

Good culture, bad culture...no culture! The implications of culture in urban regeneration in Bradford, UK

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Abstract

This paper shows how regeneration policies in Bradford (UK) have over the years been modified following local, national and international events since 1997. It will be argued that policy makers reacted to public perceptions of the city itself and of its large Muslim community in three phases: celebration of local minority ethnic culture; pathologization of the same; exclusion of any cultural element from the city's self-projection. The paper suggests that these changes are at the same time reflexive of historical events and hegemonic discourses, and likely to be constitutive (as they have the potential to deeply affect social relations in the city). Further investigation is required to measure such constitutive long-term effects on minority ethnic groups and social relations in the city.

Key words

Bradford, Bradford riots, categories of practice, heritage tourism, multicultural cities, New Labour inclusion policies

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Introduction

Regeneration processes are complex and lengthy endeavours that have only their most practical outcome in material production and expenditure. Behind material production, regeneration visions and city self-projections are informed by less obvious but historically significant and sociologically crucial aspects (Hetherington, 2007). The underlying assumption of this paper is that recognizing the dynamics at work behind such visions allows us to understand the historical constraints of regeneration policies and may help in predicting effects on local social relations. This is consistent with the theoretical assumption that everyday or popular culture representations, as Stuart Hall famously put it:

do play a constitutive, and not merely a reflexive, after-the-event, role. This gives questions of culture and ideology, and the scenarios of representation – subjectivity, identity, politics – a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life. (Hall, 1996: 443)

In other words, the shifts in the public use of ‘culture’ (see next section for this paper’s use of ‘culture’) not only are a reflection on how ideologies or policies hegemonically influence everyday life, but may also provide some insights as to how ‘subjectivity, identity, politics’ may be changed through practice.

This paper analyses the shifts in Bradford’s regeneration plans by linking them to local, national and international events. Its first part will review the main historical events which affected Bradford, and will work as a chronology to help the reader to follow the different phases of regeneration plans as informed by those. The second part of the paper will analyse the three phases of local regeneration, exemplified by the tags ‘good culture’, ‘bad culture’ and ‘no culture’.

The case of Bradford regeneration’s changing visions will offer a distinctive potential for the reflexive/constitutive argument outlined above for two reasons. The first is that it has to some extent visibly incorporated New Labour’s multicultural discourses (so it has been hegemonically influenced). The second is that by comparison with other literature on city branding and heritage tourism (see for example Chang et al., 1996; Caffyn and Lutz, 1999; Henderson, 2000; Hoffman, 2003; Hetherington, 2007), it appears that the public use of culture in Bradford has a great potential to affect the city’s identity, politics and economics, as will be argued in the last part of the paper.

The paper is the result of a systematic review of several interrelated sources, including material gathered during fieldwork (Bolognani, 2007b, 2009), from local policy documents, local and national press, electronic sources (touristic websites, Facebook groups on Bradford, YouTube videos

and their comments), as well as from visits to specific sites in the town (tourist information offices, building sites, city museums, parks, exhibitions) between 1998 and 2010. This time frame is both an opportunistic one (as the author was conducting fieldwork in the area) and corresponds to most of the New Labour rule, that, as explained below, contributed significantly in shaping British understanding of multiculturalism. The author was also fortunate enough to visit the permanent exhibition on Bradford regeneration at the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. These sources provide evidence pointing to the close relationship between historical events, public policy articulation of culture and their pragmatic outcomes. Before analysing these sources, however, it is mandatory to first explain this paper's use of 'culture' and then to chronologically review the most important events that in the second part of the paper will be critically linked to the shifts in regeneration policy.

