# A Reflection on Culture-Led Urban Development: From Symbol-Oriented Consumption Toward the City for All

Nebojša Čamprag

## 1 Introduction

During the past few decades, a complex set of rapid and competitive transformative processes took over development dynamics in cities all over the world. As a phenomenon behind the global socio-economic restructuring, it is also reflected in urban spaces and images, with the most dramatic changes occurring in the new centers of economic power. Downtown districts of some progressive cities, such as Shanghai or Dubai, underwent comprehensive expansions and redevelopments in only a couple of decades. To fully understand these development dynamics and their outcomes, it is essential to reflect on the background of the associated phenomena that enabled instant shifts and upgrades of the former cities on the "periphery" into the epicenter of the global arena.

The origins of these transformations should be found in the last decades of the twentieth century when the industrial city of production started to shift toward the entrepreneurial city of consumption under the auspices of the neo-liberal, entrepreneurial economy. Free-market capitalism was later associated with policies of economic liberalization—including privatization, deregulation, globalization, free trade, austerity, and reductions in government spending—all aiming to increase the role of the private sector in the economy and society. In addition, the atmosphere of the rising intercity competition fueled the "economy of attention" that required cities to find new ways of socio-spatial and economic development to stand out from the crowd (Franck, 2019). Urban governance has thus had to detach from the passive implementation of welfare-state policies and shift toward innovative, competitive, and locally oriented development strategies and solutions to attract new investments, residents, tourists, and visitors. The rising technological

N. Čamprag (✉)
Fachbereich Architektur, Technische Universität Darmstadt, Darmstadt, Germany
e-mail: nebojsa.camprag@tu-darmstadt.de



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advancements, increasing mobility of people, goods, and ideas and rising quests for new (urban) experiences additionally highlighted the challenge of local governance under such conditions. This resulted in a diversity of strategic solutions, ranging from the ones that relied on the promotion of authenticity as "the new consumer sensibility" (Pine II & Gilmore, 2011) to the so-called creative city concept.

While the creative city was seen as an alternative that promoted innovation, creativity, and uniqueness to attract new investments and highly educated and trained creative professionals, a vast majority of the strategies were developed to address the requirements of the booming tourism industry. Considering that this industry became one of the largest sectors in the global economy and urban tourism the fastest-growing travel segment, cities required activities and businesses to orchestrate memorable events. This filled the local budgets but, on the other hand, often initiated commodification of city experiences into marketable items. Urban myths, symbols, and cultures were transformed into a product, sanitized, and packed into the overall urban experience and, as such, ready to be consumed. Under such conditions that promoted not only the transformation of urban symbols and images but also socio-economic, political, and spatial restructuring, local economic development, and tourism agents gained prominence over cultural ones in a relatively short time.

Scholars generally underlined many benefits and potentials of relying on culture and consumption in urban development; however, they also highlighted some fewer positive outcomes of this trend. These range from the voluntary rewriting of meanings attached to urban environments, to some damaging environmental, socio-spatial, and economic issues. The reliance on culture and consumption for promoting economic growth was, therefore, questioned regarding its genuine contribution to creating more just, inclusive, and sustainable cities, along with a rising trend aimed at improving them in this regard. Before a more thorough analysis of the phenomena is brought into focus, the following section of this chapter provides brief features of the reliance on culture, authenticity, and city image in urban development.

## 2 Culture and Urban Imagineering

Although heavily exploited in recent years, the role of culture in strategies for urban development can be considered neither an entirely new concept nor the product of neo-liberal society. Looking back in history, the example of the nation-states of the nineteenth century was already profoundly using culture to build up homogeneous national identities and new citizenships in cities. However, the focus in urban theory has been traditionally set on socio-economic changes, so there was little room for culture. However, the situation radically changed with the major shift to a service and knowledge-based economy, making culture a key element in strategic urban planning and, therefore, one of the prime topics in urban studies.

