

Cardiff: Diversity in a World-Becoming City

Ana Gonçalves

EURODIV PAPER 67.2009

JANUARY 2009

KTHC - Knowledge, Technology, Human Capital

*Ana Gonçalves, Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE),
Escola Superior de Hotelaria e Turismo do Estoril*

This paper can be downloaded without charge at:

The Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei Series Index:
<http://www.feem.it/Feem/Pub/Publications/EURODIVpapers/default.htm>

The opinions expressed in this paper do not necessarily reflect the position of
Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei
Corso Magenta, 63, 20123 Milano (I), web site: www.feem.it, e-mail: working.papers@feem.it

Cardiff: Diversity in a World-Becoming City

Summary

Cardiff, the capital of Wales in the UK, has been undergoing intense urban redevelopment throughout the past decades, being reshaped at a vertiginous pace in order to become a “world-class European capital city”. Cardiff docklands’ area, which was known for its Butetown multiethnic community, has experienced intensive urban redevelopment since the late 1960s, being most of those who lived in the docks’ community rehoused in other parts of the city. Although Cardiff is still particularly multiethnic, its multiethnic population still shares the multiple deprivations of socially excluded geographical areas. At the same time, the city is constructing itself as a cosmopolitan ‘world-becoming’ city, and has been drawing the attention of national and foreign inhabitants, visitors and investors, by highlighting its importance as a business, sports and cultural centre. Therefore, this paper argues that, through urban regeneration and diversity, Cardiff is turning into a world-becoming city and presenting a new image identity to the world.

Keywords: Cardiff, World City, Multiethnic Diversity, City Image-Making

JEL classification: J61, L72, L80, N34, N94, O18, R11, R12, R14, R23, Z13

Address for correspondence:

Ana Gonçalves
ESHTE
Av. Condes de Barcelona
2769-510 Estoril
Portugal
Phone: +351210040713
Fax: +351210040719
E-mail: ana.goncalves@eshte.pt

**EURODIV –Cultural Diversity in Europe: Diversity in Cities: New Models of Governance
Rome, Italy, 16-17 September 2008**

Ana Gonçalves – ana.goncalves@eshte.pt

Estoril Higher Institute for Tourism and Hotel Studies (ESHTE), Portugal / PhD Student at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Cardiff: Diversity in a World-Becoming City

Abstract

Cardiff, the capital of Wales in the UK, has been undergoing intense urban redevelopment throughout the past decades, being reshaped at a vertiginous pace in order to become a “world-class European capital city”.

Cardiff docklands’ area, which was known for its Butetown multiethnic community, has experienced intensive urban redevelopment since late 1960s, being most of those who lived in the docks’ community rehoused in other parts of the city. Although Cardiff is still particularly multiethnic, its multiethnic population still shares the multiple deprivations of socially excluded geographical areas. At the same time, the city is constructing itself as a cosmopolitan ‘world-becoming’ city, and has been drawing the attention of national and foreign inhabitants, visitors and investors, by highlighting its importance as a business, sports and cultural centre.

Therefore, this paper argues that, through urban regeneration and diversity, Cardiff is turning into a world-becoming city and presenting a new image identity to the world.

Keywords: Cardiff · World City · Multiethnic Diversity · City image-making

JEL Classification: J61, L72, L80, N34, N94, O18, R11, R12, R14, R23, Z13.

Introduction

More interesting than analysing the different urban changes taking place in a city throughout its history, is to be able to witness the rebirth of a city in progress and its ongoing intense urban redevelopment as the one taking place in Cardiff, the capital of Wales. Although a relatively small and compact city in area and in population, at least when compared to other European capitals, Cardiff is flourishing and being reshaped at a vertiginous pace in order to attain its most wanted goal: to become a “world-class European capital city”.

This paper aims at analysing how urban regeneration in Cardiff has influenced and has been influenced by ethnic, cultural and social diversity in the city and has taken advantage of it in the city’s image-making to the world as a European capital and a world-class city.