A note on the use of 'culture'

The definition of 'culture' has long presented a predicament for the social sciences, although perhaps in a more significant way for anthropologists (for a review of the different definitions see Kuper, 1999: 1–20). As other concepts such as 'ethnicity' and 'race' gain more popularity, an unaffixed use of 'culture' has arguably led the term to lose analytical effectiveness, increasingly appearing at the margins and not at the centre of writings about identity. Notably, 'culture' has much more currency as a 'word' than as a 'concept', in the sense that it is used as a tool to explain rather than as a complex idea. Even in academic works on *multiculturalism*, arguments about diversity find 'culture' an inadequate term for discussion, and have increasingly adopted 'race', 'ethnicity' and 'religion' as tools to analyse it. 'Culture' could be thus considered more significant as a 'category of practice' rather than a 'category of analysis' (Brubaker and Cooper, 2000: 4), as it is used with much more weight in non-academic texts (see case study below), suggesting a more popularized ('folk', Wacquant, 1997: 222) and less problematized use, oblivious to much of the more than a century-long academic discussion of the nature and use of the term.

By acknowledging the 'translation' gap embodied by the everyday use of 'culture' and its academic use as a starting point, this paper analyses the social consequences of historically grounded constructions of 'culture' in Britain by illustrating the shifts in use and conceptualization of 'culture' in public discourse in the city of Bradford since 1997. The paper does not want to criticize the academic use of the 'categories of analysis' mentioned above, but rather for once focus only on a 'category of practice', its use, its development in the social world and its possible consequences as a social fact.

A chronology of the shifts in the public use of culture in Bradford

Bradford has been described as 'one of the key places in the UK, and possibly in Europe as a whole, in which relationships between populations of Muslim and non-Muslim background are likely to be worked out in the future, either for good or for ill' (Carling, 2008: 554). Whether Bradford can be considered as truly representative of citizenship debates on Muslims in Britain is controversial, as the city has a very distinctive history in terms of both economics and migration composition and history (Bolognani, 2009: 1). However, it is undeniable that the city is recognized both in the UK and abroad as a privileged site to observe the pragmatic side of multiculturalism. Historically it has 'pioneered' a series of 'multicultural predicaments' that have now become a prominent part of the history of Muslims in the UK and Europe, and at times in the world. The local public use of culture thus has a wider significance there as Bradford has been routinely topically used in national and international debates. The shifts in the public use of culture cannot be fully understood without a historical review of the main local, national and international events that have somehow affected the city.

As early as 1982, the city faced very heated debates, and rallies were organized in reaction to an article written for a national audience by a local headmaster (Mr Honeyford) who was the first to problematize Muslim pupils' inclusion in education (for a review of the Honeyford Affair see Bolognani, 2009: 64–66), an issue that would come to the forefront in Europe only in 1989 with the debates on the Muslim veil in schools in France (Laurence and Vaisse, 2006: 163). It is important to note that the Bradford protests, however, were formulated in cultural rather than in religious rights' frames of reference. During what is now recognized as the Honeyford Affair, cultural issues were debated and defended by a variety of groups, from left wing activists to other South Asian non-Muslims (Singh, 2002: 35).

The focus started shifting when, before Ayatollah Khomeini issued the notorious fatwa against Salman Rushdie, a group of Bradford Muslims burned copies of *The Satanic Verses* and forced retailers to take the book off their shelves (Herbert, 2003). It has now been argued that the Rushdie Affair in Bradford marked the end of local pan-Asianism and the emergence of a separate Muslim identity that did away with a particular idea of South Asian cultural heritage in favour of a number of brands of 'authentic' Islam (see Bolognani, 2009: 107). In 1995, the protests against prostitution on Lumb Lane were, according to Macey (1999a), the test of how Bradford Muslims were able to fend for themselves alone without the support of the other groups of the Honeyford Affair, using religion as a powerful cohesion device (Bolognani, 2009: 65–67, 205). A few months later, Pakistani youth confronted the police during an episode of violence recorded as the '1995

riots'¹ (see Macey, 1999a). Episodes of vigilantism that are alleged to have led to a Muslim local collective consciousness as a corollary of the Rushdie Affair experiences (Macey, 1999a, 1999b) informed literary accounts (among others Alam, 2002) and were described in the cinematographic take on Kureishi's short story 'My Son the Fanatic' (1997). In the latter, where the name of the location and the reference to real events were omitted, the story's focus is on religion rather than on culture. The fond interest in such an event may be rooted both in an emerging moral panic about the change of citizenship status of Muslim labour migrants who had by then decided to stay (Bolognani, 2007b: 66), as much as in a choice dictated by the spirit of the times, notably the urge towards reflection on a number of emerging issues related to multiculturalism.