The background of the shift to culture lies in three major causes. The first involves the industrial and economic crisis in the Western world in the mid-1970s and 1980s, followed by the increasing economic and social significance of consumption as a

driver of urban development, as opposed to industrial production. Lastly, there was the rising intercity competition for capital and people in the context of the globalized economy. Starting from the 1980s, intensified intercity competition and the growth of urban tourism increased pressures on individual city governments, causing shifts in the patterns of urban governance and policies toward the so-called entrepreneurial model (Harvey, 1989a). Thereby, the motivation for using culture shifted away from the ideal of attaining social justice and equality, to becoming an important economic resource. This led the way for the emergence of place-marketing policies and culture- and consumption-led urban development models, which favored the objectives of economic and tourism development—rather than social integration or the promotion of intrinsic cultural values.

At the same time, this was the period of the rise of place-marketing as a tool for achieving goals of neo-liberal urban development, operated through reliance on cultural resources in the creation and dissemination of attractive place images. Although deindustrialization equally affected many urban regions—such as Britain, France, and elsewhere—US cities were the first to develop strategic approaches based on place-marketing policies. The reason for them to become pioneers in this matter was that US cities were already more dependent on their local tax base and local economies, which was not the case with Western-European cities that still relied on state policies. To illustrate, Boston and Baltimore led the way in developing strategies for changing into consumption places, while the "I ♥ New York" campaign (Fig. 1) became the first famous example of "city boosting" (Greenberg, 2008).


**Fig. 1** The slogan, logo, and song "I ♥ New York" are the basis of an advertising campaign used since 1977 to promote tourism in the state of New York, including New York City. The trademarked logo, designed by graphic designer Milton Glaser in 1976, has become a pop-culture icon imitated in every corner of the globe. Photo: Andre Carrotflower, Creative Commons Attribution-Share Alike 4.0 International license, https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/deed.en

The reliance on the economic potential of city images and the phenomenon of urban Imagineering has also been conceived in the United States. The name itself comes from the entertainment industry—particularly from the "Walt Disney Imagineering," a part of the Disney Company that develops theme parks, resorts, and real estate. Urban Imagineering generally denotes a "combination of creative imagination and technological engineering in the 'theming' of goods, services and places, so that visitors develop memorable experiences of their visit" (Salazar, 2014: 93). The verb *to Imagineer* describes the act of "combining imagination with engineering to create the reality of dreams" (Paul in Yeoh, 2005: 42). The Disney Company translated its experience with the creation of entertainment parks and imagined spaces to city planning and design with the construction of a utopian town of Celebration in Florida during the 1990s that later inspired similar transformative place-making elsewhere.

The formulas from US cities relying on cultural resources for urban development mobilized place branding and marketing for advertisement and placement of their city products on the global market. Their overall aim was to boost the urban experience and promote consumption in cities, which proved to be highly influential in the development of entrepreneurial strategies elsewhere (Ward, 1998). Such policies were particularly influential in the so-called Global South, where they later proved to be more transforming and far-reaching than in the West (Broudehoux, 2000; Freeman, 2016). However, considering that the core of the Imagineering trend relied on cultural resources to transform urban environments, there were many other ways of mobilizing culture emerging in strategies for urban development. Contrary to their popularity and success, urban scholars explained these phenomena as the creation of a modern city through the imaginary and branding of places, including materialization of its aspects in the built environment—some of which jeopardized, others promoted the concept of an inclusive urban society.

## 3 The Role of Culture and Consumption in Urban Development Strategies

According to Cronin and Hetherington, "how cities are constituted as places is increasingly shaped by a combination of service sector industries, municipal authorities, and the lifestyle promotion of an image-conscious consumer-oriented culture industry associated with the arts, music, film, sports, and entertainment complexes, as well as retailing, tourism, and eating and drinking" (Cronin & Hetherington, 2008: 3). This largely supports Scott's (2000) argument that culture could be considered fundamental in the post-Fordist economy, which placed cultural policy as a central element in the restructuring of the economic basis for many cities (Bianchini, 1993).

