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Rethinking urban entrepreneurialism: Bristol Green Capital – in it for good?

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ABSTRACT

Urban entrepreneurialism is generally characterized by a series of spectacular events, organized and orchestrated by powerful actors. Recently, this has given rise to a series of urban policy agendas that have become ubiquitous across the world. This paper draws attention to an emergent form of urban entrepreneurialism that privileges environmentalism, social inclusion and grassroots creativity. Based on the 2015 European Green Capital process taking place in Bristol in the United Kingdom, this paper shows how the European Green Capital Award is being used to engage a large and diverse range of organizations in the name of the Bristol Green Capital Partnership. We argue that rather than reiterating narratives of urban entrepreneurialism as dominated by narrow economic agendas and being socially exclusionary, this form of urban entrepreneurialism encourages us to look at cities as places that can be coproduced in context-sensitive ways by multiple entities. The paper is informed by primary data gathered through fieldwork conducted over 2014 and 2015, including primary documents, key informant interviews and participant observation.

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Introduction

Urban entrepreneurialism is usually understood as involving spectacular events, organized and orchestrated by powerful actors such as global capitalists and urban governments. Geographers and urban studies scholars have shown how as cities compete to capture private investment and stimulate the urban economy, this new form of entrepreneurialism has combined inward investment and economic development with the speculative construction of place (Harvey, 1989). Mega events such as the Olympic Games, the World Cup (see Gold and Gold, 2017) or urban festivals have become sites of spectacle and a marketable resource to generate what Zukin (1990, p. 38) calls ‘cultural capital’. More recently the emphasis on urban entrepreneurialism has given rise to a series of urban policy agendas that have become ubiquitous across the world. Examples include business improvement districts (Ward, 2006), creative quarters (Florida, 2002), and arts-led...
regeneration initiatives (Catungal & Leslie, 2009; Orueta and Fainstein, 2008; Garcia, 2004; McCann, 2007; Parker, 2008; Peck, 2005; Peck, 2011). These entrepreneurial activities are promoted by consultants and local elites (Peck & Theodore, 2010) and actively leveraged by local governments as a part of their place making strategies. It is argued that these spectacular developments place restrictions on who, what and where is considered as creative and undermine alternative, marginal and quotidian urban practices that are parts of ‘vernacular and everyday landscapes of creativity’ (Edensor et al., 2010). This line of conflict in urban entrepreneurialism calls for more attention on democratic exclusion, democratic challenges and inclusiveness than one would have expected from mainstream entrepreneurialism literature.

This paper aims to explore whether existing discussions of urban entrepreneurialism between the roles of government and private sector can go beyond wealth creation and focus solely on economic profits. We argue that urban entrepreneurialism within the field of green policy is associated with special sets of collaboration elements which also promote inclusiveness alternative forms of urban entrepreneurialism and more positive ways of engaging heterogeneous actors. This paper draws attention to an emergent form of urban entrepreneurialism that privileges environmentalism, social inclusion and grassroots creativity. Our analysis is based on the European Green Capital process taking place in the city of Bristol in the United Kingdom. Under the auspices of the 2015 European Green Capital Award a diverse range of organizations came together in the Bristol Green Capital Partnership, which is explicitly charged with developing a form of urban entrepreneurialism based on collectivist approaches. While powerful actors such as multi-national consultancy firms and urban policy makers remain highly visible in this process, there is an explicit commitment to developing a community-based cultural economy premised on genuine engagement and coproduction. Those involved emphasise the importance of shared knowledge creation and learning, and focus on relational processes rather than outputs and outcomes. This understanding of urban entrepreneurialism remains tentative and experimental but, we argue, formally demarcates spaces for alternative ideological practices and heterogeneous actors (Gibson-Graham, 2008). Rather than reiterating narratives of urban entrepreneurialism as dominated by narrow economic agendas and being socially exclusionary, this form of urban entrepreneurialism encourages us to look at cities as places that can be coproduced in context-sensitive ways by multiple entities.

We organize our argument as follows. The first section of this paper reviews academic debates on urban entrepreneurialism and arts-led regeneration to contextualize the new emphasis on coproduction and community engagement. The second section identifies the historic experiences of Bristol, and points to the emergence of a more heterogeneous model of urban entrepreneurialism. We then show how the European Green Capital award is being used to engage a large and diverse range of organizations in the name of the Bristol Green Capital Partnership. Finally, we explore the implications of this model of urban entrepreneurialism, pointing to the enduring structures that are being developed through a coproduced platform of activities.