In 2001, two months before the attack on the Twin Towers in New York, the most violent disorders on British soil in 20 years erupted between Muslim youth and the police (see Bolognani, 2007a). The disorders, reported by television channels across the world, opened debates on Muslims as the potential 'enemy within' in Britain that became all too familiar on a global level after 9/11. The variety of positions that emerged in relation to the riots was mainly related to deprivation and structural constraints (Amin, 2003; Kalra, 2003; D. Phillips, 2006). However, when the following September the threat of Islamic terrorism reached its climax with the Twin Towers' attack, the discussion on the riots started being permeated by religion as well. Evidence of this is the shift that took place in journalism from describing the participants in the disorders as 'Asians' to 'Muslims' (Gimson, 2002).

The high profile of the Honeyford and Rushdie Affairs, the 1995 and 2001 riots and 9/11 and their national repercussions will be used later in this paper to explain the intertwining of connotations of culture and politics in Bradford.

Bradford has therefore been since the 1980s a very common feature not only for specialists in multiculturalism, but also for lay people. It is controversial whether its use as a real-life laboratory would be of any use for more theoretical elaborations, given its specificities (see also McLoughlin, 2006). The latest Census shows that Bradford is composed of a very large Muslim community (around 19%) with a disproportionately high Pakistani heritage element, but, more specifically, a Kashmiri one, recognized locally as 'Mirpuri', from the eponymous Azad Kashmiri district.² In spite of the demographic particularities of the Bradford example, though, the fact that the city has been consistently used as a 'laboratory' for the multiculturalism *a l'Anglaise*, has led us to utilize it once more as a case study for the shifts in the public use of 'culture' in Britain. I will now relate the above historical events to the changes in vision behind Bradford's regeneration policy. Subsequently I will identify the possible strategies emerging from different uses of 'culture', thus arguing in favour of more emphasis on an acknowledgement of

the cogency of the use of this term in public policy. The shifts in the different uses of this term will be treated as 'social facts', that is to say something that is not necessarily true, but whose forceful argument powerfully influences society.

1997-2002: 'Good Culture'

During my first Bradford visit at the end of the 1990s, I found there was still much curiosity and fascination about Bradford among white Yorkshire men who would go there for 'the best curry in the country' and would over-excitedly describe it to strangers as a city where 'all the shops signs are written in Urdu'. Bradford was then still an exotic attraction: the Tourist Information Office was selling trays of spices as a souvenir of the city. There, information about the city revealed that Lister Park would be by 2001 enriched with a garden designed as a miniature of the Taj Mahal's fountains garden, for which in 1997 the Heritage Lottery Fund set a £3.2 million grant. The Black Environment Network (BEN) describes the idea of such an addition to the park part of the industrial legacy of the textile town as an attempt 'to reflect the rich Asian cultural heritage of Bradford' (2003: 1). Such an inclusive effort, however, was reportedly not felt by a number of Asians³ who did not feel adequately consulted while the plans for the restored park were being designed (BEN, 2003). In this instance 'inclusion' hence appeared to be mainly related to a policy framework wording on the lines of 'celebrating diversity' rather than to real consultation practices.

