

Title: Cities and the art of cultural planning. Authors: [Montgomery, John](#) Source: [Planning Practice & Research](#); Winter90, Vol. 5 Issue 3, p17, 8p, 1 diagram, 6bw Document Type: Article Subject Terms: *[CULTURAL policy](#) Geographic Terms: [GREAT Britain](#) Abstract: Discusses that cultural planning in European and North American cities is not an impossibly difficult task which it only requires understanding about what cities should be and what *urban* living is all about. The condition of *urban* centers in Great Britain; Future of *urban culture* in Britain; Cultural planning in Britain; Cultural policy and arts; Cultural industries; *Urban design* and revitalization; Conclusion. Full Text Word Count: 5624 ISSN: 0269-7459 Accession Number: 9707075437 Persistent link to this record: <http://search.epnet.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=aph&an=9707075437> Databas

e: Academic Search Premier * * *

CITIES AND THE ART OF CULTURAL PLANNING

Contents

[Introduction](#)

[The condition of urban centres in Britain](#)

[Urban futures](#)

[Cultural planning](#)

[Cultural policy and the arts](#)

[Cultural industries](#)

[Urban design and revitalisation](#)

[Cultural planning](#)

[Notes of caution](#)

[A new way of thinking about urbanism?](#)

[Acknowledgement](#)

[References](#)

[APPENDIX:
Possible initiatives for local authorities](#)

[City cultures and cultural](#)

[animation](#)
[Events and sign-posting](#)
[Structural renewal and the built environment](#)
[Supporting public services](#)
[Retail policy](#)
[Cultural production and economic development](#)

[Notes](#)

Introduction

Have you ever wondered why it is that continental cities tend to feel so much more lively, diverse, and stimulating than British cities? Is it all the government's fault for imposing public spending cuts and a decline in public services across the UK? Is it the weather? Or is it a lack of imagination about what urban living is or should be all about?

Perhaps a bit of all three, but the lack of imagination is in my view critical. My contention is that British town planning has rarely, if ever, adopted a cultural approach to *urban* living, and that this, over the years, has contributed to the diminution of civic pride, citizenship, and the quality of *urban* living. By *culture* I mean the sense of place, the way of life of a city or town and its inhabitants: the way people eat, talk, think, meet, work, how they spend their free time, and plan their holidays. This is a wide definition of *culture*, and one which goes beyond the orthodox British conflation of *culture* with 'high arts'.

And yet cultural planning as practised in many European and North American cities is not an impossibly difficult task, though like everything else it has its problems. What is required is an understanding about what cities should be and what *urban* living is all about.

Admittedly, we in the UK start from a position of weakness, for many British towns and cities are depressingly similar in their drabness, impoverished *culture*, monotony, and mono-functionalism. Others appear to be following the same path, and *urban* life in Britain will probably get worse before it gets better. This is likely, for some, to intensify the nostalgia of English rural idealism, with people trying to escape from cities to suburbs and the second home in the country. But many of the worst features attributed to *urban* living are becoming manifest in rural areas and market towns across the country: traffic jams, lager louts, violent crime, and so on. The problems of *urban* living are not solved by running away.

Many Europeans are now debating the coming "Battle of the Cities" where major *urban* areas--Barcelona, Milan, Paris, Berlin, Frankfurt--are gearing up to compete as European centres for *culture*, fashion, finance, or innovation. A mayor weapon in this battle is the quality of life, sense of place, and way of living in a city, in the hope of attracting investment, relocating companies and would-be employees. *Culture*, more specifically *urban culture*, is consequently moving to the centre stage of political and public policy agendas in Europe and in a handful of UK cities.

If the late 1980s and early 1990s marked the emergence of green consciousness on a large scale, much debate in the 1990s will centre on the liveability of cities, the dynamics of *urban culture*.