Towards alternative spaces for urban entrepreneurialism

There is a long standing literature examining how cities, places and communities compete to attract increasingly mobile capital investments (Cox, 1993; Cox, 1995; Harvey, 1989;
Hubbard & Hall, 1998; Lauermann, 2018; Leitner, 1990). While megaprojects have been considered essential as a part of urban menegerialism (Brenner, 2004; Cochrane, Peck, & Tickell 1996), local governments see cities either in a more business-like manner (Moulaert, Rodriguez, & Swyngedouw 2003; Doucet, 2013; Lawton & Punch, 2014) or platforms where new partnerships can be created with private actors (Bezmez, 2008; Fainstein, 2008; MacLeod & Jones, 2011). More recently, the policy mobilities literature has focused on how cities have promoted programmes to exchange ‘best practices’ and create new networks to strengthen ‘urban capacities’ (Cochrane & Ward, 2012; McCann, 2013; Peck, 2011; Peck & Theodore, 2010; Temenos & McCann, 2012). Scholars suggests that city-to-city networking has become crucial as local authorities promote their visibility transnationally (Acuto, 2013; Beal and Pinson, 2014). These studies show that ‘Ideas that work’ are able to find a worldwide audience and transnational salience in remarkably short order (Peck & Theodore, 2015). There is an expectation that investing in spectacular events will increase jobs and the tax base, appeal to potential business investors, certain groups of coveted workers, granting agencies and tourists (McCann, 2013).

The literature on urban entrepreneurialism also resonates with recent claims made about the urban geographies of brands and branding (Björner, 2013; Kavaratzis, 2009; Kavaratzis & Ashworth, 2005; Pike, 2015). It is suggested that established geographical associations can be reinscribed by rationales of accumulation, competition, differentiation and innovation (Cook & Harrison, 2003; Edensor & Kothari, 2006; Jackson, Russell, & Ward, 2007; Power & Jansson, 2011). Cities now actively use brands and branding to create authentic, high quality, durable and stylish market settings (Pike, 2015). Ashworth (2009) argues various instruments such as personality association, the visual qualities of buildings and urban design, and event hallmarking are used when it comes to place branding. Mega events are one of the examples that ‘have an ambulatory character and are normally subject to a bidding process by potential hosts’ (Gold & Gold, 2008, p. 302). These events have potential to affect local, regional and national economies and receive substantial media attention globally (Getz, 1997; Hall, 2006; Horne & Manzenreiter, 2006; Richards & Palmer, 2010; Roche, 2000; Smith, 2012). They can also create wider socio-economic and socio-cultural effects (Miseren & Mason, 2006; Rohe, 2002). The Olympic Games exemplify this process, as their size and promise are harnessed to deliver on wider ambitions for regeneration and urban change. However, mega events have also been used to mask socio-economic and cultural problems within cities (Garcia, 2004; Harvey, 1989). For example Raco and Tunney (2010) show that many small and medium sized businesses were forced to relocate during the preparation of the 2012 London Olympics site, and they undermine the less visible elements of cities that are essential to urban vibrancy, diversity and sustainability.

Analyses of arts-led initiatives in cities raise similar issues. Policies formulated to attract cultural economy actors and promote creative quarters, clusters and networks, target the highly educated, skilled and mobile labour identified in Richard Florida’s creative class thesis. These ideas have been accepted by many authorities almost uncritically not because they are revolutionary, but because they are so modest and hold out hope for mayors, city councils and urban development officials (Kotkin & Siegel, 2005; Peck, 2005). City managers invest in arts-led regeneration and placemarketing projects, including major events, to contribute to urban regeneration (Catungal & Leslie, 2009; Garcia, 2004; Johnson, 2006; Quinn, 2005). Policy makers and flagship cultural institutions have created joint agendas in the United States (Grodach, 2012; Ponzini & Rossi, 2010),
Canada (Bain & McLean, 2013; Catungal & Leslie, 2009), Australia (Gibson & Klocker, 2005) and Europe (Pratt, 2009). In this process, non-state actors such as artists and long term residents often find themselves excluded from governance structures and the dominant socio-economic networks, and also subject to racialization and gendering (Catungal & Leslie, 2009; Leslie & Catungal, 2012). Moreover while policy documents may advocate arts-led regeneration, in practice agencies tend to adopt more conventional economic development strategies for cultural economy activity and appropriate the language of the creative city for multiple purposes (Grodach, 2013).

In the context of these critiques there is an increasing emphasis on the ‘legacy’ of mega-events and arts-led regeneration (Allen & Cochrane, 2014; Bergsgard & Vassenden, 2011; Davidson & McNeill, 2012; Gray & Porter, 2015; Lauermann, 2015; Pappalepore, 2014; Raco & Tunney, 2010; Smith, 2014). Although the discussion relates primarily to physical elements including sporting infrastructure and urban regeneration, the discussion about ‘legacy’ also captures wider socioeconomic factors such as enhancing skills and workforce development, community relations and social capital (Davies, 2012). In an early intervention Hall (2006, p. 59) argued that

> mega-events are … an extremely significant component of place promotion because they may leave behind social, economic and physical legacies which will have an impact on the host community for a far greater period than that in which the event took place. Preuss (2007, p. 211)

focused on the legacy of mega sports events and described the concept as ‘all planned and unplanned, positive and negative, tangible and intangible structures created for and by a sport event that remain longer then the event itself’.