The potential of culture as an economic driving force originates in the shift in the perspective on traditional industry and industrial development, which were during the late twentieth century increasingly seen to fail as a basis for prosperity and growth (Harvey, 1989a; Hall & Hubbard, 1998). Culture-led urban development

strategies thus inspired perceptions of them being a feasible alternative. Subsequently, economies in cities became strongly interwoven with culture through its economization through the so-called symbol-oriented consumption (Zukin, 2008; Lysgård, 2012). The growing relationship between economy and culture later became characterized by two processes that developed simultaneously. The "economization of culture" includes the process of turning culture into commodities, while the "culturalization of the economy" involves the incorporation of aesthetic and symbolic dimensions into most aspects of commodity production and consumption (Basset, 2005). This repositioning in the production of material goods toward symbolic and cultural ones remains the key element in the new urban economies (Miles, 2020). However, in this shift from industry and commerce to service and entertainment, culture was not only apprehended as a central element to attract tourists, citizens, and highly competent labor but also as a solution to other post-industrial issues, such as social division and the regeneration of former industrial sites (Sassen, 2000).

The vast majority of culture-led urban development policies and tools were undoubtedly inspired, supported, and promoted by the tourism industry. Feinstein argued that "virtually every city today sees a tourism possibility and has taken steps to encourage it" (Fainstein et al., 2003: 8). From its marginal position in the urban economy in the 1980s, tourism has developed to become a key concern of local policymakers. Besides becoming one of the world's largest industries, it was also recognized as a key driver of contemporary urban change in both developed and less developed geographical contexts. Especially during the last few decades, tourism gained its role to such an extent that the distinctions between tourism and other forms of migration, leisure, or place consumption became increasingly blurred (Maitland & Newman, 2009: 3). It has become so pervasive that it took over much of today's everyday life. However, the conceptions that isolate tourism from other forms of consumption or mobility interpreted tourism as one dimension of temporary mobility, "being both shaped by and shaping it within contemporary practices of consumption, production and lifestyle" (Hall & Jenkins, 2004: 104).

Depending on the objectives, Griffiths (1995) identified three main categories of culture-led urban development models in early post-industrial economies. The first involves the creation of rapid and substantial growth through making a city more attractive—the so-called city boosterism. In this model, culture performs as a medium for attracting tourists, investors, entrepreneurs, and highly trained workforces. The second model emphasizes internal sociocultural processes in a city, in which culture is used to revitalize a city's public social life, and even to create a sense of coherence, pride, and a common identity among its citizens. Finally, the third culture-led urban development model involves the production and circulation of commercial cultural products in the form of symbolic cultural artifacts. In contrast to the previous two, this model mostly focuses on the issues of urban economy and employment but less on a city's spatial and sociocultural forms.

Considering that in the symbolic economy, culture demonstrated the power "to create an image, to frame a vision" (Zukin, 1995: 3), cities gained importance as places "where cultural images are made, marketed and most visibly consumed"

(Zukin, 2008: xi). Consequently, two new fields of knowledge mostly contributed to the shift to culture in urban development. The first refers to the understanding of the potential of culture as an economic driving force, which reflects the ideas of the American professor of geography and public policy (Allen J. Scott, 2000). The second influential field of knowledge refers to the attention to the importance of competence and creativity, which has been stressed by the American "guru" of social and economic aspects in urban development (Richard Florida, 2002). The policies based on culture therefore aimed at promoting cities either as global cultural icons or as creative environments. Kavaratzis (2004) elaborated on this by highlighting the approaches to the city as a product that needs to be marketed and sold or the city being a place of production and consumption of culture.

## 4 City as a (Cultural) Product

The shift from an administrative to a more managerial urban governance approach involved the mobilization of working methods and techniques, until then specific to the private sector. Places became "regarded as commodities to be consumed and as commodities that can be rendered attractive, advertised and marketed" (Kearns & Philo, 1993:18). As a consequence, city marketing became particularly useful in new urban management strategies. To illustrate, the corporate marketing endeavor instantly created and promoted a different image for post-industrial Rotterdam, cleaned from the working-class and masculine mythology that was thought to mitigate innovations in the city's post-industrial economy.

Marketing the city product should be understood as more than just a mere promotion of a place; it "(…) entails the various ways in which public and private agencies, often working collaboratively, strive to 'sell' the image of a town or city, to make it attractive to economic enterprises, to tourists and even to inhabitants of that place" (Kearns & Philo, 1993: 3). As a background to reimaging Rotterdam, Van den Berg (2012) argued that the aspired new economy was anticipated to replace the lost jobs in the harbor and industry by creating new ones in tourism, healthcare, and creative industries. The images that were once compatible parts of the working-class and "masculine" mythology needed to be rearranged and juxtaposed in an extensive urban rebranding process. During this campaign, the "working city" of Rotterdam has been repacked into a "daring city" product that moved beyond the harbor and ultimately through these powerful campaigns even "changed its gender" to make itself more attractive for the city's new economic objectives.