Cardiff’s docklands’ area, nowadays known worldwide as Cardiff Bay, has experienced intensive urban redevelopment since the 1960s, as well as the city centre, although to lesser extent. The docklands’ area of Cardiff was known for its multiethnic

community, housing people from different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, and forming what came to be known as the Butetown or Tiger Bay community. However, with urban regeneration projects in the docklands and its surroundings, most of those who lived there were rehoused in other parts of the city and in the city suburbs, putting an end to the existence of this community. This same community, nevertheless, is nowadays remembered to depict Cardiff's past and to characterise it as one of the most multicultural and multiethnic cities in Europe, a 'world-becoming' city whose openness to diversity aims at drawing the attention of national and foreign inhabitants, visitors and investors.

From a Small Port to the Coal Metropolis of the World

To understand the urban development of Cardiff and its recent regeneration strategy to become a "superlative European Capital", one has to understand the historical background of this city as a maritime site of worldwide importance.

In early 18th century Cardiff was no more than a small port. The Glamorgan Canal, built in the 1790s, initiated the process of the construction of Cardiff. But it was not until the 1830s that Cardiff's role as a port became relevant, when John Crichton Stuart, the second Marquis of Bute, commissioned the construction of the first docks that helped the traffic of ships coming to Cardiff to take coal worldwide. To help in the transportation of coal from the Valleys into the docks, the Rhymney Railway was built in 1860. Further developments took place in the following years, such as the opening of the Low Water Pier in 1868, for passenger traffic, and the Roath Basin in 1874, increasing the total water area of the docks by 12 acres. Less than twenty years later permission was granted to build Queen Alexandra Dock, a larger dock which was completed in 1907, and with it the expansion of Cardiff's Docks.

By the end of the 19th and early 20th centuries, the canal, the railway and the docks represented "the jugular vein of capitalist Wales" (Gwynn Williams, 1991) and shaped the physical, social, and cultural identity of Cardiff in mid and late 19th century, turning the city into "the coal metropolis of the world" and into a "specialised urban centre" (Nestor Rodriguez and Joe R. Feagin, 1986 in Brenner and Keil, 2006:32-41) in the sense that it specialised in the exportation of coal to many parts of the world.

Diversity in Cardiff: A Multiethnic City

*The social history of Butetown provides us with
valuable lessons about how to live with others
- with people of different skin colours, beliefs and ways of life -
in an atmosphere of tolerance, respect and harmony.
(Jordan and Weedon, 1995:136)*

To meet the demands related to coal exploration and exportation and other docklands' activities, Cardiff attracted foreign labour, becoming an appealing site for many seamen

from different parts of the world, who mingled with the resident population. As Iain Tweedale stated,

...many shipping companies recruited local seamen, Somalia, Yemen, West Africa, West Indies, India, China, along with Scandinavia, Spain, Greece and Malta were the main sources of immigrant labour for the developing port. [Besides,] Cardiff's thriving export trade meant that seamen could find a ship relatively easily and the preference of white British seamen to avoid tramp steamers (because of poor working conditions) meant that Cardiff, as a centre for tramp steamers became the home of a large number of Black seamen and their families. (Tweedale, 1987:5)

These people, from different origins and backgrounds, found a home in Butetown, a district that was built to house middle class professionals, and which, as these retreated to other areas of the city, progressively started housing people from the working-class who worked mainly in the docks. Due to the ethnic and cultural diversity present in this area, Butetown's neighbourhood developed a highly pejorative connotation and came to be known as Tiger Bay, its most negative and sensationalist name.

It is believed that, in 1950, there were about 6,000 people who accounted for 57 different nationalities living in an area of about a mile long (Lloyd, 1950). Each nationality contributed to the formation of a "colourful tapestry", a multiethnic community, that organised itself in small national quarters and shared everyday life practices of identification in the neighbourhood. Although the area was considered a site of "vice and violence" (Cameron, 1997), those who lived there did their best to live peacefully together and to help each other in times of need.