Bradford culture, intended as the historical layering of different migration waves, was portrayed as a distinctive and proud characteristic of the economically struggling former textile mill town. This vision was consistent with what has been described as the 'New Labour identity campaign' (Pirker, 2008: 189), or the institutional celebration of cultural diversity as part of British identity, wherein lay a conscious effort to represent minorities as part of Britain, but also to help the 'nation in its process of finding an identity' (Pirker, 2008: 204). When New Labour came into power, equality and diversity policy was given a new boost with the government promoting a broader agenda to fight social exclusion. Within this agenda, art institutions, museums, libraries and other similar actors were being asked to collaborate in some form of inclusion strategy (Vincent, 2010: 86): rather than *l'art pour l'art* (or *la culture pour la culture*), whatever was promoted had to be 'politically and societally relevant' (Pirker, 2008: 203).

In the late 1980s, the Bradford festival had already been the occasion to celebrate one of the first multicultural sites of the city, Little Germany (Qureshi, 2010: 15); by the beginning of the 1990s, the Bradford festival had been taken over by one of its events, the Mela, a term used in the Indian

subcontinent that can be broadly translated as 'fete'. Bradford's own local celebration of diversity resonated well with the New Labour slogans, but also meant that the primary aspect of identification of the city was with its South Asian element. In 2002 the Mela, originally created as the place where the different cultures represented in Bradford would converge (Qureshi, 2010), became the centre of the bid for the 2008 European Capital of Culture. The multicultural history in Bradford connected with textile production and trade and was originally mostly central-European, then expanded to Poland and Italy, and only after the Second World War did it become so meaningfully represented by the South Asian (mostly Pakistani) contingent, creating a multi-layered migratory local history. This was represented in the bid by the focus on a pluralistic definition of culture, where the idea of 'capital of culture' diverged from a classic 'high culture' connotation to a postmodern vernacular multiplicity. Paul Brookes, who led the Bradford bid, said that 'that multiculturalism that the Mela represents, the way the Mela was a symbol of some of that multiculturalism, was absolutely at the centre of the bid' (quoted in Qureshi, 2010: 18). In reality, just like the Mela, the bid seemed to be quite heavily drawn to the South Asian experience, the most visible and marketable element, as exemplified by the idea of the creation of the Museum of Spices, whose fate is paradigmatic of the shifts in the public use of culture in Bradford (see below). These local strategies seem to point to a general understanding of the minority cultural heritage as a resource for the city, in line with New Labour slogans on diversity.

Although the 2008 Capital of Culture bid was not successful, its vision was at first supposed to be the matrix for much of the city's regeneration and community projects. In fact, material that had originally been used during the bid appears pretty much unchanged on the City of Bradford websites:

Of particular interest to the visitor are Bradford's impressive mosques (one of which is pictured above) and its famous (predominantly Kashmiri) curry houses and restaurants. There is also a range of Indian stores and markets selling exquisite saris and materials (thus carrying on Bradford's long association with the textiles trade in to the 21st Century). (<http://www.city-of-bradford.com/ethnic.html>; accessed 25 January 2012)

Such culture-saturated vision had continuity with a number of grassroots initiatives aimed at recording the history of South Asian migration to Bradford, such as the book *Here to Stay* (Bradford Heritage Recording Unit, 1994), a photographic collection of images of the history of the South Asian migration to Bradford, that then continued with exhibitions such as the one on Bradford migration and the history of the GT (Grand Trunk) road (for a review of similar cultural endeavours in Bradford see also Bolognani, 2011). Rather than being a grassroots or community project, however, the