According to Bianchini (1993) and Kennell (2010), the rapid rise in popularity of these development tools during the 2000s rendered the age of city marketing and branding we still experience today. These strategies rapidly evolved even to become specialized, depending on the intentions behind their mobilization. Therefore, through its power to reduce the urban to single trademarks (Hubbard, 2006), *city branding* assigns desired meanings to places through carefully planned branding campaigns. Furthermore, *imaging the city* constructs and advertises "spectacular urban landscapes" through images that fit with "perceptions of urban success"

(Cochrane, 2007: 112). Finally, *selling the city* assumes "the complex and often contested processes, whereby the managers of large urban areas manipulate cultural resources for capital gain whether by converting them into 'commodities' or by using them as a lure to inward investment from industrialists, tourists and shoppers" (Kearns & Philo, 1993: ix).

Regardless of their form, all marketing strategies are a "necessary cultural strategy in our age of image inflation" (Zukin, 2008, xii). The role of culture in such activities has been regarded either as a source of employment and income generation—for example, tourism—or as a catalyst for a change of image, for example, the impact of prestige cultural activities, flagship developments and mega-events. Furthermore, according to Hall "there is probably no greater advert for cities than their own landscape" (Hall & Hubbard, 1998: 29). Initiatives in urban space often implied demolition of squatter neighborhoods, beautification of sidewalks, and sanitization of touristy public places. Such major urban restructuring endeavors could also be considered as a part of the making of imagery for the city, as much as being a part of other entrepreneurial strategies.

Particularly popular was the reliance on urban megaprojects, considered to be "emblematic examples of neoliberal forms of governance" that propel socio-economic restructuring (Swyngedouw et al., 2002: 548). Bianchini defined these large-scale urban initiatives as "significant, high-profile and prestigious land and property development which plays an influential and catalytic role in urban regeneration" (Bianchini et al., 1992: 252). Often intertwined with culture, urban megaprojects were normally associated with high-profile flagship developments, aiming to "mark out 'change' for a city" (Bianchini et al., 1990: 11). The effects of culture-based megaprojects that promoted cities as cultural products also extended beyond the physical boundaries of the project itself. They hold the capacity not only to reshape urban space but also the way cities and institutions represent themselves, through providing widely circulated images.

One of the best-known examples of such large-scale culture-based initiatives was implemented during the late 1990s, in the city of Bilbao in Spain. It relied on the combination of a cultural building and its iconic architecture, as a powerful strategy for triggering successful urban regeneration of a formerly declining industrial city. By placing the iconic Guggenheim Museum building designed by American star architect Frank Gehry in the city's dilapidated port area, the Basque government marked out a new chapter for the city and its region. This flagship project further initiated anticipated economic restructuring and major infrastructure improvements, which associated culture with such gains. Although the opinions on the success of this project were mixed and even contradictory, Guggenheim-Bilbao is still considered the first contemporary art house that has re-imaged an entire region, thus remaining one of the most transformative symbols of culture-based place-making of the last century.

## 5 City as a Place of Production and Consumption of Culture

As previously explained, culture and creativity have appeared almost like a mantra in urban development during the last two decades (Stevenson, 2004; Peck, 2005). The increasing role of cultural industries in national and local economies particularly highlighted the importance of a place, which resulted in some major spatial clustering in cities. Local decision-makers thus strongly encouraged the emergence of the so-called creative milieux and creative clusters (Scott, 2000), hoping that they will contribute to the urban economy and revitalization. Additionally, cities needed to make themselves attractive to a specific social group regarding the types of employment opportunities available and not least their image as cultural arenas and living environments (Florida, 2005). These arguments are at the core of the hypothesis on the creative class, developed by Richard Florida (2002).

