

Tales of Two Cities: 'Motor City' Detroit and 'King Cotton' Manchester: Transatlantic Transmissions and Transformations, Flows of Communications, Commercial and Cultural Connections

Authors : Dominic Sagar

Abstract : Manchester 'King Cotton', the first truly industrial city of the nineteenth century, passing on the baton to Detroit 'Motor City', is the first truly modern city. We are exploring the tales of the two cities, their rise and fall and subsequent post-industrial decline, their transitions and transformations, whilst alongside paralleling their corresponding, commercial, cultural, industrial and even agricultural, artistic and musical transactions and connections. The paper will briefly contextualize how technologies of the industrial age and modern age have been instrumental in the development of these cities and other similar cities including New York. However, the main focus of the study will be the present and more importantly the future, how globalisation and the advancements of digital technologies and industries have shaped the cities developments from Alan Turing and the making of the first programmable computer to the effect of digitalisation and digital initiatives. Manchester now has a thriving creative digital infrastructure of Digilabs, FabLabs, MadLabs and hubs, the study will reference the Smart Project and the Manchester Digital Development Association whilst paralleling similar digital and creative industrial initiatives now starting to happen in Detroit. The paper will explore other topics including the need to allow for zones of experimentation, areas to play, think and create in order develop and instigate new initiatives and ideas of production, carrying on the tradition of influential inventions throughout the history of these key cities. Other topics will be briefly touched on, such as urban farming, citing the Biospheric foundation in Manchester and other similar projects in Detroit. However, the main thread will focus on the music industries and how they are contributing to the regeneration of cities. Musically and artistically, Manchester and Detroit have been closely connected by the flow and transmission of information and transfer of ideas via 'cars and trains and boats and planes' through to the new 'super highway'. From Detroit to Manchester often via New York and Liverpool and back again, these musical and artistic connections and flows have greatly affected and influenced both cities and the advancement of technology are still connecting the cities. In summary two hugely important industrial cities, subsequently both experienced massive decline in fortunes, having had their large industrial hearts ripped out, ravaged leaving dying industrial carcasses and car crashes of despair, dereliction, desolation and post-industrial wastelands vacated by a massive exodus of the cities' inhabitants. To examine the affinity, similarity and differences between Manchester & Detroit, from their industrial importance to their post-industrial decline and their current transmutations, transformations, transient transgressions, cities in transition; contrasting how they have dealt with these problems and how they can learn from each other. With a view to framing these topics with regard to how various communities have shaped these cities and the creative industries and design [the new cotton/car manufacturing industries] are reinventing post-industrial cities, to speculate on future development of these themes in relation to Globalisation, digitalisation and how cities can function to develop solutions to communal living in cities of the future.

Keywords : cultural capital, digital developments, musical initiatives, zones of experimentation

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