Recently, the main motivation has been to neutralise some of the ‘unseen and invisible’ consequences of mega-events and arts-led regeneration projects by explicitly focusing on legacies as a way of overcoming governance challenges. For example, ‘transformation in the life chances of London’s most deprived communities’ was central to the thinking around the London Olympic Games and Paralympic Games (London Assembly, 2007, p. 4). In terms of the Cultural Olympiads, Stevenson (2012) illustrates the possible contributions to developing a ‘cultural tourism’ legacy. Nevertheless, he argues the emphasis on visible and outward facing cultural projects ‘appears to have been at the expense of local inclusive community cultural events which are less visible and appealing to outsiders and less able to generate funds’ (Stevenson, 2012, p. 147). In the case of Sydney, Davidson and McNeill (2012) emphasise the importance of legacy debates for the political economy of state involvement. They argue that an assessment of legacy outcomes requires both a consideration of multiple objectives and a concern over the ongoing compatibility of these objectives (Davidson & McNeill, 2012, p. 1629). Recently, Andres and Golubchikov (2016) explored the use of artictic space in St Petersburg and Lausanne. They raised the role of the ‘soft infrastructure’ of cultural production, in contrast with those in ‘creative cities’ as the ‘hard infrastructure’ of urban production. Similarly, Moore, Raco, and Clifford (2018) discusses the 'London model' which emphasises the importance of strong, dedicated delivery institutions and a high degree of interchange between the public and private sectors. They refer to this model as it focussed on the conversion of messy places into manageable and deliverable development spaces.
This discussion has traced how the academic literature on urban entrepreneurialism has raised the issue of economic and social exclusion, and moved practitioner conceptions of mega-events and arts initiatives to more explicitly grapple with questions of political legitimacy and legacy. One consequence has been a shift from presupposing the outcomes of particular development projects to a more explicit focus on the historical and geographic specificity of particular cities. For example, in the recent case of the Glasgow Commonwealth Games, the East End of the city was illustrated. As one of the most deprived communities in the city, the area was viewed as holding back the prosperity of Glasgow, and previous attempts at regeneration had failed to make a difference in the area (Paton, Mooney, & McKee, 2012). Yet despite an explicit emphasis on social inclusion and legacy, Gray and Porter (2015) show how the particular procedure of compulsory purchase orders on the site of the Athletes’ Village suspended ‘normal’ rights and procedural protections and defined ‘public interest’ by displacing working class neighbourhoods. The question remains, therefore, as to whether urban entrepreneurialism can truly engage a wider set of actors, particularly in a context where both capital and the state are looking for ‘partners’ to deliver on their ambitions. According to McCann (2013), local policy domains are still crucial in the face of global competition as they are sites of innovation, assemblage, and struggle by gathering and reformulating knowledge from elsewhere. Especially, in the context of urban entrepreneurialism in the field of environmental policy, global competition needs to cooperate with local policy domains for comprehensive environmental policymaking (Andersson & James, 2018). Following the same line of enquiry, we ask whether it is possible to repoliticise mega events and arts-led regeneration projects through different vocabularies and imaginations? Are there alternative spaces for urban entrepreneurialism that could trouble the reiteration of dominant narratives, naturalization of social-economic inequalities and ‘greenwashing’ in which policy changes do little for the sustainability of cities (see Burch, 2010; Holgersen & Malm, 2015)? To answer these questions we turn to Bristol’s experience of European Green Capital 2015.

**Methodology**

To substantiate and develop our argument, we draw on our empirical material gathered from the fieldwork in Bristol. The city of Bristol is widely perceived to be successful in the context of entrepreneurialism as the city ‘benefitted from the work of an energetic and imaginative Cultural Development Partnership that has spearheaded a range of initiatives that would otherwise probably not have happened’ (Oatley et al., 1999, p. 263). Bristol’s diverse and extensive voluntary and community sectors have developed a self-reliant and adversarial relationship with conventional political institutions, and have regularly come together for campaigns linked to various issues such as the environment, public sector cuts and gentrification. The presence of strong civil society organizations in the city has underpinned the rise of the so-called ‘sharing economy’, with notable activity in areas such as community energy, transport and food.