vision of the Capital of Culture bid had wider implications, all related to the 'New Labour Identity Campaign' which was gathering momentum. In 1997 the British Council had already promoted the photographic exhibition 'Re-inventing Britain', allegedly challenging the idea of Britishness as grounded only in 'beefeaters, Buckingham Palace and red buses' (Trapp, 1997). But it was around the time of the Bradford bid (more precisely between 2001 and 2003), that another exhibition in particular aimed at reflecting the diversity of the Muslim experience in Britain was conceived and started touring the Middle East (Pirker, 2008: 187): 'Common Ground'. This exhibition has been read both as a New Labour brainchild and as evidence of the growing attention towards the 3% of British citizens of Muslim heritage. Bradford entered the Capital of Culture competition in order to bring finances to the economically and socially challenged place, hoping to nurture a new image of the city, and did so according to the influence of this historical climate by using culture as its master signifier. Like many of the bidders that year Bradford used a postmodern idea of culture, talking of multiculturalism (in the guise of 'celebrating diversity', the New Labour slogan) in order to make its way through the short-listing ('The Official Websites on UK Bids for European Capital of Culture 2008', n.d.). Regarded by some as a 'sympathy strategy', the Bradford bid was keen to play with the bad fate of the state of the city, and push optimism out from the squalor in which the city had been viewed in the national and international limelight in the aftermath of the 2001 riots: Paul Brookes was quoted as saying: 'we have to show that the government can do something *even* for Bradford' ('The Official Websites', n.d., my emphasis), and the promotional posters covering the city at the time read 'Bradford Capital of Culture? Oh ye of little faith'. There was no hidden acknowledgement of the bad state of the city, by now at the centre of the national debate on multiculturalism, and the Capital of Culture prize was explicitly talked about as a source for regeneration, rather than as a due recognition of achieved postcolonial conviviality (Gilroy, 2004). Culture, however, was 'in', in its postmodern, pluralistic and popular acceptance: it was seen as a resource for the whole city. However, the bid failure and other historical events, such as the growing criticism of multiculturalism, changed the trend.

2002-now: from 'Bad Culture' to 'No Culture'

As the exclusion of Bradford from the Capital of Culture bid shortlist was communicated in 2002, the backlash of the last six months of 2001 (with the July riots and September 11th) became obvious. Slowly and steadily, the preoccupations about Bradford's segregation and multiple deprivation across ethnic lines permeated public discourse (Ouseley, 2001). The *a posteriori*

reading of the local riots in the light of 9/11 started influencing the self- and hetero-perception of the city in very significant ways, in a fashion quite established for an urban setting, as pointedly explained by Keith:

Historical descriptions ... can naturalize, stigmatize, obscure and fictionalize the production of cultural landscapes. In novels, in cinema, or in contemporary art as much as in planning and in local economic development, the lexicon of the city provides both subjects that are analyzed and a set of values and meanings that are not reducible to mere bricks and mortar. (2005: 28)

The perception of a city, vital in assessing regeneration plans and city branding (Hetherington, 2007), conceals important historical forces, and Bradford has not been an exception. Once recognized as a touch of exoticism in the grim North, the popular public association was now much more likely to lead to 'riots' and 'disorder' rather than spices, curry, and saris. Very little was left to 'celebrate' in cultural terms. The religious element was overtaking the South Asian one in media preoccupations and political debates (see Gimson, 2002) responding to a time when Islam was being heavily problematized in public discourse.

By 2004 the plan for the Museum of Spices was abandoned. Another two attempts to create spaces celebrating the multicultural history of Bradford were subsequently dismissed: a spice-themed retail space on the site of the former Odeon cinema (Wainwright, 2004), and the Casa Mela project. In spite of Casa Mela being the subject of an exhibition at the Museum of Photography and Television in 2005, currently no public information is available about the project that was supposed to be a kind of multicultural retail space ('casa' means home in Italian, and 'mela' is the same word used for the festival mentioned above). Evidence of its popularity as a project can be found in letters to the editors in the Bradford *Telegraph & Argus* forum (see for example letter from Mark Nichols on 20 December 2007), but any culture-related plan has now been shelved in favour of the New Victoria Place shopping centre, comprising 'the city centre's first Grade A offices, a new hotel, apartments, bars, restaurants and cafes, all centred around a vibrant public square' (Kilner, 2009).

