

Report on the 10th Anniversary EURA Conference 'THE VITAL CITY'

12-14 September 2007, Glasgow
www.eura2007.org.uk



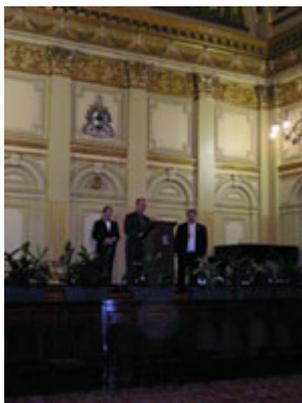
UNIVERSITY
of
GLASGOW

The largest ever EURA conference was held in Glasgow during September with some 260 participants from around the world. It was a highly successful event marking the 10th anniversary of the organisation. Delegates discussed the idea that European cities are sites of renewed economic dynamism, while at the same time promoting cultural vitality and social cohesion, and performing a key role in sustainable development. Participants exchanged knowledge and experience about how to balance and integrate these objectives and thereby achieve *The Vital City* in different European settings.

Some of the debates focused on the role of cities in an increasingly knowledge-intensive economy dependent on innovation, graduate skills and connectivity. Others explored how tolerance can be enhanced and social cohesion strengthened in a context of increasing population diversity, inward migration and social inequality. A third workshop stream considered how cities can offer more environmentally sustainable patterns of development in a context of increasing travel and energy consumption.



One of the keynote speakers, Greg Clark, argued that we are moving from an era of cities competing for investment and acting more like businesses through branding, benchmarking and strategic leadership, to one in which business is increasingly seeking cities because of their markets, labour and other assets. This creates new opportunities for cities to develop constructive alliances with global corporations and financial institutions in the interests of economic development.



Professor Sako Musterd challenged the conventional wisdom that social interaction, cultural diversity and the general 'buzz' in central cities foster industrial creativity. The evidence from Amsterdam is that much depends on the specific industry and company size. Social cohesion does not automatically go hand in hand with economic revitalisation, but should be promoted for its own sake and for moral and political reasons.

Bea Campbell, the third speaker, described how many working class communities across Britain had been devastated by deindustrialisation and the resulting loss of meaningful activity for young men. Drug-dealing, violent crime and high levels of imprisonment were some of the consequences. However, there were signs of genuine social progress in some areas, including

Northern Ireland and parts of inner London, where women were often at the forefront of reconciliation.

An active social programme was another conference attraction, including a lively ceilidh, civic reception at Glasgow City Chambers and study tours of the city centre, neighbourhood regeneration and waterfront revitalisation.

One of the conference conclusions is that the renewed interest in cities on the part of national governments and the EU presents considerable opportunities for European urban researchers to engage more closely with policy-makers and practitioners. There is general agreement about the need for improved analytical tools and a stronger evidence base to inform policy and practice in the years ahead. EURA is uniquely placed to foster that interaction and build analytical capacity and research networks across Europe.

Ivan Turok, University of Glasgow
Chair of Organising Committee

For further information go to: www.eura2007.org.uk



JUNIOR PRIZE AWARD

As part of this conference and in co-operation with JUNIUS, in Autumn 2006, EURA announced a competition for junior research scholars working on urban issues.

The competition was open for students, ph.d. candidates or persons who obtained a ph.d. degree not earlier than in 2006 and who were under 35 years old on 1st March 2007.

Interested scholars sent their research papers and the EURA jury, nominated by the EURA Board, has after considerable deliberation, agreed that the award should go to:

Dr Elsa Vivant from the Urban Research Centre - Department of Geography, London School of Economics

Elsa Vivant presented the winning paper during the EURA conference in Glasgow (September 2007). An abstract of the winning paper is below:

The *off* artistic venues' trigger effects in urban regeneration project

Off artistic spaces are flourishing in cityscapes, such as artistic squats, techno travellers party places, underground circus.... If some people could be considered them as dangerous and marginal, *off* venues could catch a wider audience than outskirts and freaks. In a context of creativity's rising (or even diktat), a large urban neobohemia is supposed to be deeply interested into all kind of creativity and artistic expression. Moreover, we argue that these *off* venues could be used as tools in city's cultural policies.

To understand this interest, it is necessary to review changes in French cities' involvement in cultural policies for the last thirty years. Actually, policies' goals are moving from residents-oriented cultural services supplying toward new comers and visitors needs' matching. This shift implies a change in policies' patterns too. The city, as a built environment and a social fabric as well, is becoming the cultural policies' playground. Especially, cultural policies are now embedded into cities development strategies, as we are showing in the first part of this article. Then, we will explain further what we consider as *off* culture and how is it related to mainstream culture. We will put into relief the current shift that is occurring in planners and authorities attitude toward these *off* spaces. The example on the regeneration project of La Chapelle Stalingrad area in Paris will illustrate it. Moreover, it is the opportunity to discuss more controversial issues. For whose sake are culture-led regeneration projects planned? Is there any alternative to culture in planning policies?

For further details:

Dr Elsa Vivant
Email: Elsa.vivant@univ-paris8.fr



*Professor Robin Hambleton
and Elsa Vivant at the
Glasgow conference*