The condition of urban centres in Britain

The economic base of many UK towns and cities has experienced rapid restructuring over the past ten to fifteen years. Many manufacturing sectors were lost altogether during the recession of the early 1980s, and the new growth areas of the economy have been in financial services, producer services, retailing, and personal services. This has been accompanied by a new geography of production, enabled by telecommunications technology and other infrastructural investment, and driven by the desire to leave congested centres, in favour of places where rents are lower, labour is cheaper and/or more plentiful or skilled, and where senior personnel can be attracted by the 'quality of life' on offer. The major recipients of population growth during the 1980s have been the smaller cities and market towns within easy (at least in principle) reach of Birmingham, Manchester, and London. Many such towns are now business locations for insurance companies, pension funds, and banks, where the more routinised functions are undertaken. Many other towns and cities, particularly in the South and the Midlands (one thinks here of Swindon or Derby) are being targeted by the Japanese as locations for production from which to assail European markets after 1992.

Allied to these economic changes and relocation strategies has been the property investment boom of the 1980s, with nearly every town in Southern England and the Midlands experiencing intense development pressure for new offices, private housing developments, 'themed' leisure complexes, marinas, and, of course, shopping centres. Some of these towns are now competing with each other to attract new occupants into this new floor space. Some, sadly, are not competing at all. Because of the time-lag imbalance of property supply to demand, because of the tendency towards over-production, and because of the threat of recession, the property market is now very flat indeed. Some existing proposed schemes may well be abandoned during the next year. Yet, the fact remains that the physical structure of many UK towns and cities, and the pattern of living in them, have been altered considerably by property developments over the past ten years.

Retailing is a prime example. Some towns are now left with only one or two supermarkets, as often as not stuck somewhere on the edge of town. Large new shopping centres have been built in the centres of towns, their high rents only affordable by the multiple chains. The result is that one can hardly tell one shopping centre from the next and one can often guess in advance the shops that one will find. At the same time, many of the smaller, independent shops which contribute to a town's character have been lost.

And perhaps most worrying of all is the tendency for shopping centres to colonise public space, turn town centres into solely shopping centres, and close off rights of access after 6pm (Montgomery, 1987).

The sameness of British shopping centres is mirrored in their *design*. Post-modernist pastiche is everywhere, the architecture reflecting the social mood of the 1980s. New buildings proclaim a facadism gone mad, the triumph of form over function, shopping centres designed as pagodas, for example. Others reflect a corporate symbolism, all glass

and cool steel, standing aloof from rather than integrating with their surroundings. This also applies, in a slightly different way, to the 'theming' of heritage and the quest to provide new leisure experiences--at a price. Many of the visitor attractions are utterly banal, projecting a transatlantic monoculture (Landry et al, 1989).

Many of these changes have compounded past development and/or planning errors (pre-1970s) where the sense of humanity was lost as cities were planned according to strict zoning, a separation of activities, and the slide-rule. The building of roads and driving of cars were allowed to take precedence over people and the way they live their lives. In the process some of the chaos which creates interest in a town was lost.

The social tensions which can arise from all of this are all too palpable. The have-nots are excluded from post-modern Britain and left to their own devices on sink estates. Public services have worsened and many cities and towns are increasingly characterised by public squalor, litter, unswept streets, broken paving stones, and packs of wild dogs. Some of the new private housing areas are physically fenced off for 'residents only'--the new enclosures? People, women especially, are often frightened to go out at night on streets that are virtually deserted except for 16-20 year olds.

None of this has been helped by the fiscal crisis of local government and various spending restrictions placed on councils during the 1980s. The result has been growth by civic depletion, increasing squalor of the public realm, and a loss of civic pride in many towns and cities up and down the country.

Urban futures

A forward projection of the above trends makes for rather gloomy reading. Imagine the future city as a gleaming high-rise central business district surrounded by decaying *urban* ghettos interspersed with sealed-off pockets of up-market housing, and with suburbia extending endlessly into the surrounding hinterland. If people are not at work, sitting in traffic jams, or commuting, they are at home watching satellite television and eating take-away food.

At night the streets are empty except in some areas where street life is characterised by violence, crime, drug abuse, and the collapse of social cohesion. The city overall is poorly serviced, with inadequate public transport, overcrowded streets, congested roads, polluted air, high prices, and a loss of public self-confidence and morale.

Now imagine another city which is culturally and socially diverse, a meeting place and a working environment for people of all ages, nationalities, and classes; a place where there is something for everyone, a centre of intellectual and political debate, trade, *culture*, and political democracy. The question is how to get there from where we are now.

