

critical questioning about the trajectory of particular cities. The following chapters on Leeds will, it is hoped, make some contribution to developing a nuanced and critical analysis of the postmodern city.

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# Chapter 2
# Leeds – Becoming the Postmodern City

Peter Bramham and John Spink

## Globalisation and Postmodernity

Whether styled as the coming of Postmodernity, of Postindustrialism, of Postfordism or even of Late Capitalism, there is substantial evidence that the developed world has sustained significant and qualitative change in the past 30 years. Many authors pinpoint the mid 1970s with the onset of the Oil Crisis and ensuing global depression and fiscal crises for cities, particularly in North America, as marking a critical juncture in these developments. From that time the taken-for-granted dominance of the West came to be challenged by the emergence of newly-developing economies on the Pacific Rim. However, by the late 1990s, even the 'tiger economies' in this part of the world were experiencing substantial economic disruption, whilst transnational agencies wrestled with intractable problems surrounding world debt. During the next decade the exponential economic growth of both China and India made unprecedented demands for primary materials for energy, food production and manufacture. Recently there have been severe dislocations in both commercial and financial markets which fashioned global repercussions, signified by the 'credit crunch' following the collapse of sub-prime mortgage markets in the US and elsewhere. National governments worldwide have chosen to provide substantial public funds to help the private sector in banking, building societies, car manufacture and small business. There has also been consistent global failure to agree and meet climate change targets for the environment in 'recycling' and transport. Another major contributor to widespread destablisation was the liberalisation of state-socialist nation states with their subsequent political desire to form new military and economic links with western capitalist democracies. In the UK, media and politicians have debated the social and economic impacts of migrant labour and asylum seekers, following the expansion of the European Union from 15 to 24 members in 2004.

Most social science commentators characterise such seismic changes in ideas, communications, manufacture, information, markets and natural environment by frequent use of the umbrella term of 'globalisation'. Whatever the exact cause or its precise timing, the consequences for urban centres and for the leisure time of their inhabitants have been profound. These changes have affected all aspects of contemporary life.

## Economic Change

At the core of all cities is their economic rationale. Postmodernity in the form of postindustrial relations reflects profound change in urban economies. Traditional methods of large-scale factory-based, mass production, usually organised around assembly-line production techniques, have given way to much more flexible methods. Mass production meant efficient supervision and control technologies, high levels of productivity and low unit costs of production. More recently, in place of standardised products created through economies of scale in massive plants dominating the inner areas of large industrial cities, manufacturers have adopted small-batch production methods for high-quality products using computer-aided design and manufacturing. This 'just in time' production allows for economies of scope and a far more demand-responsive system based on fewer but highly skilled workers within smaller plants that can even be located away from urban centres.

This flexibility facilitated within production systems has generally led to less routinised work and to the employment of a smaller, less unionised and increasingly part-time workforce. According to Leon Kreitzman (1999) patterns of working have become more flexible as boundaries between work and leisure become more permeable in the 24 hour society. Reduction in the old hierarchical labour force has in most developed countries been accompanied by growing pools of persistent long-term unemployment, particularly amongst less skilled male workers. Simultaneously, with change in production patterns and the application of new technologies, has come a structural shift in local and national economic life. In cities like Leeds, manufacturing industry in engineering, clothing or printing has come to assume a less significant role and in most centres has been displaced by a growing focus on commerce, services and finance capital. Growth in this service sector has been facilitated by technological developments in 'global information highways' viz. the digitalization of computing, data-processing and satellite and cable communications. According to Manuel Castells (1996) we live in a 'network society' at 'an interval in history' which is experiencing a transformation of material culture by new technologies of information processes and communications. This 'lifeblood' of cities demands locations near central hubs or nodes of information flows in order to avoid the risk of being bypassed or 'switched off', as is the plight of undeveloped regions at both a national and international level. Hotspots of commerce, finance and information transfer, whether in West Coast US, in Northern Italy, or the South East of England, must be attractive to dominant managerial elites who express cosmopolitan tastes in work, residence and leisure.

The major urban changes of the past 30 years, however categorised, be it as deindustrialisation, post-modernity, high modernity or late capitalism, involved considerable dislocation and readjustment within European cities, in their economic, cultural, spatial and political structures. The generic changes which have transformed the working-class cities of the industrial heartlands of Europe have nevertheless been mediated by diversification in the local economy. Accordingly, the industrial and commercial face of cities in Britain and Europe, crafted by processes of production,

have been reshaped and recast by newer forms of economic activity and distinctive patterns of consumption and pleasurable free time.