This community faced its hardest times when, at the beginning of the 20th century, Cardiff started suffering competition from docks at Penarth and Barry and coal was progressively being replaced by oil as a form of fuel. It was the beginning of the decay of Cardiff as a coal metropolis and, consequently, of its prosperity as a port and as a coal exporter worldwide. Therefore, between the 1920s and the 1960s, unemployment became a harsh reality for these people who had lived their lives in close connection to the docks and the sea.

Cardiff eventually turned its back on the docks and these became associated with "physical decline, urban dereliction and social deprivation/marginalization" (Hooper and Punter, 2006:10). This was one of the reasons why the City Council decided to redevelop the area. The first urban changes took place in Loudoun Square, the most coloured area of Cardiff, which was replaced by high-tower residential buildings. Those who lived there and in other areas of the docks were then rehoused in the edge of the city or in the city suburbs and community ties were broken by physical separateness and feelings of humanity and comradeship that characterised this community were replaced by a feeling of isolation, lived behind apartment doors.

Despite all efforts to improve the area and the living standards of its people, the redevelopment scheme was not successful in coping with many problems within the area, such as unemployment and poor housing, health and education conditions.

This community, which was responsible for Cardiff's multiethnic past and was in the first half of the 20th century the target of racial prejudice and stereotyping, is now made to contribute to the new branding image of Cardiff as a cosmopolitan, multiethnic and multicultural city, although the city's urban regeneration has been made at the expense of this community that was condemned to cease to exist. In fact, at the beginning of Cardiff's urban redevelopment in the docks,

[t]here was no great concern for social justice or for local people – except to the extent that gross injustice might inflame social tension and threaten investor confidence. Enter the Cardiff Bay Development Corporation with a remit easily interpreted as largely about creating profits for big business while pacifying and rendering invisible local people. Unfortunately, nothing it has done – least of all its memoirs – will undermine the cynicism of those who know anything of Butetown, its residents or its place in the history of Cardiff. (Thomas, 2000:34)

With a population of about 317,500¹, Cardiff is still a particularly multiethnic city. According to the National Centre for Public Policy of the University of Wales in Swansea, of the approximately three million people who lived in Wales in 2001, the black and minority ethnic (BME) community accounted for 2.1% of the total population – almost 62,000 people (Vincent, 2005:1). Of these, about 28,700 lived in Cardiff, especially in its most multiethnic wards – Butetown, Riverside, Grangetown, Plasnewydd, Adamsdown and Cathays. Cardiff's BME populations “share the multiple deprivations of socially excluded geographical areas, lower income levels, poorer health and education services and fewer or inferior amenities...” (Vincent, 2005:4). The Butetown area, for instance, which was considered in the 1960s as an “inner city problem area” (Tweedale, 1987:7), is still nowadays characterised as a deprived neighbourhood figuring in the list of the 2000 and 2005 Wales Index of Multiple Deprivation (WIMD), being “the fourteenth most deprived electoral division in Wales in terms of income and the eighth most deprived in terms of child poverty”, with more than a half of its residents (54.5%) living “in receipt of means-tested benefits”. Besides, “around a quarter of the adult population of working age were deprived of paid employment” (Hooper and Punter, 2006:63). These numbers help us to understand that ethnic diversity in Cardiff is still very much associated with conditions of deprivation and poor geographical areas.

Cardiff has maintained the reputation of a multiethnic city, displaying different ethnicities, cultural and social formations. However, these people now lack the bonds

¹ 2006 mid year point; although the County Hall's Cardiff Research Department believes this estimate is low and that the city's population could be as high as 355,000.

of a community to give them a sense of belonging and support as Butetown did in the past.