According to Florida, the new "creative class" seeks open, multicultural, and tolerant urban environments, which gave new meanings to urban development strategies (Florida, 2002). Consequently, the cosmopolitan, cultural life is seen as an important element in the marketing and internationalization of cities, while an active cultural life is a quality in itself, which can contribute to wealth and welfare in cities. Considering that this particular "class" of people is also characterized by a creative ethos, openness, and tolerance, they require culture and are its large consumers. The increasing scope of the cultural offer will further enhance a city's attractiveness, enabling culture and economy to combine in a new form of consumer culture.

Besides a particularly problematic sociological basis for the concept of a class, scholars criticized Florida's creative class theory due to a lack of clarity in connection with the creative concept, as well as the missing evidence to the assumption of the large economic changes upon, which the theory is founded (Peck, 2005). Although there is no empirical evidence to support the theory of "urban social development" effects of arts and culture in practice, more recent arguments for culture-led development by Lysgård (2012) still assume that creative persons could save cities from industrial failure and contribute to their innovation, growth, and increased employment. Considering that culture has a strong industrial aspect, Lysgård argued that investing in cultural industries should be seen as "the answer to urban development strategies in the future" (2012: 1287).

Another aspect regarding the city as a place of production and consumption of culture refers to urban cultural events. According to Häußermann and Siebel (1993), cities at the turn of centuries entered the era of "urban festivals," urban spectacle, and "festivalisation of urban politics," which all fall under the notion of urban mega-events. They include "large-scale cultural [including commercial and sporting] events with a dramatic character, mass popular appeal and international significance" (Roche, 2000: 1). Brent Ritchie (1984: 2) stated that "such events rely for their success on uniqueness, status, or timely significance to create interest and attract attention." The promoted narratives are designed not only to enhance attractiveness to outsiders (Richards & Wilson, 2004) but also to create cohesion in

otherwise often fragmented cities (Burgers, 2002). However, the primary function of these events was allegedly to provide the host community with an opportunity to secure high prominence in the tourism marketplace (Hall, 1989: 263). They are also used as an instrument for economic growth and the development of cultural industries (Gold & Gold, 2008). In some cases, these events even demonstrated a political role—they enabled local and national elites to "project and disseminate old and new hegemonic and 'official' ideologies to 'the masses'" (Roche, 2000: 9).

Probably, the most iconic example of transformative urban mega-events was the 1992 Barcelona Olympics, which were not only proclaimed "the best Olympic Games in history," but was also entitled the first "games-related urban regeneration" (Gold & Gold, 2008: 307). This large-scale event represented an elaborate urban development strategy that instantly turned Barcelona into an internationally recognizable urban brand and tourist destination, marking the beginning of a new model that later inspired other cities across the globe.

In the European framework, among the most prominent examples of culture-based mega-events is the European Capital of Culture. This initiative by the European Commission primarily aims at highlighting the political idea of Europeanness by propagating the richness and diversity of its cultures. At the same time, it promotes urban regeneration and tourism development in the host cities through the versatile use of culture and art. Along with supporting the cultural, social, and economic development of cities, these mega-events are also improving the quality of life, strengthening the sense of community, attracting visitors and, finally, helping the cities to (re)gain international recognition. The initiative was, therefore, particularly interesting as an opportunity for urban governments in formerly marginalized or disadvantaged contexts in need of effective restructurings—such as among the former industrial centers, or cities from the former Eastern Bloc.

Despite its immense potential for socio-economic development, culture is inherently contested. This means that culture-led urban development can accentuate differences and provoke dissent—a feature that, when combined with a neo-liberal agenda, threatens rather than fosters the concept of an inclusive urban society, as shown in the following section.

## 6 Some Harmful Effects of Mobilizing Culture for Development in Cities

In the arena of increasing intercity competition, the neo-liberal global economy often required cities to stand out from the crowd. Consequently, in their search for effective and quick solutions, local urban governments often looked upon strategies that worked someplace else. Many cities organized cultural festivals, participated in bids for sporting events or international summits and developed new urban landmarks. In this way, strategies that were calling for uniqueness paradoxically often resulted in the promotion of overly similar city images and cultural offers. This was particularly evident in the remarkably alike marketing slogans and brands that similarly highlighted cities' infrastructures, population, and exciting urban life. The

trend was also evident in similar slogans that often included "empty" signifiers, such as associations with "cosmopolitan" or "world" cities to promote themselves as cultural and entertainment icons (Short & Kim, 1998).