The paper is informed by primary data gathered through fieldwork conducted over 2014 and 2015. Six key informant interviews were conducted during this time. Interview data were then complemented by secondary sources—newspaper articles, policy
documents, academic reports and official websites. More specifically, the former author has been fully participating in one of the work strands within the Bristol Green Capital Partnership, and latter author is representing the University of Bristol in the working group charged with designing a legacy organization for the city. We acknowledge that such involvement might raise issues around 'research legitimacy' in some cases. Nevertheless, our positionality enabled us to better access data, establish rapport, and build trust with the project participants that might have been problematic otherwise (e.g. Kauffman, 1994). Similarly, reflecting on the ways in which we are familiar with our territory allowed us to be more aware of the context and some of the insights (Labaree, 2002; Turgo, 2012).

**Bristol**

Bristol is a prosperous city with diverse city actors and a long history of entrepreneurialism and experimentation. An important port city during the Industrial Revolution, but then experiencing a long period of relative decline, Bristol has recently undergone an urban transformation (see Bassett, Griffiths, & Smith, 2003; Boddy, Lovering, & Bassett, 1986; Tallon, 2007). Earlier phases of this transformation were analysed within academic debates about urban entrepreneurialism. In the late 1980s Bristol was identified as one of the areas for an Urban Development Corporation, designed to deliver the market-driven strategies of the Thatcher government (Bassett, 1996; Deas, Robson, & Bradford, 2000). An early example of public private partnerships, the UK government attempted to extend market processes into the urban economy by engaging local business leaders and elites (Bassett, 1996). When the city was hit by recession in the early 1990s, one response was the establishment of ‘The Bristol Initiative’ (as a substitute to the Chamber of Commerce) to provide an alternative source of leadership and vision for Bristol businesses (Bassett, 1993). Later this initiative enhanced its role in the city by relaunching the Chamber of Commerce as the Bristol Chamber of Commerce and Initiative, and establishing links with the City Council, the local community groups and government agencies both at local and regional levels (Bassett, 1996). Through the New Labour period of the 1990s, the emphasis on urban entrepreneurialism remained, although there was more focus on social exclusion and neighbourhood-based urban renewal policy through initiatives such as Local Strategic Partnerships, Local Area Agreements, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies, Multi-Area Agreements and the English Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) (Meegan et al., 2014). The Bristol Partnership became the most prominent partnership, responsible for driving the implementation of area-wide Sustainable Community Strategies, including efforts to revitalise deprived neighbourhoods (Davies & Pill, 2012).

Following the formation of Conservative-led Coalition government after the national elections in 2010, it was argued the focus of urban policy should be more on people rather than places (Crowley, Balaram, & Lee, 2012). This government replaced RDAs with Local Enterprise Partnerships. Although the main concern was to support disadvantaged people to achieve better outcomes regardless of where they live, there were no requirements to have representation from local trade unions, voluntary organizations or community sectors. After the Heseltine Report in 2012, there was an explicit focus on the devolution of power. Following these discussions, Bristol became one of the two
English core cities (along with Liverpool) with an elected mayor. At the same time regional economic initiatives became more important as the government sought to address growing regional inequalities. The Bristol Initiative supported by Business West (which represents independent business organizations across the South West) developed a vision and plan for the Bristol city region to 2050, with the ambition to ‘develop and grow as the economic powerhouse of the South West’.2 Most recently, Bristol, Cardiff and Newport have begun to discuss a super-city region, with the aim to strengthen transport links between cities, unlock the energy-generating potential of the Severn Estuary, and attractive international business.3

Reflecting wider discussions about mega events and arts-led regeneration, one of the key contributions of The Bristol Initiative was the upgrading of the city’s cultural strategy (Bassett, 1996). The Bristol Cultural Development Partnership emerged in the early 1990s, and Bristol launched its arts and cultural policy strategy in 1992. The Harbourside area was identified as the site for an arts and entertainment quarter that would boost the attractiveness of surrounding areas and nearby cultural attractions such as the Old Vic Theatre, Watershed Media Centre and Arnolfini Art Gallery. This was widely perceived to be successful as the city ‘benefitted from the work of an energetic and imaginative Cultural Development Partnership that has spearheaded a range of initiatives that would otherwise probably not have happened’ (Oatley et al., 1999, p. 263). In 1994 National Lottery Funds were received for a new hands-on science and wildlife centre which later became known as At-Bristol (Tallon, 2007). Building on these efforts, in the early 2000s Bristol was one of six shortlisted cities in the bid for 2009 European Capital of Culture (Bassett et al., 2003). More generally, the Harbourside development had significant implications for the cultural infrastructure of the immediate area and promoted media production industries in the city more generally.