Regeneration can be superficially defined as the process by which an urban dwelling is injected with capital in order to improve its conditions for the benefit of the people who live there or to encourage people to move there. Often regeneration processes extend over decades crossing different social and economic eras, at times jammed by the changes in political scenarios, at times favoured by the discovery of the core of one vision crucial in driving regeneration. The ideology of the single-image chosen to drive regeneration must not be underestimated. First of all, public representations and projections have very real consequences, as they may surge to the status of

'social facts'. Manchester's regeneration vision, for example, has emphasized a particular idea of Britishness as embedded in its industrial heritage (Hetherington, 2007). For Bradford, the core of the postmodern idea of 'culture' once believed to be the winning card for the Capital of Culture bid collapsed while the backlash of the critical events (Das, 1997) of 2001 became evident. The attention was switched from 'celebrating culture' to the problematizing of 'cultural stuff'. The original regeneration core-image constructed around the self-representation as a bastion of positive multicultural Britishness had to face the anxieties growing locally, nationally and internationally and respond to the negativity attached to hetero-representation by modifying such a core. Emblematically, the institutional promotion of the Museum of Spices turned into the support for a private retailer dominion, only to be obliterated in a less culturally distinctive (we could say 'non-denominational') space, 'Casa Mela', and eventually to be erased in the culturally empty (or 'colour-blind') New Victoria Place. The approved Tourism Strategy (Bradford Observatory, 2002) still referred to some ideas of the Capital of Culture bid, but overall emphasized city-living as the leading scope, again a 'non-denominational' or 'colour-blind' project that had been already adopted in many other UK cities where good shopping and good living were the base of the regeneration vision. In spite of declaring one of the aims of the Bradford District's Cultural Strategy as 'to promote positively the diverse cultural landscape of the District' (Bradford Observatory, 2002: 2), the 2002 Tourism Strategy describes its overall theme as 'to improve the competitiveness in the global markets' (Bradford Observatory, 2002: 2). The effort towards competitiveness emerges from the district 'being hampered in its ability to attract more visitors by a number of issues [such as] the negative media coverage which in the past has identified the city with riots, drugs and prostitution' (Bradford Observatory, 2002: 3) and terrorism threat and its effect on tourism (Bradford Observatory, 2002: 10). All these issues could be easily linked in a negative way to stereotypes attached to the Asian population.

One of the major achievements of the branding strategy behind the post Capital of Culture bid regeneration plan was to have had its own official video included in the permanent exhibition of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York. The video, titled 'Picture a City' (2007) opens with a few snapshots of current Bradford (including a picture of a woman in hijab) accompanied by a few seconds of Bollywood-sounding soundtrack quickly fading into an electronic remix of European classical music. Once the 'cultural(ly diverse)' is blurred, the video starts its illustration of future possibilities: 'what if this city removed all the concrete it did not want?' The video then shows all the facilities (including family homes, shopping centres and parks) that will be part of this city, whose identity as Bradford, for the ones who are not directly acquainted with it, is only shown in the

last scene, thus creating the expectation that to 'Picture a City' like that can be a universal dream. In this universal 'picture', Bradford specificities as they are widely recognized in the UK, notably its ethnic composition, are obliterated and culture thus evicted from the regeneration discussion. The gap left by Alsop Architects and the 'Bradford Centre Regeneration' (for whom the video was filmed) in terms of 'culture' has, however, allowed unplugged writings to fill-in the gap, as the amount of racist and Islamophobic remarks below the video on YouTube demonstrates, confirming that culture is alive and kicking in its everyday racialized use, and where policy leaves a gap for its articulation, this vacuum may be taken up with controversial results. Bradford urban policies seem for now to have completely abandoned a culture-informed vision of regeneration.

What can culture do for a city?