Another major issue with urban branding implies the aestheticizing process it was based on, particularly criticized for being highly artificial, and for promoting remaking, engineering, or even rewriting urban mythologies and images (Hubbard, 2006: 86). This process reflected the ambitions of urban marketers, elites, and administrators—rather than real urban dynamics, city characteristics, or urban social problems. Therefore, Zukin argued that the symbolic economy "works its way into the city character by organizing its complexity into simple, but powerful, images which both evoke emotion and repress critical thought" (Zukin, 2008: xi). Harvey referred to this phenomenon as the production of a "carnival mask" (1989b: 35) that aims to cover up underlying economic problems and hide growing social and economic inequality in the post-industrial city (Harvey, 1989b). Imagineering of cities has similarly gone through scholarly criticism, particularly after Disney's town of Celebration, designed as an "ideal American city" and a fantasy to live in became labeled as a fantasy of community spirit and social control (Zukin, 1991; Kargon & Molella, 2008). Some urban scholars thus pointed out that imagineering and branding of places are not innocent and neutral processes, as they may seem at first—Johansson highlighted their political dimension (2012: 3611), while Bezdecny described city Imagineering as the manipulation of reality for the benefit of the already-privileged (2015: 325).

Regarding the reliance on urban megaprojects for creating a desired change, urban governments similarly looked upon successful examples, which later became known as the "Bilbao Effect." In other words, due to the quick and successful socio-economic repositioning of this Basque city, other cities suddenly wanted "their own Guggenheim." Crawford stated that the so-called Bilbao Miracle should not be taken as an instant recipe for success and rather called for creativity; "other cities will have to find their own projects, not copies of the Guggenheim" (Crawford, 2001). Some criticisms of the initiative in Bilbao even denounced the museum as a symbol of gentrification and cultural imperialism (del Cerro Santamaría, 2013). In this regard, Giddens argued for more respect for the local context and necessary inclusion of all urban stakeholders, stating that "money and originality of design are not enough... You need many ingredients for big, emblematic projects to work, and one of the keys is the active support of local communities" (Crawford, 2001).

Scholars generally criticized urban megaprojects mostly on democratic, economic, and social grounds (Olds, 2004; Orueta & Fainstein, 2008). These projects commonly showed to be prone to planning failures and were often marked by overspending and excessive delays (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). An example of the reconstruction of the historical Altstadt in Frankfurt (Fig. 2) reveals the controversial sanitization of historical buildings and commodification of urban cultures and histories, generously supported by the local tourism organization and some civic organizations. Similarly to the megaproject HafenCity in Hamburg that evidences a relatively successful culture-led urban transformation, both initiatives were denounced due to their skyrocketing costs and schedule overruns. In addition to

**Fig. 2** DomRömer project, with its historical reconstructions and creative replicas, resulted in the musealization of Frankfurt's Altstadt—as the idealized identification point for the locals and the new attraction for the tourists. Photo: Author, 2022

overspending and delays, the gains and benefits of such initiatives for the wider public became less clear and much debated (Plaza, 2000; Sandercock & Dovey, 2002).

While seemingly serving a broad range of interests, culture-led urban megaprojects often masked the underlying shift "from collective benefits to a more individualized form of public benefit" (Lehrer & Laidley, 2008: 786). Particularly notable was the lack of transparency in the development of these projects, often based on exceptional measures that in some cases served to circumvent democratic control. The example of the unfamous refurbishment initiative of the capital city of North Macedonia, "Skopje 2014," illustrated an over-pretentious, overly expensive, and nontransparent urban beautification for the alleged purpose of nation-building (Fig. 3). The background of this initiative was in the political elite intentionally looking upon Western European cultures and ideals in their fantasizing of a perfect "historic" capital for the newly born European nation. This project proved to be a costly endeavor that not only greatly surpassed the initial cost estimates but was also planned and built without any form of public participation, in the shadows of the money-laundering accusations. Reflecting on Evans, "culture-led regeneration projects have not benefited residents," and such initiatives have created negative physical impacts instead (2005). A rising civic engagement against particular urban megaprojects in the Western Europe gained much attention more recently,


**Fig. 3** The new building of the Constitutional Court, the State Archives and the Archaeological Museum, featuring elements of architecture from the time of classical antiquity, represents one of the signature features of the controversial refurbishment of the capital city of North Macedonia "Skopje 2014." Photo: Author, 2013

contributing to their significant implementation delays (Novy & Peters, 2013; Lauermann, 2016).