While partnerships between the public and private sector have played an important role in Bristol’s recent development, civil society organizations have also been an important dimension of these processes of urban renewal. In the case of the waterfront regeneration scheme, Bassett, Griffiths, and Smith (2002) examined the variety of interests, competing urban visions and political agendas. They argued that incorporation of a wider range of stakeholder interests and public opinions at an earlier stage could have avoided potential conflicts more effectively. Frenzel and Beverungen (2015, p. 6) identify the inner city area of Stokes Croft as a good example of how heterogeneous values flourish in the city, and where ‘social wealth is produced in common and shared, not merely through the market and mediated by capital’. Stokes Croft is where Bristol’s vibrant squatter and anarchist movements have long circulated, and has established itself as a distinctive neighbourhood with its graffiti and music culture. More generally, Bristol’s diverse and extensive voluntary and community sectors have developed a self-reliant and adversarial relationship with conventional political institutions, and have regularly come together for campaigns linked to various issues such as the environment, public sector cuts and gentrification. Most recently the presence of strong civil society organizations in the city has underpinned the rise of the so-called ‘sharing economy’, with notable activity in areas such as community energy, transport and food.

Until recently the vibrancy of non-state, non-market organizations in Bristol was not seen as advantageous for urban governance. The capacity of public, private and civil society organizations to work across sectoral boundaries was limited, and commentators...
described the city as lacking coordination. For example, Hambleton et al. (2001, p. 11) claimed that Bristol has a ‘fragmented and implied leadership [which] is highly dependent on the external (imposed) policy environment and the formal requirement of partnership working’. This observation echoes with earlier analysis such as DiGaetano and Klemanski (1993) who also stated that Bristol had a fragmented leadership capacity. According to them, this ‘weakened [Bristol’s] capacity to carry out the tasks of managing its buoyant economy. Although cooperating pragmatically on a project-by-project basis, Bristol’s mixed pro-growth/growth management regime lacked a coordinated effort in carrying out its economic development activities’ (78). It is in this context that the developments around European Green Capital mark a distinctive shift in traditional forms of urban governance, a new chapter in Bristol’s urban policy agenda, and the potential for an alternative form of urban entrepreneurialism.

**European Green Capital**

The European Green Capital Award (EGCA) grew out of an initiative taken by 15 European cities and the Association of Estonian cities in May 2006, which saw the establishment of an European Commission award rewarding cities leading the way in environmentally friendly urban living. The aim of the EGCA is to promote urban sustainability and the sharing of best practices between cities. The award is based on an application process involving a set of evaluation areas: climate change; local transport; green urban areas incorporating sustainable land use; nature and biodiversity; ambient air quality; quality of the acoustic environment; waste production and management; water management; waste water management; eco-innovation and sustainable employment; energy performance; integrated environmental management. To date eleven cities have been crowned with the EGCA: Stockholm, Hamburg, Vitoria-Gasteiz, Nantes, Copenhagen, Bristol, Ljubljana, Essen, Nijmegen, Oslo and Lisbon. Bristol has been a part of the EGCA process since 2010. It was shortlisted in both 2010/2011 and 2014 before being finally crowned with the award in 2015.

In a wider scale, the EGCA exemplifies the urban ‘governance experiments’ that have emerged in recent years. These are efforts to ensure that climate change and the green agenda can still be addressed even with the failure of ‘megamultilateralism’ in international climate change agreements (Hoffmann, 2011). Indeed McGuirk et al. (2015) argue cities are an important new site of carbon governance with significant implications for urban governance, showing how carbon reduction initiatives are expanding urban capacities and seeing the emergence of new forms of urban authority in Australia. In our case the EGCA might be seen as a clear example of urban entrepreneurialism. It has been associated with a marked shift from a highly technocratic approach that involved traditional urban elites to a more relational understanding marked by a growing emphasis on formal partnership working and the co-production of urban initiatives. It is this shift, and the ongoing implications for urban governance, that we wish to underline.