There are, I believe, some emerging trends in society, the economy, and politics which, if they can be tapped, offer hope for reviving *urban culture* in Britain. The first of these is the growing concern over the environment and the way that greenness has entered the

collective unconscious (even if we don't always know how to be green). People now want to live and work in clean environments and to consume green products. Whilst aspirations and lifestyle in the 1980s were driven by greed, envy, power dressing, sacrificial consumption, and the quest for status (Bourdieu, 1985), there are signs at least that the public mood, lifestyle, and aspiration are now concerned with 'post-material' needs. As a consequence, the debate is now on what makes the green city, coupled to a recognition that the problems of cities require longer term solutions.

The second major trend is shifts within the organisation of the productive economy, away from mass production for mass consumption towards new methods of flexible, less vertically integrated, production with the accent on customised products, *design*, highly skilled labour, and the use of sophisticated technology. This move towards 'disorganised capital' offers the prospect of more small businesses growing at the local level to compete in local, national, and international markets.

There are changes in society at large which offer hope: the increasing demands for more participation in decision-making, for devolving power away from central government; the emerging view of the state and local state as enablers and strategic policy makers rather than universal providers; the prospect of meaningful partnerships between local government, business, and the community (providing these are not hijacked by big business as 'growth coalitions').

Finally, there are the opportunities generated by the single European Market and the democratic reforms of Eastern Europe: trade, investment, and cultural exchange. There are threats, too, particularly where European cities have so much more to offer in terms of diversity, choice, and the quality of life. On the bright side, the more British people travel to Europe and see for themselves how much more liveable European cities are, the louder the calls for change will become.

Policy makers will be forced by this and other pressures--for example, the fact that the staff of US merchant banks view a posting to London as a penance--to plan for the 'good city'. Which brings us back to *culture*.

Cultural planning

Culture is one of the most difficult words in the English language, with many definitions.

The one I want to use here is provided by Raymond Williams:

"...a particular way of life, which expresses certain meanings and values not only in art and learning but also in institutional and ordinary behaviour."

This is a wide-ranging definition. It encompasses the way people eat, talk, think, meet others, go to work, spend their free time, and plan their holidays. If cities and towns in the future are to become liveable, they must become places where all of these activities have space, inter-relate, and are pleasurable. This means that rather than being an add-on

to the serious concerns of the economy and the `hard' infrastructure of *urban* areas, *culture* is central to the way cities should develop. This necessitates, in my view, policy makers taking a more holistic approach to planning, combining a number of disciplines which have in the past been separated and sometimes divided. Cultural planning is shorthand for this holistic approach and embraces three main sub-areas: cultural economics and production, cultural policy and the arts, *urban design* and revitalisation (Figure 1).

Cultural policy and the arts

This is primarily about the consumption of the arts, and therefore their provision, as enjoyable performances, activities, and events in their own right and as means of self-expression. This usually refers to the pre-electronic arts, including classical music, opera, drama, creative writing, architecture, sculpture, painting, and crafts. Each town and city will have its own configurations of these various art forms, and some will have particular strengths in some activities but not others. The aim of a cultural policy is to achieve a balanced provision of the arts, to programme events over the year, to ensure there is a good range of venues, to support and sustain the arts, and to find additional means of funding, to ensure diversity, choice and quality. Many cities in North America, Europe, and a few in Britain (Glasgow, Liverpool) are turning to the arts as a means of `branding' or re-imagining the city, often away from a history of heavy industry and decline. In the process, tourists and visitors are attracted to cities they would not previously have considered visiting, and senior business managers begin to consider such places as suitable locations. At one level, Glasgow's proclaimed renaissance is built around the art galleries, the Burrell collection, Charles Rennie Mackintosh, and its fine architecture. There are limits to this approach as we shall see, but the arts clearly offer, in addition to events for public enjoyment, economic and status spin-offs as well.

But it is important to remember that cultural expression takes many forms: pop music as well as classical, ethnic dance as well as ballet, crafts as well as fine art. For this reason an arts and cultural policy needs to be widely conceived, covering community as well as professional arts.

There are four potential contributions the arts can make to the wider local economy and the built environment:

as a means of environmental improvement via public arts, commissioning local artists to *design* street furniture or paint murals--infusing arts into everyday life;

by acting as seedbed for new designers and artists and as R & D for products of the future;

by bringing life and vitality back to run-down *urban* areas, for example, by using empty or derelict properties as studios and workshops⁽¹⁾;

acting as a keystone for the development of an evening economy which could become as important over time as the day-time economy.