Urban Regeneration in Cardiff: The City's *Kiss of Life*

*Cities are focal arenas for the human condition
and man's struggle for self-expression.*

(Lin and Mele, 2005:1)

Cities are spatial constructs that can only be understood through their specific historical, cultural and economic settings, as well as through the social networks that are developed within their urban places.

Urbanisation, which has been affecting the landscape of different locations worldwide, is increasingly characterised by geographical specialisation and spatial reorganisation and restructuring, that started to take shape especially in the post-1970s period, due to transformations in the economic, political, social and spatial fields that have been taking place worldwide. Therefore, many cities in the world have been experiencing urban regeneration and this "consist[s] primarily of the efforts of cities to upgrade their locality in the international competition for investors, advanced services, and mega-projects" (Margit Mayer (2000) in Brenner and Keil, 2006:297). Therefore, according to Alan Hooper, urban regeneration cannot be seen only "as physical renewal and socio-economic development", but nowadays it also encompasses "the cultural aspects of civic transformation" (in Hooper and Punter, 2006:1).

Urban regeneration in the UK has been based on the British government's choice to implement an American-type strategy of 'selective migration' to foster urban regeneration and renewal, in which "most experts agree that attracting more upper-status residents is crucial to future revival" (Nelson, 1988:9 in Rowley, 1994:265). This was also the belief that lay at the heart of Cardiff's urban renewal strategy. In fact, it has been argued that "there is no more interesting study in town growth and development than Cardiff" (Daunton (1977) in Hooper and Punter, 2006:2). This is perhaps true if we consider the intensive urban change that has been taking place in Cardiff for the past three or four decades. Since the 1970s until the present, historical buildings, such as the Roman castle in the city centre or the outstanding Pier Head in the Bay, have been maintained and their facades improved to represent the city's 2000-year history, while modern, glistening and reflexive glassed buildings and flagship projects have been built to create a renewed city to compete with some of the most important cities in Europe and worldwide.

Although regeneration in Cardiff started in the late 1960s and early 1970s, The Cardiff Bay Development Corporation (CBDC), which became the flagship for urban policy and regeneration in Cardiff, was not created until 1987. The CBDC's main objective was to

(...) establish Cardiff internationally as a superlative maritime city, which will stand comparison with any similar city in the world, enhancing the image and economic well being in Cardiff. (in Rowley, 1994:269)

As it was suggested by Huw Thomas, the Corporation's mission statement "was not set up to benefit local people, or directly address poverty in Cardiff: its remit was to create an exciting internationally significant waterfront development" (Thomas, 2000:30). In fact, the Corporation has been accused of lack of attention towards the local population by disregarding "employment targeting, imaginative training initiatives and equitable housing provision" (Rowley, 1994:279). Yet, "the CBDC emerged as the area's saviour, providing the only hope of salvation where all else had failed and, in so doing, helping to turn Cardiff into a world-class maritime city" (Thomas, 2000:32) and, I would add, giving Cardiff its *kiss of life* by, through urban renewal, allowing the city to regain the vitality of the past, although a completely different one.

The focus of the development of the CBDC was the docklands' area or, as it is known nowadays, Cardiff Bay. The CBDC's aim to turn the Bay into "the most exciting waterfront development in Europe" was grounded on the objective to attract investors to the area, a fact that has played a pivotal role in Cardiff's urban regeneration and rebirth, especially through the creation of office, retail, leisure and residential infrastructures in former industrial and derelict areas. These changes have been accompanied by the Bay's freshwater lake that came to replace the mudflats that gave the Bay a dirty and abandoned look. This freshwater lake in Cardiff's Bay was created through the construction of the polemic Cardiff Bay Barrage, also known as the "multi-million pound development of the Welsh capital's docklands" (Rowley, 1994:265). This major development was highly criticised because, although proponents considered that it gave a brand new look to the Bay and triggered the construction of leisure and entertainment facilities, its opponents highlighted the environmental risks that such a development would cause, especially to the great diversity of bird species that fed on the estuary's mudflats.