So far the paper has followed historically the intertwining of local, national and international events with the shifts in the regeneration use of culture in Bradford. In the premises at the beginning of the paper we have claimed that culture, however, not only is reflexive, but can be constitutive. The idea and the use of culture have reflected the shifting fates of multicultural policies and historical events, but what can such hegemonically reflective culture do to a city? Can this abstract use have real, constitutive effects on the city? Existing literature on both regeneration and tourism can point to a number of possibilities that may apply to Bradford. We have already shown how at a grassroots level, the celebration of culture was already taking place through the Bradford festival in the 1990s. Culture was a resource for positive community relations and interconnections. Caffyn and Lutz (1999) have argued that culture is not necessarily an area that disadvantaged communities postpone engaging with until they have sorted out more compelling problems of a social nature, as argued by Lister (1991). On the contrary, culture is as much part of everyday life, and can be used as a resource for the 'powerless'. In a first instance, it can have an effect on identity. Through weaving minorities' heritage into the official and institutionalized city history, minorities' self-esteem and sense of belonging is likely to be positively nurtured (Taylor, 2010: 33, 36). However, I argue that culture can be a resource also in a much more pragmatic, and measurable, way. This seems to be particularly relevant in the case of regeneration when it is matched by an attention to tourism. As argued by Putnam in a public lecture (2010), diversity may not be most desirable for people who wish to move to a city; however, diversity has become an international tourist attraction that can significantly contribute to the economic life of a city. Gumpert and Drucker (2007) have coined the term of 'visiting ethnicity'

to describe the phenomenon of urban tourism involving areas that were once considered poor, unappealing and even dangerous, and now have been transformed into touristic attractions. This phenomenon is recognizable all around the world, from the tours of Harlem in New York (Hoffman, 2003) and Singapore's Chinatown (Henderson, 2000), to sojourns in Rio's *favelas* (T. Phillips, 2006) and Johannesburg's infamous township Soweto (Smith, 2009).

Although this view may be criticized by those who link the 'commodification of diversity' (Goonewardena and Kipfer, 2005: 670) with the idea of uncomfortable 'theme parks' (Hernandez, 1985), it can be argued that there is an underestimated potential in the preservation of cultures, especially in terms of facilitating minorities' reflexivity and self-esteem that can be prompted by tourism-related investment. In Europe, this cultural potential has not been explicitly pursued by urban policies in very many cases. However, Manchester's Curry Mile (Kirmani, 2006), Leicester (Singh, 2006) and Southall (Nasser, 2004) can all boast at least some type of culinary tourism. The most organized attempt at capitalizing culture, to my knowledge, is the grassroots-organized museum visit + area tour of Kreuzberg in Berlin.

Heritage tourism has been a globally important instrument to reinforce national narratives, especially through museums (see Chang et al., 1996; Palmer, 1999; Lepawsky, 2008). Apart from the above mentioned example of Kreuzberg, even in Europe the museum of migration in Paris (Stevens, 2009) and the City Museum in Oslo cater more towards an internal necessity of making sense of national narratives, rather than de-politicized leisure tourism. This may be particularly true where there is some form of contention, or at least a tension that calls for a politics of unity. The 'theme-park' critique of the 'visiting ethnicity' phenomenon seems to have overlooked the potential that the economic gain of, for example, town councils may create for minority ethnic groups. Harlem in New York is a very good example of how working on tourism has guaranteed the preservation of a cultural heritage. With organized 'gospel tours' and embedded historical symbols such as the naming of a road 'Malcolm X' and the inclusion of the Apollo Theatre as one of the stops of the city sightseeing bus, 'magical urbanism' (Davis, 2000) has flourished. By magical urbanism we refer precisely to the positive incorporation of minority groups in regeneration visions.