Cultural industries

A major study of the economic importance of the arts (Myerscough, 1988) (a narrower field than the cultural industries) has estimated that they contribute £10 billion each year to the UK economy, in terms of earnings, turnover, downstream multiplier effects, and in helping to attract tourist spending. Direct employment is estimated to be 500,000 in the UK. The impact of the cultural industries is greater. The term, originally coined by the Frankfurt school, is now shorthand for those industries which transmit meaning and which involve creative input: film, television, photography, the music business, fashion, ceramics, furniture, publishing, and so on. *Culture* and economics are interwoven (Mulgan and Worpole, 1986). Each sector has its own production chain, and an economic profile with varying degrees of economic concentration, stages of capital formation, and small firm development. Some are fairly discrete sectors in their own right; others such as industrial *design*, architecture, and graphics feed into a wider range of economic activities and are a key source of added value.

It is important for policy makers to understand trends nationally, locally, and internationally for each sector if decisions are to be made to support economic development of the cultural industries. For example, some sectors are characterised by a large number of small and medium sized companies, often independently owned, producing cultural products in competition and sometimes collaborative competition with each other and larger firms. By collaborative competition I mean joint-working, subcontracting, shared R & D, and the building up of industrial networks and business linkages. The Italian and Spanish fashion, ceramics, and furniture industries are a case in point.

For local economic development this means analysing potential sectoral development, providing venture capital, access to *design*, marketing advice, low-cost premises, management consultancy, access to and advice on the applications of new technology. It is a strategy for independent local production which in the process is intended to achieve greater cultural diversity. It is not a case of saying "...they've got a media centre, so we want one too".

Urban design and revitalisation

In recent years a number of towns and cities have been turning to a fusion of cultural policy and *urban* planning as a means of making qualitative improvements in the quality of life for visitors and residents alike (Bianchini et al, 1988). The aim is to encourage residents to `rediscover' their city, and to celebrate the town or city as a contemporary as well as an historic centre. This involves a fusion of cultural policy with various support services (public transport, policing, parking regulations, street cleaning, childcare, information, and signposting); and of the `hard' component of the built environment with a diversity of `soft' uses, events, and activities.

It means recognising the importance of night-time as well as day-time economies, of town centres as locations for as wide a range of activities as possible, for formal as well as informal (cafes, bars, restaurants) relaxation, of activities for different age and social groups, and of the importance of public spaces in which to 'hang around', and transitional spaces between the public and the private.

Cultural planning

The over-arching link between the above categories--arts and cultural policy, *design* and the built environment, cultural economics--is a cultural or way-of-life approach to planning. This means having a vision for the future (as well as respect for the past), setting goals, and building up a bank of initiatives to get us from where we are to where we want to be. The effect of adopting a cultural approach to *urban* planning is that planners will be forced to look at *urban* areas in new ways, from the standpoint of users rather than uses, and with an awareness of quality. The result is to root planning in a cultural sense of place.

Notes of caution

Despite the many benefits which I believe cultural planning offers for the future of UK towns and cities, policy advisors would be well advised to stop and think before acting. Because towns and cities are unique, they will have different problems, different potentials, and different opportunities. It is important to build from what exists rather than pluck 'off-the-shelf' models from other towns and cities, in the UK and abroad. There is an associated danger of duplication as cities rush to compete with each other to build new art centres.

A second point is the danger of pursuing a property-led rather than a property-support strategy. Unless mechanisms can be found, for example, to control rent levels for small shops, cafes, artists' and the like, land value and rental increases could easily destroy those activities which revitalised an area in the first place. It is likely that property developers will begin to see *culture* as a source of added value in the future and they are already offering new theatres and libraries as planning gains. This is fine if it is what is required, but there is a danger of duplication and a negative impact on existing facilities. On this note it is often wise to resist the temptation to build a brand new, all-purpose civic arts centre when a rationalisation of existing venues and the use of other types of property (town halls, shopping centres, pubs, cafes) as new venues would be cheaper and more adaptable. Tents and other temporary structures are also likely to be more effective. Money could be more wisely spent on cultural activities and services than on new buildings.