Nevertheless, and despite the great amount of criticism, "the most exciting waterfront development in Europe" started to take shape and it is nowadays the liveliest and most attractive area in Cardiff, and it "continues to display the Janus face that is the city's development trajectory" (Hooper and Punter, 2006:172). The Bay is nowadays an alluring waterfront with lively restaurants, cafés and shops and iconic buildings such as the renowned Pier Head, the glassed-façade Welsh Assembly and the modern 5-star St. David's Hotel, just to mention a few.

Although to lesser extent than the Bay, the city centre and Cardiff Gate have also undergone considerable urban changes. Efforts have been made to turn Cardiff's centre into "a truly superb European City centre' out of the rather small and obsolete provincial centre of the 1950s" (Hooper and Punter, 2006:122) which was "worn out, inconvenient, drab and downright dangerous" (Buchanan, Colin and Partners (1964) in

Hooper and Punter, 2006:123). Therefore, major changes in the city centre have been concerned with the growth of retail and leisure facilities and with the pedestrianisation of some areas and streets. Besides, other land use allocations have been planned and developed for a variety of office and housing purposes at Cardiff Gate, capitalizing on the M4 motorway and the Peripheral Distributor Road (PDR), the two most important accessibilities to the city.

Cardiff's process of urban renewal has been used to market the city and give it a whole new image, that of a city that is trying to become one of the most important European capitals.

Re-Imagin(in)g Cardiff – *A City for the Eyes*

It is said that in our progressively globalising and globalised world, it is increasingly important and necessary that cities become competitive and promote themselves as attractive destinations for visitors, residents and investors. To meet these objectives, cities are increasingly presented as commodities to consumers and marketed as products.

For the past few decades, urban regeneration in Cardiff has been focused on a post-modernist stress on "image" and an increasing concern for the 'visual' has taken place. Visuality in Cardiff is based on 'civic boosterism' and 'competitiveness', in an effort to give it a distinctive character. In fact, Cardiff has been marketing itself as a "superlative maritime city", as a "first-class city", or as "a leading European city", showing its downtown urban regeneration as "Europe's most exciting waterfront" and attempting to become "the best place to live and work anywhere in the UK" (in www.cardiffharbour.com). As Hooper and Punter have pointed out, Cardiff's re-imagining "was driven forward by major investments in regeneration strategies, design briefs/policies and review processes and innovative art programme allied to a series of flagship projects and an ambitious programme of festivals and spectacles" (Hooper and Punter, 2006:149), centred at Cardiff Bay, the city's flagship urban regeneration project, which is pure spectacle of visual consumption. As Sharon Zukin stated,

[p]artly a matter of providing world-class commercial facilities, and partly a matter of image-creation, the effort to attract geographically mobile investment activity changes a city's perspective. The old, diversified urban center is cleaned up for new offices and cultural consumption (...). (Zukin (1992) in Brenner and Keil, 2006:138)

This visually-drawn city has centred its efforts on sports, business, entertainment and culture in order to attract residents, national and foreign business partners and visitors, and to influence people's perception of the city, its places and its people. Place marketing has become a major concern for the city's institutional entities and it has been used "to advertise the city as an exciting place for the consumption of entertainment, cultural experience and quality of life for potential, new and existing residents" (Hooper and Punter, 2006:25).