These represent decisive change in economic activity and in the labour force from one predominantly male and working in manufacturing to one which is increasingly female and working as the personnel of a postindustrial revolution. Such major structural changes have implications far beyond the economic domain. Most commentators see development of new information technologies as representing a distinctive stage in economic development as cities are tied into processes of 'globalisation'. There are now global 24 hour financial and information systems and therefore decisions by transnational agencies and corporations have a direct impact on cities wherever they are located in the world.

## Social Change

Urban populations have necessarily been greatly affected by the broad structural re-composition of city economies. In place of a large working-class population based upon male manual labour have come service classes with very different attitudes and aspirations. The historic collective and community focus associated with each industrial locality has been replaced by a far more individualised and domestic perspective adopted by the new 'service' class.

Flexibility in employment has encouraged greater spatial mobility and a destabilising of local cultures and kinship networks. Giddens (1991) describes this process as the 'disembedding' of local cultures and patterns of life and their replacement by 'expert systems' of technical knowledge which stretch over time and space. To provide one example, local cuisine and restaurants become replaced by global chains such as Starbucks or McDonald's, and local shops and outfitters are replaced by exclusive fashion and lifestyle designers like those which constitute the Victoria Quarter in Leeds. Throughout the UK, there is growing popular and media resistance to the dominance of supermarket chains over customers, suppliers and producers. Tesco, in particular has been actively, too aggressively for many critics, acquiring and hoarding land for future stores, challenging local development plans and absorbing independent local stores in order to rebrand them as Tesco Metro or Tesco Express. Shopping malls, in particular, have become, in the words of George Ritzer (2004), 'non places' that carry no unique or distinguishing features as each mall, like the White Rose Centre, boasts the same national retail outlets and identical brands.

Households have changed simultaneously, with declining birthrates and more female employment leading to smaller families. Economic independence at all ages has increasingly been associated with independent living and growing demand for self-contained housing. There is some evidence[1] of changing gender roles

1 See National Statistics data from the 2001 Census at www.statistics.gov.uk/census2001/topics, accessed 28.02.2009 and Steve Coltrane's overview of 200 studies

and gender expectations in employment, marriage, family and leisure. Greater numbers of elderly people, due to lengthening life expectancy and continued independence, have generated many more single-person households. In addition, marital breakdown and new patterns of living and sexual expression have all contributed to an increasingly varied and fragmented social structure.[2] Some cities seek to use these changed identities as an important source of investment in leisure [for example, the 'Gay Village' in Manchester: Taylor et al. (1996)]. However, alongside the positive effects of restructuring, changes in traditional relationships with work have led to great areas of cities in which the casualties of these global innovations face lives of deprivation and material poverty within societies of widening disparity in wealth and socio-economic resources, as experienced in the vast estates of South and East Leeds.

## Cultural Change

Global telecommunications and computerisation affecting industrial production have wrought a similarly profound effect on urban cultural forms. Satellite broadcasting, increasingly replacing terrestrially-sourced television in many homes, accelerates national and transnational acculturation in a homogenous commodification of international products and associated lifestyles. Particularly amongst the impressionable young such forms and products assume immense status capital as tide after tide of material innovation sweeps around the world, supplanting previous commercialised innovations with still more prestigious replacements. It is this global commodification and consumption which represents a qualitative shift from historic local and national cultural heterogeneity.

Amongst all age groups there is increased focus on home and domestic-based cultural forms in leisure time. The domestic hearth, whether as the venue for television, video game or more traditional activities like reading and needlecrafts, has come to replace public and collective domains of mass entertainment developed during the era of modernity. Even within households individualisation of headphones, laptops and palmtops and most recently iPhones, whether for auditory or visual pleasure, further separate leisure participants into an isolationist cellular mode. Time shifting and de-differentiation of patterns of life are facilitated by video timers, digitalized TV and the BBC iPlayer. Fast foods, 'snacking', microwaves and a variety of computer applications ensure that even meals are no longer necessarily shared group activities, whether at home or at work.

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2 See for example patterns of polarisation and gentrification in Kirkstall, Leeds in Bramham, P. and J. Spink (1994). Leisure and the postmodern city. *Modernity, postmodernity and lifestyles*. I. Henry. Eastbourne, Leisure Studies Association**:** 83-103.

Individualisation, whether of personal mobility through private car use, of entertainment through personalised stereos and television sets, or even of education through CD Rom and the internet, has profoundly restructured the leisure lifestyles of contemporary urban populations. Through generic websites such as Bebo, Facebook, My Space and YouTube or through internet dating sites, blogs and chatrooms, communication has become more selective, customized and privatized. Many of the old collective forms (Hoggart 1957) enjoyed by a mass public have been eliminated or replaced by newly repackaged commodification, whether as multi-screen cinemas or executive-boxed football stadia or downloaded music and television programmes.