Third, there is the need to balance policies for consumption with those for production. Crudely, there is little point in building up the image of a place if nothing of substance exists. What will the long-term impact of Glasgow's year of *culture* be if local cultural production is not nurtured.

Fourth, there is the difficult problem of achieving critical mass in city centres and a balance between this and the range of facilities on offer to people who live on suburban estates. People tend to prefer to have facilities near where they live, yet the town centre is important because many people work, live, and relax there, it can achieve critical mass, is more likely to attract visitors, and is a neutral territory for all the city's residents.

Fifth, there is the need to combine popular and mainstream *culture* with the visionary, the avant garde, and the innovative, but also to avoid local cultural policy being defined by the *urban* elites. It is important that local artists have opportunities to develop and not be forced to leave town in the search for recognition, while city managers are busy trying to attract the 'big names'.

Finally, there is the problem of resourcing the arts in particular, as these are seldom able to generate the income to be self-supporting. Arts funding is a difficult debate and one which I cannot address here except to say that as wide a range of sources as possible should be tapped. The arts will, however, always require public funding: subsidy is value for money. However, this raises the problem that not everything can be achieved at once, and, while it is crucial to have a vision, it is also important to demonstrate in practical terms how the various initiatives can work. It is not always the best tactic to opt for high-profile 'flagship' developments, though these can often have spectacular results (e.g. Tate of the North, Bradford's Museum of Film and Photography). Equally, perhaps more, important are the pilot schemes and the trial projects (chess pieces) which send signals to the public and other actors. A strategic intervention, however small, can trigger off a chain of events in the future.

A new way of thinking about urbanism?

In conclusion I want to raise some keywords which I believe could represent a paradigm shift in the way we think about cities and liveability(3). As indices of liveability and the strength of *urban culture*, they are primarily concerned with the 'soft' infrastructure of everyday life.

1. Bridging the public/private divide. Recognising that the state and the local state cannot provide everything themselves, nor that the market can be left completely unregulated.
2. Going with the grain of local history and traditions, but also having a vision of the future.
3. Diversity and choice--as wide a range of activities, ownerships social groups, *cultures*, shops, meeting places, opening times, as possible.
4. Vitality and flow--participation in events, uptake of facilities, people capturing the streets, movement.
5. Safety--how safe do people feel in going out at night? Is perception worse than reality?
6. Access (three types)

(a) Economic--a range of provision from the free to the expensive;

(b) Physical--to the town centre via motorised transport; and within it for people with disabilities, the elderly, young children, and so on.

(c) Emotional--mental maps, the sense of belonging.

- 7. Environmental quality.
- 8. Accountability and participation in decision-making.
- 9. Cosmopolitanism.
- 10. Economic vitality--the numbers and range of local and small businesses.
- 11. Identity--historic traditions, symbolism.
- 12. The evening economy.
- 13. Sense of place and aesthetic quality--frontages, listed buildings, architectural lighting.
- 14. Legibility--signposting, information, street names, arrival points (bus and rail stations).

This field of cultural planning/cultural urbanism is at present under-developed and under-theorised in the UK. But the potential it offers--always accepting the problematics and dialectics--is considerable and, together with environmentalism, holds out the prospect of breathing new life into *urban* planning and the meaning of towns. In the words of Wolf von Eckhardt:

"effective cultural planning ... involves all the arts--the art of architecture, the art of *urban* planning, the art of winning community support, the art of transportation planning and the art of mastering the dynamics of economic development. It is not a job for dilettantes."

Acknowledgement

Many of the ideas and arguments put forward in this paper have emerged from discussions and joint work with colleagues at Comedia. My thanks in particular to Franco Bianchini, Charles Landry, Liz Greenhalgh, and Ken Worpole.

Notes

*(1) See British American Arts Association (1989) "Arts and the changing city"; Arts Council "An **urban** renaissance".*

(2) It should be noted that there is a considerable debate amongst economists over the validity of such economic impact studies. However, whatever the "true" figures, the amounts involved are considerable. The problem for policy-makers is what to do, and this is why I favour the sectoral approach to cultural economics.

(3) These 'indices' are drawn from "Greenwich 2001: Concept study" (1989) by Comedia and available from Greenwich Borough Council. And also from Franco Bianchini's input

into Comedia's project "Out of Hours: A Study of Public and Social Life in UK Towns and Cities".