Besides, Cardiff has also centred its efforts to become one of the most important retail, cultural, sports and business destinations in the UK and worldwide. Attractive shopping facilities displaying diversified shops of renowned international brands, city centre and Bay mega-projects such as the Millenium Centre (in itself a visually attractive and reflexive building) or the Millenium Stadium, glistening glass-windowed office tower blocks, have all been contributing to build an image identity of Cardiff as a state-of-the-art city. As we can read on Cardiff's official tourism site,

Cardiff's not the only thing that's evolving. So is its branding. Visionary, creative, enriching - Cardiff's new brand identity is designed to act as a promotional umbrella under which the city can show itself to be an attractive, healthy and sustainable place to live, work, visit and invest. (in www.visitcardiff.com)

In fact, the whole urban landscape of Cardiff has been changing in order to give the city a brand new look. Architecture is supporting Cardiff to become a first-class European city and a significant player on the world stage. In Cardiff, different buildings, and even their building process, have become spectacularised and part of a marketing strategy aimed at creating a whole new identity for the capital of Wales.

According to Anne Haila (1997 in Brenner and Keil, 2006:282-287), more than keeping up with the discourse of the "global city", one should focus on "global city politics", in the sense that with the global city, a new urban politics has emerged that focuses on the similarities that modern cities, either global or small and middle-size cities, share with each other. At the centre of this new politics is the creation of an attractive city image for real estate developers and investors. Cardiff has already become an attractive city for the real estate and that can be seen through the "To Let/For Sale" signs that proliferate in the city, especially in the city centre and the Bay. Haila also advances four trends in contemporary urban development that are affecting global cities, as well as other small and middle-size cities that have been copying these out. These four trends are related to the "operation of global actors to create an international image for the city", "the spread of similar methods of finance and construction", "foreign investments and the integration of markets" and "buildings as signs" (Haila, Anne (1997) in Brenner and Keil, 2006:285-287). Although these four trends can be seen nowadays in Cardiff, the last trend is particularly important for the city. Indeed, iconic buildings such as the Millenium Centre, the Welsh Assembly or St. David's Hotel, the Capitol or the forthcoming St. David's 2 shopping centres are all image buildings that "create a favourable image for the city in order to attract foreign investors. Image buildings are landmark buildings that give the city the appearance of a global city (...)" (Haila (1997 in Brenner and Keil, 2006:287). What we cannot forget is that these buildings, although they attract many people, also segregate and exclude by leaving many other people at the door because they cannot afford what the building has to offer them.

In brief, Cardiff's has been re-imagining and re-imagining itself to become a competitive European capital city and that has also been done through the spectacularisation of urban policy and redevelopment. According to Hooper and Punter,

[t]he competitiveness strategy (...) has (...) encouraged the development of boosterism and the resulting arrival of a set of conspicuous and much-publicized developments, especially in spectator sports and entertainment. As a result, Cardiff's predominantly generic pattern of development has been complemented by the spectacularisation of public policy and the growing emphasis on 'a city for the eyes' (...). (in Hooper and Punter, 2006:320)

Notwithstanding, Cardiff's imaging has also been focused on diversity. In fact, as Richard Florida (2005) points out, for a city to become attractive and economically competitive worldwide, one of the characteristics it should boast is to be tolerant and open to diversity. To quote him,

(...) regions would appear to have much to gain by introducing measures to support and enhance diversity. This suggests that diversity is more than just a social goal - it may have direct economic benefits as well. (Florida, 2005:109)

This is why diversity, particularly ethnic and cultural diversity, has been part of Cardiff's "campaign" to become a city recognised worldwide.

Cardiff: A World-Becoming City

*(...) a major city may, at least metaphorically,
encompass the entire world.
(Brenner and Keil, 2006:19)*

World cities are important urban regions with key economic and political roles and embedded in an emergent system of worldwide or global capitalism. Therefore, they concentrate international banking and finance and accumulate capital. These cities are characterised by a new urban landscape, where space is reconfigured and reorganized in order to attract and house transnational companies' headquarters. Furthermore, world cities are also the centres of political and symbolic power, where super-profit-making and highly-paid corporate elites move freely and where spatial and social polarisation is more acute.