When Bristol’s EGCA applications are analysed, the growing focus on collaboration and partnership with diverse organizations across the city is the most striking feature of the documents. Table 1 shows how this shift also manifests in the growing emphasis on extensive infrastructure, comprehensive networks, good citizen engagement, active community involvement and strong relationships in the evaluation areas. Nor is this simply
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<td>1) Climate change</td>
<td>High emission per capita;</td>
<td>Ambitious targets going beyond national requirements; good list of measures in place</td>
<td>Excellent indicators on climate change; excellent working in partners and citizens</td>
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<td></td>
<td>low share of renewable</td>
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<td>electricity; not much</td>
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<td>effort in low carbon</td>
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<td>energy supply</td>
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<td>2) Local transport</td>
<td>Extensive but limited</td>
<td>Good performance on local transport; extensive cycle</td>
<td>Broad range of measures adopted from</td>
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<td>bicycle network; high</td>
<td>infrastructure network to stimulate cycling</td>
<td>infrastructure to travel cultural initiatives, campaigns, collaborations and</td>
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<td>share of car mobility;</td>
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<td>partnerships</td>
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<td>transport medium</td>
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<td>3) Green urban areas</td>
<td>High value of green space</td>
<td>Strong land use policy; statutory land use policy on</td>
<td>Network of multifunctional, inter-connected</td>
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<td>incorporating sustainable land use</td>
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<td>Strategic Green Infrastructure Network; rehabilitation of brown field sites</td>
<td>green spaces; excellent improvement of brownfield sites</td>
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<td>4) Nature and biodiversity</td>
<td></td>
<td>Well defined and supported ambitions for wildlife network;</td>
<td>Well-endowed with biodiversity; a range of</td>
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<td>successful auditing and monitoring measures</td>
<td>targets for future; well-presented and meets all</td>
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<td>the requirements</td>
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<td>5) Ambient air quality</td>
<td>Very ambitious measures</td>
<td>Comprehensive air quality monitoring network</td>
<td>A long list of measures for sustainable travel</td>
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<td>and plans</td>
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<td>modes; well-integrated future plan</td>
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<td>6) Quality of the acoustic environment</td>
<td>Not clear focus on real</td>
<td>Good engagement with citizens; further actions such as</td>
<td>Very active management of noise involving the</td>
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<td>measures; less information</td>
<td>education and enforcement</td>
<td>community</td>
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<td>about future commitment</td>
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<td>7) Waste production and management</td>
<td>Many awareness programmes</td>
<td>Integrated strategy; very good progress in recycling and</td>
<td>Extensive separate collection system; clear future</td>
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<td>but not sufficient</td>
<td>reduction of waste to landfill</td>
<td>plans; strong community involvement</td>
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<td>evidence of how goals</td>
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<td>would be delivered; very</td>
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<td>ambitious plans for future</td>
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<td>but lack of energy</td>
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<td>recovery</td>
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<td>8) Water management</td>
<td>High consumption and</td>
<td>Low level of domestic water metering; per capital</td>
<td>Improvement in per capita consumption;</td>
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<td>leakage (though it is very</td>
<td>consumption decreased but no target has been set</td>
<td>improvement in the water-energy nexus;</td>
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<td>successful in the UK</td>
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<td>awareness raising with innovative approaches</td>
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<td>standards); no incentive</td>
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<td>pricing, low metering</td>
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<td>Full connection to mains sewerage; one of the most efficient UWWTOs in Europe and</td>
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<td>9) Waste water management</td>
<td>The only city with</td>
<td>High level waste water plan; references made to</td>
<td>self-sufficient with its electricity use</td>
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<td>secondary treatment but</td>
<td>environmental sustainability; structured performance</td>
<td>Strong partnership with a range of stakeholders; Sustainable Procurement Strategy;</td>
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<td>no separated rain water</td>
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<td>future funding commitments</td>
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<td>management; compliance</td>
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<td>with UWWTP but landfill</td>
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<td>use is allowed</td>
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<td>10) Eco-innovation and sustainable</td>
<td>Participated planning and</td>
<td>Has the largest emission trading scheme sectors in the UK;</td>
<td>Strong partnership with a range of stakeholders; Sustainable Procurement Strategy;</td>
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<td>employment</td>
<td>vision; very successful</td>
<td>improved carbon efficiency</td>
<td>future funding commitments</td>
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<td>conduct of the Council</td>
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<td>are not specified</td>
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<td>11) Integrated environmental</td>
<td>On the way towards more</td>
<td>Well supported and informative environmental system; variety of initiatives willing</td>
<td>Leading and disseminating activities on ‘Green Public Procurement’; environmental</td>
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<tr>
<td>management</td>
<td>compactness; growing</td>
<td>to reduce carbon footprint; the first city in the UK that</td>
<td>and social impact assessments used for major council</td>
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<td></td>
<td>consideration of climate</td>
<td>undertook carbon footprint assessment</td>
<td>decisions</td>
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<td>change impacts and</td>
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<td>cooperation with</td>
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<td>Energy system transformation programme;</td>
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<td>hinterlands on avoiding</td>
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<td>energy efficiency programme; growth in</td>
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<td></td>
<td>urban sprawl</td>
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<td>renewable energy; ambitious energy saving</td>
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<td>12) Energy performance</td>
<td></td>
<td>Well supported and informative environmental system; variety of initiatives willing</td>
<td>programme for future</td>
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<td>to reduce carbon footprint; the first city in the UK that undertook carbon footprint</td>
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<td>assessment</td>
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<td>Ambitious start of a community based on a sustainable</td>
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<td>energy economy; improvements in transport but requires a realistic forecast</td>
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rhetorical. Over time the EGCA process was characterized by a deepening involvement from diverse city groups:

Since the first time the document [bid] was written, the partnership has been growing over the time and there has been more collaboration between different partners. I actually think the process was helpful to getting people in the city to further develop collaboration in the city. To be able to work on a document, which covers lots of different sectors such as climate change, water and businesses, you need to work together closely (Interview #1)

In the 2010/11 application, Bristol City Council dominated the application process but even then there was a understanding that a whole of city approach was needed. The aim was to give the city a higher profile in Europe, albeit with different motivations from different constituencies.