The reliance on urban mega-events could be considered as even more problematic, as it is often linked to the marginalization of specific sub-cultures and local identities. Roche noted that "whether their impacts are positive or negative, urban mega-events are typically conceived and produced by powerful elite groups with little democratic input to the policy-making process by local citizens" (Roche, 2000: 126). Taking the Olympic Games as a case study, some radical scholars such as Lenskyj argued that their "legacy benefits accrue to the already privileged sectors of the population, while the disadvantaged bear a disproportionate share of the burden" (Lenskyj, 2002:131). There are many pieces of evidence of forceful evictions and displacements, so the Olympic Games became associated with the erosion of human rights, in addition to policing, surveillance, anti-terrorism measures, repression of dissent and hiding undesirables, and restricting freedom of movement of residents (Cashman, 2010).

The example of beautification attempts in Rio de Janeiro reveals strong reliance on mega-events, illustrating the scale of harmful effects of this trend. As the city struggled with the image of being one of the most divided and violent cities for

decades, the local administration embarked on a massive regeneration strategy and image campaign. It started with the 1992 UN Conference and continued during the preparations for the World Cup in 2014. However, "beautification" and "cleaning up" of the city and its waterfront emphasized the aesthetic dimension of the regeneration, leaving many of the underlying social problems untouched. Rio's poor were excluded from the city's image and actual public space (Broudehoux, 2000; Freeman, 2016) and were denied their right to the city, as authorities prioritized the security of the rich and the tourists. The strategy was repeated during the preparations for the 2016 Summer Olympics when funds were used for cosmetic interventions and beautification, rather than for social investments that could benefit the city's less privileged social groups. However, the example of Rio also serves to illustrate another important phenomenon. Although its' many favelas were long *invisibilized* by demolitions, evictions, walling, and manipulated representations in visual media, it was difficult to hide their physical presence. Their romanticized image eventually became a part of the international tourists' imagination, so the favelas were consequently subjected to the process of pacification, beautification, and touristic staging (Steinbrink, 2013). This abrupt shift testifies to the power of the tourism industry, commodifying even poverty and violence into exotic tours of favelas (Steinbrink, 2013).

Tourism as such already proved to be "a central element of some of the critical economic and political issues of the contemporary era: the internationalisation of capital, industrial and regional restructuring, urban development, and the growth of service economy" (Hall, 1994: 7). However, contrary to its rising power, "detailed tourism policy studies are few," while the existing ones mostly focus "on notions of prescription, efficiency, and economy rather than ideals of equality and social justice" (Hall, 1994: 7). Considering "(...) the economic, social and environmental effects of tourism, it is remarkable just how little attention is given to the way in which tourism is governed and directed" (Hall, 2006: 260). Uncontrolled development dynamics of this industry became evident in over-tourism affecting some cities, causing even more problematic socio-spatial phenomena, such as the rising *tourismophobia*. As an example, this phenomenon was initiated in Barcelona by the negative impacts of the tourist economy on the city neighborhoods, such as the proliferation of short-term rental apartments, problems of noise and antisocial behavior linked with "drunken tourism," or the occupation and commodification of public spaces by cafe terraces, rising gentrification, and other urban issues. The insights from Berlin further demonstrate the harmful effects of uncontrolled tourism development, where the residents and anti-tourism activists claimed that tourists are destroying what they seek by finding it, so the city seems to be in danger of falling victim to its success (Hollersen & Kurbjuweit, 2011).

Considering all the issues, neo-liberal culture-led urban development necessarily needed some substantial revisions and alternative approaches. An evidence of the emerging shifts is the rising public unease and contestation—such as the proliferation of urban conflicts, protests, and resistance, which Colomb and Novy (2017) described as "politization from below."