It is my belief that Cardiff has been trying to reconstruct itself not only as a European capital, but also as a city of and for the world. Whereas specific cities are and have been emerging as world cities, that is, as the centres of world economy, there are others, such as Cardiff, that are "likewise subject to closely analogous, globally induced forms of political-economic and spatial restructuring", without being considered as truly world cities, but that are notwithstanding transformed through worldwide "patterns of consumption, cultural politics and economic restructuring" (Brenner and Keil, 2006:21).

To keep up with these patterns, these cities face, in the same way that world cities do, urban restructuring and renewal, in order to make the city more attractive to visitors and to important transnational companies.

Therefore, although Cardiff cannot be considered a truly 'world city', we can already identify some characteristics of a world city within the capital of Wales. As in many world cities, Cardiff is characterised by deindustrialisation and a decline in manufacturing and the great majority of former industrial areas have been the object of spatial restructuring and converted into attractive arts, entertainment and sports facilities. Furthermore, Cardiff has focused on developing a knowledge-based economy by incorporating industries which deal with the production of knowledge, such as financial services, technology and the cultural and creative industries. Besides, the banking, finance and insurance sector has also registered an increase in the past decades. Nevertheless, Cardiff is still a city of contrasts when it comes to employment, "with a distinct divide between the relatively prosperous northern part of the city and the southern arc which is characterised by high levels of economic and social deprivation" (Hooper and Punter, 2006:63).

Despite all these "world city" characteristics that can already be perceived in Cardiff, the city still fails to achieve the importance of a truly "world city", not being considered as an articulating node in a network or a hierarchy of cities as world cities are and still failing to be a basing point for the operations of transnational companies. Therefore, Cardiff is still a "world-city-in-the-making" (to use Friedmann and Wolff's words in Brenner and Keil, 2006:57-66), or, as I would like to name it, a 'world-becoming' city because, besides trying to achieve the position and importance of a world city, Cardiff also attempts to encompass the whole world within itself. Within the city's multiethnic and multicultural diversity we are acquainted with examples of different nationalities and cultural backgrounds of the four corners of the world, in Cardiff's streets and in modern and glistening shopping facilities we encounter shops of the most important brands worldwide and, ultimately, in the capital of Wales we also perceive an attempt and effort to present outstanding and worldwide emblematic architectural projects and cultural, sports and business mega-events.

Metaphorically speaking, Cardiff is nowadays a magnifying-glassed city. We use a magnifying glass when we cannot see objects accurately, when things are too small to be seen properly. But, although a magnifying glass can show us an image and details that could not be seen at first sight, it also augments, exaggerates, and ultimately, distorts reality; in brief it creates a magnified virtual image of an object under the lens. In the same way, when looking and trying to understand cities worldwide, the image that we are given and that is created of them may be distorted and magnified. Although some cities, as is still the case of Cardiff, cannot actually be considered as world cities, they give an appearance of themselves that is very similar to this type of cities. Although Cardiff cannot be considered a world city, it is willing to be one; it is a

“wannabe world city”, to use Ute Lehrer’s words (in Brenner and Keil, 2006:332-338), that is focusing on the “the glitz and glitter of [a] spectacular city centre and waterfront development” (Hooper and Punter, 2006:26) to promote its image as an attractive city for national and foreign residents, visitors and public and private investors.

As an example of Cardiff’s path towards becoming one of the most important cities worldwide, Cardiff’s official website for visitors is at the moment highlighting that Cardiff has been chosen as one of the 13 favourite places worldwide in the Frommer’s Guide list of top destinations for 2008. The city is described as “a city transformed” that has “reinvented itself and is now a thriving cosmopolitan centre with an ancient Welsh heart”. Besides, Cardiff has been ranked seventh in the top 50 cities in Europe in the fDI’s 2008 Cities of the Future shortlist, which is published by the Financial Times, beating Barcelona, Geneva and Madrid (in www.visitcardiff.com), and even the Hawaii Business Magazine has included the city in its list of top 8 travel destinations, recognising the city’s growing international reputation and as a destination that has ‘transformed itself from a coal miner’s town to a cosmopolitan city that holds onto its Welsh roots (in www.newswales.co.uk).