You’ve got politicians who want to apply perhaps for a range of reasons – the cynic would say for their own political ends but equally they want the city to gain from the exposure that an award brings. You’ve then got the technical people or officers in the Council who are passionate about their own area and want to drive that further. And you’ve got the people outside the Council who want to push the whole city and the Council even further. Little sparks of interests came from all three places (Interview #2)

This first application was shortlisted out of 35 applications and came fifth amongst the eight shortlisted candidate cities. When Bristol re-applied for the 2014 award, the city scored very well overall and came first in areas such as climate change, ambient air quality, quality of the acoustic environment, but second overall to Copenhagen. Perhaps more significantly, however, the preparation of the second bid saw a more explicit emphasis on participation and capacity building around environmental issues.

In the second bid there was a pendulum swing away from the first bid. The partnership lined up a whole range of external reviewer. I remember meeting in this room with some of these very positive marketing people coming in from the partnership, and everyone was gradually starting to lose to live the will because we were talking through this process and it was getting gloomier and gloomier – but we’re not doing this on ecology, we’re not doing this on waste or whatever it was, and then someone said, so, what cities in the UK are doing anything like that? No-one. That was a kind of break-through moment, a paradigm shift (Interview #2)

It was this paradigm shift that marked the development of the third, and ultimately successful bid. The application was developed through a city-wide consultation process jointly orchestrated by the City Council and Arup. In addition to major political and economic actors from all sectors there was a strong presence of local organizations who had long been working hard to make Bristol a greener and more sustainable city. The importance of engaging beyond the more affluent areas of the city, and linking environmental concerns to wider socio-economic disparities in the city was a constant refrain in the consultation meetings. The application also highlighted an on-going programme of awareness-raising and practical projects with citizen groups. Finally, thousands of individual Bristoliens pledged to back the Green Capital bid when the BGC website went online, expressing their willingness to build new forms of social connectivity and stitch together diverse forms of activity and political engagement.

When Bristol was awarded with the EGC 2015, the application bid documented a number of examples where Bristol could act as a role model to cities across Europe.
The vision statement as a green, inclusionary and diverse city was framed in conjunction with a strong community involvement in areas such as waste reduction, recycling, bikes and furniture shops. It promoted the successful redevelopment of the harbourside area into a cultural and recreation amenity within the city; presented an innovative and sustainable vision for the Temple Meads station area which would turn into a new green gateway in the future. It developed an extensive cycle infrastructure network and other measures to stimulate bicycling, building on prior experience of serving as a UK cycling demonstration city in the UK.

Perhaps most importantly, however, throughout the bid an urban policy discourse that had previously been based on economic growth and development was reoriented towards environmental values and collaboration. Bristol’s stated aspirations as European Green Capital had shifted from the spectacular event that might be expected from the urban entrepreneurialism literature to a set of ambitions oriented towards citizen focus and city-wide inclusivity.

When you are trying to present a city as a dynamic place, the ability to say it’s not just government agencies that are interested in this, but organisations – whether that’s corporates or small community organisations – are also interested in that. When you say does Bristol care about being more sustainable and green? Yes we do, 830 organisations from big corporates to small community organisations have all signed up to say yes we want to work together (Interview #4)

**Bristol Green Capital partnership**

One of the most distinctive features of the European Green Capital Award is the governance mechanism through which it is being delivered. The Bristol Green Capital Partnership (BGCP) was initiated in 2007 by the City Council as a platform to develop the concept and delivery of a green city. Initially a small informal network of people from local government, multinational corporations, small businesses, education and third sector, the Partnership is now a formal organization with over 830 groups represented. In 2009 the Council funded the position of Green Capital Coordinator, and in 2010 a Momentum Group was established as an informal decision making body with a small grants programme. As the Momentum Group developed its activity, a Steering Group was created so different members were able to bring in their skills and perspectives, advise on decision making, and provide ideas for the manager. After the second bid for European Green Capital in 2011, the BGCP became the core component of the application, profiled as the vehicle through which diverse organizations would be drawn together, cross-sectoral partnerships would be delivered, and relevant activity generated. The BGCP was registered as an independent Community Interest Company in 2014. It is now formally constituted and being positioned as the independent legacy organization that will work with partners across the city to address complex environmental problems.