DIAGRAM: Figure 1.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Community arts mural, Hackney--arts and the built environment.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Carousel in Reims, France--animating the town centre and running a business.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Cafe *culture* in Reims (even in the rain!)--the cafe also helps police the street.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Paintings in the parks--art and green.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): Red Tape Studios, Sheffield--popular music as a cultural industry for local and young people.

PHOTO (BLACK & WHITE): *Culture*, promenading, civics, and politics--the headquarters of Obcanske Forum (Civic Forum), Prague, during the run-up to the general election.

References

Arts Council, 1989, "An *urban* renaissance"

Bianchini F, Fisher M, Montgomery J, Worpole K, 1988, City Centres, City *Cultures*: The Role of the Arts in the *Urban* Revitalisation, CLES, Manchester

Bourdieu P, 1985, Distinction: Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste (Routledge and Kegan Paul, London)

British American Arts Association, 1989, "Arts and the changing city"

Comedia, 1989, "Greenwich 2001: a concept study", Greenwich Borough Council

Landry C, Montgomery J R, Murray R, Worpole K, 1989, "The last resort: tourism and post-tourism in the South East", SEEDS, Stevenage

Montgomery J R, 1987, "Trade winds: the changing face of retailing and retail employment", SEEDS, Stevenage

Mulgan G, Worpole K, 1986, "Saturday night or Sunday morning", Comedia, London

Myerscough J, 1988, "The economic impact of the arts", Policy Studies Institute

APPENDIX: Possible initiatives for local authorities

The following is a list of initiatives which local authorities could adopt, many of which have been adopted in North America, Europe, and in a few British cities. It is by no means an exhaustive list but it does indicate ways in which progress can be made.

City *cultures* and cultural animation

1. A cultural animation strategy involving river festivals, firework displays, lighting, and the provision of informal open spaces, tented venues, and bars and cafes.
2. A strategy to foster and develop the night-time economy in town centres.
3. A review of all council-owned properties to assess their feasibility as arts or cultural venues, for example, libraries, town halls, museums, schools, and health centres.
4. Establishing a cultural or museum quarter.
5. Excavating a number of public archeological sites, linked as an historical trail to demonstrate the depth of histories and *cultures* associated with the local area.
6. A youth cultural policy which recognises a variety of needs and gets beyond the conception of youth as a 'problem', for example by providing alcohol-free pubs and a modern Youth cultural centre.
7. A public space strategy which recognises the need for 'hanging about' space, the interchange between eating and drinking places and cultural venues, but which is designed to cope with the British climate, for example by using tented wind-breaks, glass partitions, and awnings. The strategy might include a promenading route linked to local fashion stores, for example a 'designer' Saturday.
8. In discussion with major breweries, the setting up of a pub-venue circuit for popular music, pub theatre, and literary evenings, jazz in wine bars.
9. The purchase or renting of a large marquee for use as a flexible venue, both in terms of its location(s) and the types of performances accommodated.
10. Setting up a municipal *design* reviews board comprising a range of interest groups. These have been successfully pioneered in the USA, and have increased *design* awareness and standards of aesthetics.
11. Setting up a modern, technologically sophisticated 'what's on' service linking local venues and business with mini town halls, ticket shops, and so on, via cable.
12. A strategy to promote a cafe and restaurant culture.
13. Identifying the town or local area's unique selling point, perhaps linked into annual festivals.
14. Conservation and arts initiatives, linking the greening of local areas to *culture*, for example via cultural parks, transforming derelict sites and scrap yards into sculpture parks, along the lines of Seattle's junk sculpture initiative, painting in the parks, and so on.

Events and sign-posting

- 15. More attention to the quality of street *design* and furniture as a means of cultural expression.