Conclusion

Despite the city’s efforts to become recognised worldwide as an important destination for visitors and as an attractive place to live and invest in, there are many problems undermining the city’s development. Affordable housing within the city, traffic congestion partly caused by high car dependency, waste management and, probably the most important, the city’s geographical constraints that limit its expansion, are just some of the problems Cardiff will have to cope with in a relatively near future.

Nevertheless, I am led to agree with Daunton when he stated that “there is no more interesting study in town growth and development than Cardiff” (Daunton (1977) in Hooper and Punter, 2006:2). However, Cardiff’s attractiveness does not lie only in the intensive urban changes that have been taking place in the city in the last decades, but also, and perhaps more importantly, on the interesting past that this city boasts and on its appeal and openness to diversity, which is certainly one of the city’s greatest assets. However, for a city that aims to become a ‘world-class’ city, issues related to ethnic diversity and deprivation must be addressed and emphasis should be placed on diversity management.

Due to all of Cardiff’s characteristics addressed in this paper, and especially because Cardiff is an example of a “world-city-in-the-making” or, as I have argued, a ‘world-becoming’ city, it is my belief that the capital of Wales presents itself as a privileged locus of research and analysis.

Note

The study presented in this paper is part of my ongoing PhD project and research in Cultural Studies at the Faculty of Letters, University of Lisbon.

References

- Brenner, Neil and Roger Keil (eds) (2006) *The Global Cities Reader*, Urban Reader Series, London and New York: Routledge.
- Cameron, Ross (1997) "The Most Colourful Extravaganza in the World: Images of Tiger Bay, 1845-1970" in *Patterns of Prejudice*, vol. 31, no. 2, London: Sage Publications, pp. 59-90.
- Cardiff Harbour Authority* [Online].
Available: www.cardiffharbour.com
[2008, March 20th]
- Ethnic Minorities in Wales*, Equal Opportunities Commission, Census 2001.
- Florida, Richard (2005) *Cities and the Creative Class*, New York and London: Routledge.
- "Hawaii Says Holiday in Cardiff" in *News Wales* [Online].
Available: <http://www.newswales.co.uk/?section=Tourism&F=1&id=14269>
[2008, June 5th]
- Hooper, Alan and John Punter (eds) (2006) *Capital Cardiff - 1975-2020: Regeneration, Competitiveness and the Urban Environment*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Jordan, Glenn and C. Weedon (1995) *Cultural Politics: Class, Gender, Race and in the Postmodern World*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers.
- Lin, Jan and Christopher Mele (eds) (2005) *The Urban Sociology Reader*, Urban Reader Series, London and New York: Routledge.
- Lloyd, Bert (1950) 'Down the Bay' in *Picture Post*, 22nd April 1950.
- Rowley, Gwyn (1994) "The Cardiff Bay Development Corporation: Urban Regeneration, Local Economy and Community" in *Geoforum*, Vol. 25. No.3, Nottingham: Elsevier, pp. 265-284.
- Thomas, Huw (2000) "Europe's Most Exciting Waterfront" in *Planet: The Welsh Internationalist*, No. 143, Oct./Nov. 2000, pp. 29-34.
- Tweeddale, Iain (1987) "From Tiger Bay to the Inner City: A Century of Black Settlement in Butetown" in *Radical Wales*, Spring 1987, 5-7.
- Vincent, Wayne (ed) (2005) *How does race and gender influence wealth and well-being in Wales?*, National Centre for Public Policy, EOC, Swansea: University of Wales.
- Visit Cardiff - The Official Visitors' Website for Cardiff* [Online].
Available: www.visitcardiff.com
[2008, March 20th]
- Williams, Gwyn A. (1991) *When Was Wales?: A History of the Welsh*, London: Penguin Books, Ltd.