The postmodern emphasis placed on pleasure, hedonistic experience and consumption has across Europe revolutionised leisure and its defining forms so that shopping, travel, even physical exercise, all fit within postmodern conceptions of commodified leisure lifestyles. The focus on commercialisation and high quality has necessarily made many of these highly individualised forms elitist, exclusive and divisive, incorporating only some of the mass of urban populations. Such widening disparities in leisure opportunities remain a growing challenge for postmodern cities and in particular for urban leisure policy makers.

As one would expect, there have been substantial formative and reactive shifts in cultural policy and planning – from the 1960s counter cultural movements driven by feminism, ethnic minorities and gay liberation – all offering a redefinition of citizenship, political participation and community networks. Environmentally, there has been growth in community planning, neighbourhood centres, the recasting of public space, both in terms of safe defensible spaces and public transport, partly afforded by re-introduction of trams and mass transit systems such as in Nottingham, Newcastle, Manchester and Sheffield. There was some attempt at a new politics of representation, often through subversive cultural forms and formats in video, rock music, popular art, festivals and street events, all aimed at 'reclaiming the city' and 'Making Space'. The past twenty years have witnessed for some city planners the emergence of the 'compact city', with a pressing need for local city marketing, for improving public transport, developing brown field sites, and resisting the new urban sprawl of eco-towns and suburbs . In architectural terms this has often meant the rediscovery of the piazza, as is the case in Leeds with the opening of Millennium Square with the aid of National Lottery funding.

A good example of cultural regeneration can be seen in the city of Sheffield in the mid 1980s. After the collapse of a Labourist strategy of direct subsidy and provision for heavy industry, Sheffield sought to develop cultural industries in a 'cultural quarter' which had an arts centre, exhibition spaces, restaurants as well as recording studio for pop music, led by local bands such as the Human League and Def Leppard. The recording studio, Red Tape, was also a venue for local groups to rehearse and record, as well as operating as a training centre for unemployed youth. This theme was sustained as the city later developed the ill-fated National Museum of Popular Music.

Other cities have also developed cultural strategies. Bilbao has been faced with the rapid deindustrialisation of its primary infrastructure and socialist-led city politics within the Basque region seeks to regenerate the city as a leisure and tourist location. There have been substantial efforts to deal with river pollution and to develop and rebuild waterfront locations and invest in a modern transport system. Cultural policies have sought to attract substantial international investment viz. the Guggenheim Museum of Modern Art, refurbishment of the opera house, as well as the revitalising of local Sunday markets, festivals, fallas etc. The role of the university and education sector has been of importance, especially in attracting international conferences and reasserting Basque regional identity in Spain and in EU.

In Rotterdam, the city has re-imaged itself from a dull industrial city to a vibrant 'Water City' with diverse cultural and sporting investments – musea, 'Tropicana' sports and leisure facilities, Center Parcs, IMAX cinema, as well as substantially modernised Central Business District investment in architecturally significant office and retail buildings, with pubs, restaurants and World Championship events used to promote the 'new' city. Similarly, in Manchester, city politicians have been keen to redevelop historic buildings (the G-MEX, waterfront docklands and waterways) as well as to capitalise on club life and pop music, graphic arts scene, linked to the education sectors. Club life and the 'Gay Village' have been important destinations for new commercial investments. There has also been substantial public investment in a mass transport system (an integrated light railway in the city centre), and there is some evidence that commuters have shifted from private car usage to public transport. Manchester has celebrated its distinctive cultural forms (Manchester United and Granada Television studios) as well as mounting successive bids to hold Commonwealth Games and the Olympics.

## Political Change

Growing individualism in the workplace and in home life inevitably found expression in the political realm. The old class-based workplace politics of the era of modernity reflected an expectation of a steady living in life-long production-based industries favouring unionised solidarity and a collectivist approach to political and social issues. This produced in the period after 1945 the collectivist welfare interventions of large and powerful bureaucratic states aiming at economic growth and assured living standards for mass urban populations. The precise settlement agreed between state, private capital and the labour movement was historically negotiated and contested within each nation state in Europe. The overall settlement was generically the development of postwar welfare states (or what some writers term Fordist systems of regulation), with US military, political and economic support.

During the 1980s and 1990s politics in Europe moved towards monetarist New Right policies to control public and welfare expenditure; this was known as Thatcherism in the UK, but many other nation states, France, Germany,