## 7 Toward the City for All

With the rise of urban development challenges, societal visions for sustainable urban futures kept on evolving. This trend includes the growing popularization of the political idea of a society in which social and ecological well-being is prioritized instead of corporate profits, overproduction, and excess consumption, setting forth de-growth and stabilization as a sustainable development alternative to constant and unsustainable growth. The new vision for a better urban future significantly impacted the ways of instrumenting cultural policies for urban restructuring. As an example, the new forms of community activism and urban social movements have increasingly turned public attention toward tourism-related issues. These issues got incorporated into agendas as part of broader claims about the defense of the quality of urban life and public space management, neighborhood restructuring, heritage protection, housing shortages, tenants' rights and rapid gentrification, the social impacts of mega-events, and many other issues resulting from the former strategies.

Mounting evidence of growing mobilization by the "creative class" in urban social movements, who are defending public spaces and influencing urban development, represent "the seeds of new types of coalitions with a wide-ranging agenda for urban change" (Novy & Colomb, 2013: 1816). This demonstrates that culture, creativity, and in particular cultural tourism—that previously reinforced power inequalities and all too often served particular interests—hold the potential to inspire and promote equitable and people-centered forms of urban and neighborhood development. The increasing emphasis of urban policy on social cohesion also discourages the former practice of place-marketing (Eisenschitz, 2010), which tended to aggravate social division. These tools are shifting toward non-planned, less elitist, and more inclusive processes, in which culture and creativity are used for the promotion of equality and social cohesion in cities.

The relatively recent removal of the famous letters "I amsterdam" from the Museum Square in Amsterdam highlights this shift. Installed in 2004 as a part of a city marketing campaign, the sign was initially intended to become a symbol of inclusion that will "celebrate Amsterdam's citizens in all their diversity" (Hitti, 2018). The sign by time attracted a lot of public attention, suggesting that visitors were more interested in taking a selfie outside the museum than appreciating the artworks inside. Due to it becoming a symbol of individualism and mass tourism, the letters were finally removed in 2018. City councilor Roosma justified this act by stating that the sign was causing overcrowding and was sending the wrong message about the city's values: "the message of 'I amsterdam' is that we are all individuals in the city. We want to show something different: diversity, tolerance, solidarity" (Hitti, 2018).

Similar examples further illustrate the idea of urban branding and marketing as inclusive tools, becoming a channel for city residents to identify with their living environment. Contrary to the previous campaign, New York City embraced a versatile and inclusive approach to urban branding that became a strong voice for the city, used across a range of city-wide initiatives. The new "NYC" brand became adaptable to promote diverse images of a range of cultures, professions, brands, and

activities, aiming to successfully represent the diversity that characterizes this multicultural city. In addition, the rebranding process of the artistic neighborhood of El Raval in Barcelona also emphasizes the integration of the local community and the promotion of local culture and creativity—instead of promoting urban tourism industry (Rius Ulldemolins, 2014).

Finally, the more recent example of a corporate, functional, and inclusive urban rebranding illustrates an innovative approach that already made a positive kick for the city and its residents. Currently, among the top five best city brandings, rebranding of Helsinki started with the aim to establish an inviting and cross-cultural platform of cohesive communications that could address a broader audience (Fig. 4). The new city identity created in 2017 as an adaptive, responsive, and versatile system stretches across all the services, events, and projects of the city. A shared vision relies upon images absent from any filters, to illustrate the diversity of people, emotions, and experiences as they truly are. By this way, the new identity of Helsinki managed to address everyone—from employees, current, and future residents, to all Finns, immigrants, tourists, and foreign dignitaries alike.


**Fig. 4** Helsinki—a city that celebrates the diversity of people and places. Photo: A. Stupar

## 8 Conclusion

Reflecting on the UN Sustainable Development Goals (2015), cities require inclusive, equitable, and just development strategies and solutions. Furthermore, UNESCO's Global Report on Culture for Sustainable Urban Development (2016) highlights the power of culture for reaching more prosperous, safer, and sustainable cities. All of these objectives are becoming increasingly relevant in sustainable strategies that rely on culture for urban development, at the same time more closely reflecting goals that foster inclusive and diverse urban communities. However, there are still many elements for further research, of which the politicization of urban challenges from below is probably the most promising. This is particularly significant given that the power-related struggle stands behind the objectives of urban equality, governance and sustainability, and even more important regarding the implications of growing global challenges on future trends related to culture as a resource in urban development.

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