- 16. Development of a public arts policy on sculptures, murals, water gardens, etc.
- 17. Encouragement of buskers and street theatre.
- 18. Focal events such as light shows, firework displays in town centre, festivals, fairs, open days at the local theatre, concert hall, museum, arts centre.
- 19. Promote public art (environmental sculpture, murals mosaics, fountains and other water-based constructions, other 'place-makers') to make the city centres more special and strengthen local identity.
- 20. Provide large town maps and/or electronic information systems at the main public gathering places.
- 21. Undertake comprehensive review of architectural lighting and of the colour of the buildings and streets. Wherever necessary, widen the town's chromatic range through extensive repainting, planting and flower schemes, multicoloured awnings, etc.
- 22. Development of a youth cultural economy around recording studios, independent record labels, film and video, dance, fashion and *design*--and local retailing.
- 23. Crafts and *design* workshops, especially those working with local materials and establishing or revitalising local industries: the arts as manufacturing.
- 24. Development of cultural districts or cultural quarters where restaurants, pub theatres, cinemas, dance studios, live music venues are encouraged to open or re-locate to, in order to achieve a 'critical mass' of evening activities that make a place feel alive.
- 25. Develop a strategy aimed at stimulating the 'evening economy' in the town/city centre, by offering residents and visitors a wide choice of shops, eating and drinking venues, and places of entertainment that are open in the evening.

Structural renewal and the built environment

- 26. Improvements to existing buildings and environment as well as new property development schemes.
- 27. Development of new space, well designed from accessibility as well as aesthetic point of view.
- 28. More flexible use of existing spaces, e.g. shopping malls as concert venues, pedestrian areas for semi-permanent street theatre, use of portable venues such as *urban* tents for rock concerts, circuses, large-scale video screenings of films, rock concerts, operas, football matches.
- 29. More buildings to be used for informal as well as formal leisure, e.g. development of sports centre and leisure centre cafes and bars, cafes in museums.
- 30. Popular planning and *design* for key sites.
- 31. More town centre housing (at reasonable rents or prices) and conversion of empty town centre office spaces into residential accommodation.
- 32. Development of percentage-for-art schemes.
- 33. Rest areas, creches, supervised play areas, landscaping, well-maintained toilets, i.e. development of civic facilities for local users, customers, retail employees, more parks and public areas open later at night--and well lit.

- 34. Consult with police, women's groups, organisations for the elderly regarding public safety. Also involve providers of public transport and night-time forms of recreation and leisure with a view to improving mobility and safety at night.
- 35. Greater use of Section 52 planning gains for development of public facilities.

Supporting public services

- 36. Regular street cleaning, anti-litter drive, fines for dog litter.
- 37. Greater and more sensitive policing at night, protection of people rather than 'fire brigade' policing.
- 38. Cheap, fast, reliable, frequent, flexible, and secure late night public transport.
- 39. Transport policy to balance needs of public and the car, e.g. park and ride.

Retail policy

- 40. Rental policies to retain food stores and local retailers, specialist shops, start-up retailers.
- 41. Coordination of deliveries, distribution, and agreement on transport policies.
- 42. A system of grants and loans to independents to improve physical condition and accessibility of shops, in return for agreement on employment conditions, health and safety at work, etc.
- 43. Greater control over ugly and inappropriate shopfronts.
- 44. Competitions for the best-designed shopfront, and for the best lighting display.
- 45. Positive use of street markets as points of attraction.

Cultural production and economic development

- 46. Devise a cultural industries development strategy and associated training programme, by analysing the strengths, weaknesses, threats, and opportunities for each sector represented locally.
- 47. A design awareness strategy to increase local demand for cheaper products and *design* services, to raise awareness of the role of *design* in production and marketing, and to improve standards.
- 48. A small batch production and distribution strategy to enable individual designers or producers to expand.
- 49. A marketing and information strategy to widen market areas, maximise sales, and provide information services to designers themselves, buyers and companies.
- 50. Devise a social tourism strategy which is designed to attract visitors to towns which are pleasant and interesting to live in, and which manages the flow of visitors to avoid the sheer weight of numbers destroying what people come to see in the first place.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, but it does indicate ways in which progress can be made.

~~~~~

by John Montgomery

John Montgomery is a Director of Comedia Consultancy.

---

Copyright of Planning Practice & Research is the property of Routledge. The copyright in an individual article may be maintained by the author in certain cases. Content may not be copied or emailed to multiple sites or posted to a listserv without the copyright holder's express written permission. However, users may print, download, or email articles for individual use.

Source: Planning Practice & Research, Winter90, Vol. 5 Issue 3, p17, 8p

Item: 9707075437

[Top of Page](#)