In the case of Bradford, local urban policies seem to have put on hold leisure tourism investments in favour of business and city-living. It can be then argued that the rationale behind enticing new residents is so different there because the Bradford regeneration core image has had to respond to the spirit of the times forcefully resonating with its own multicultural predicaments: it had to be anxiety-free and thus colour-blind. Since 2001 it has thus increasingly moved towards the popular UK trend in luxury city-living

and bingeing consumerism (see Hetherington, 2007). Had leisure tourism remained a priority, matching such a strategy with one of defusing negative stereotypes of the city's Asian population may have opened new perspectives in Bradford's re-branding. This could have led to multiple benefits, notably economic gain through heritage tourism and an inclusive strategy in reinforcing a cohesive city identity.

Conclusions

Since 1997, 'culture' as a category of practice and as a political instrument has significantly changed. The present review of the switches in this term's use has shown how, in the late 1990s, especially under the influence of the New Labour identity campaign at a national level, 'culture' as a vessel (with almost indifference to its contents given its postmodern use) was an important tag around which the promotion of the Bradford district was shaped. The mela's promotion, the Mughal garden's grant, the project for the Museum of Spices and the 2008 Capital of Culture bid are all examples of 'culture' positive saturation in that phase. In 2001, however, Bradford as a multicultural project started to become highly problematic and embody national and international anxieties. After the July 2001 riots and 9/11, the 'culture' vessel was inevitably filled increasingly by negative connotations of cultural stuff, notably the ones related to Islam. As Sivanandan has put it, after the Northern riots 'too much multiculturalism was becoming the problem' (quoted in Clement, 2007: 104). By 2002 the aura of positive exoticism (a phenomenon that has been formally recognized in urban studies internationally as 'commodification of diversity' or 'aestheticized ethnicity', Goonewardena and Kipfer, 2005: 670) faded away, as the failure to even be short-listed for the Capital of Culture bid testifies. The project for the Museum of Spices became first Casa Mela and then New Victoria Place, responding to the increasing popularity of consumerist regeneration plans where culture has no space. Urban regeneration plans are often driven by one core image elected as master signifier of the public image of a city. Far from considering regeneration as purely an architectural concern, the paper has illustrated how its policies and visions are embedded in history and politics. As Keith argues, urban spaces are crucial sites for inter-cultural dialogues (2005: 1) and therefore privileged sites for an analysis of 'culture' as a category of practice.

In this paper it has been argued that the term 'culture' in urban regeneration has both a reflective and a constitutive nature. All the above points show how it has absorbed, reflected and interacted with local, national and international history, but perhaps the constitutive element to it is still to be

fully observed. Once we have established how the term 'culture' becomes relevant in regeneration, then it can be confidently predicted that its use has the potential to have some impact on the everyday lives of people. By following the recent history of the Northern textile town and the national political implications of its immigration history, we have argued that local, national and international events have turned 'culture' from something to celebrate into something 'bad for business' progressively pushing it out of the city's vision. Spaces for culture celebration have been significantly pushed out of the public sphere. Had the positive take on 'culture' been consistently maintained after the 2002 Capital of Culture defeat, the public space given to minority ethnic groups in Bradford, but especially the quality of the attention (a change from the often pathologizing views, McLoughlin, 2006) could have been significantly different both socially and economically. Only further observation will allow us to measure how the 'no culture' policies have affected (among other issues) feelings of urban belonging (see also Taylor, 2010) and confidence and esteem in one's group economic potential (one of the consequences of 'magic urbanism' according to Davis, 2000).

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Notes

1. The author is aware of the contentiousness of the term 'riots' but has chosen to use it as it is the common term used in Bradford to describe both 1995 and 2001 uprisings.
2. The author is aware of the political implications of the use of 'Azad' ('free') to refer to the part of the Kashmiri region administered by Pakistan, but has chosen to use this denomination to reflect the common use in Bradford.
3. 'Asian' is used in this article to refer to the South Asian population of Bradford. This use is consistent with the British practice of conflating the various Indian subcontinent denominations under this label. Although the majority of the South Asian population in Bradford must be recognized as Pakistani Kashmiri, this usage is also consistent with the local one.

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