Within the Partnership, action groups have been created to drive change in different areas. These groups engage a wide range of themes such as business, education, food, energy, health, nature, new economy, place, resilience, water and transport. The advantage of setting up those themes was that they not only appealed to people with similar interests but also it ‘shifted the sense of ownership and influence from the few to the many and gave the partnership a sense of mass action that encouraged participation’ (Interview #2).
Under the auspices of the EGC agenda, the action groups have opened up spaces for the scaling up of diverse urban practices and given rise to an enormous groundswell of activity. For examples, the Business action group is focused on helping small and large businesses green their practices and become more resilient. The group is working with Bristol City Council and Goodlab South West (which aims to make South West England a hotspot for sustainable innovation) to look at the role of social enterprise in building sustainable futures. The Education action group runs in partnership with Severn Wye Agency which is a network of organizations in sustainable and environmental education. The Group has a series of projects such as ‘My Green City’ and the ‘School-University Partnership Initiative Mentoring’ that develop collaboration and encourage participation in the context of education.

Often the action groups are building on longstanding efforts, while at the same time bringing in new partners and relationships. For example, the Energy action group runs in partnership with the Centre for Sustainable Energy and Bristol Energy Network (BEN). These two Bristol organizations are key intermediaries in the community energy arena (Bird & Barnes, 2014). The Centre for Sustainable Energy is an established charity supporting individuals and communities in sustainable energy. They carry out substantial support work in its hometown of Bristol and surrounding areas. The BEN is run by a group of local groups and organizations, acting as a forum to bring together groups to share experiences and knowledge and to develop common solutions. The Energy action group has seen the BEN engaging with new actors, such as OVO Energy which is one of the UK’s cheapest gas and energy suppliers on the market and based in Bristol.

Similarly, the ‘Food’ action group is a community oriented network that aims to support the existing and strong local food movements in Bristol. It is run in collaboration with Bristol Food Network CIC. With additional funding through BGCP, a number of existing and new projects have benefited. Examples include: ‘Fareshare’ is a food supply organization for the vulnerable and needy; ‘Incredible Edible Bristol’ is a network of Bristol citizens inspired by the global urban edible and food sovereignty movements that are coming together to grow food and community in underused spaces; and ‘Bristol Fish Project’ is a community-supported aquaponics farm in Bristol exploring whether urban aquaponics farming can be a viable livelihood and build community through innovative, collaborative local food systems.11

It would be a mistake to think that there is no difference of substance amongst these groups or networks. While some groups have been led by business organizations, others depend on the work of civil society organizations and local residents. For example, the Business action group is run in partnership with Low Carbon South West, which is a membership organization working to support the growth of the low carbon and environmental sector in the South West of England. They provide consultancy on the ‘Go Green’ initiative to support businesses, charities and organizations in the region. In contrast, some action groups encourage citizen movements and participation such as Bristol Energy Network or the ‘Fossil Free Bristol’ project that the New Economy action group has endorsed. Seen in the round, however, the diversity of the action groups, and the large number of organizations that have joined, have positioned the Partnership so it can capture wider socioeconomic factors such as skill development, community relations and social capital deemed crucial in the discussions around the legacy of the
mega-events (Davies, 2012). As one of the Council officers observed in his interview, ‘Bristol Green Capital offers a neutral space. If you have got something to say, join’ (interview #1).

Moreover, it was also a challenge for the whole partnership as the BGCP has been composed of a variety of multi-national corporations as well as small community groups and individuals. Nevertheless, the promise of the EGCA has managed to keep different groups at the same table:

I remember when I was managing the partnership and the supermarket debate came up. And of course, you had the activists’ initial uprising saying Bristol is against the rise in supermarkets. And then you have all these business people at the back going, I’m not entirely comfortable with this. You could have got them maybe to say, in local decisions communities should have more of a balance of power with supermarkets. You might have got them to sign up to that. But a too radical statement was being proposed. And I think in a very informal, loose ungoverned way, the partnership always dealt with that tension really well, it’s kept everyone together. And I don’t know why. Whether the balance because everyone was after this prize of Green Capital. (Interview #1)

So the prize of Green Capital has turned into a mechanism where tensions are reconciled for the benefits of a collective good rather than just an environmental statement for the city.

This model of partnership contradicts with that found in the urban entrepreneurialism literature, which is dominated by growth coalitions and public-private partnership, instead it resonates with the politics of coalition building by which ‘effective consensus is established over the definition of key problems and specific rationalities and technologies through which problems will be addressed’ (Temenos & McCann, 2012, p. 1394). This was put by one of the Council managers as:

We are now in a period of adopting the structure further to allow that broad reach and engagement to be better partnered with a more strategic approach and inclusion of some of the larger actors to influence the bigger city problems. It is my belief that we could not have done this refinement work without first having opened up the BGCP to become a mass movement of diverse organisations with a shared commitment to positive sustainable change (Interview 3#)

This statement is contradictory to the classic projects and events models of urban entrepreneurialism which would put private developers in a position where they lead growth oriented and high-end developments. Instead, it acknowledges the need for including a variety of different organizations to enhance the quality of life. Moreover, the long terms vision the city has aspired towards takes time and requires efforts from a complex set of groups. In that respect, it is BGCP rather than private developers or BCC that will be the vehicle for becoming European green capital. And it is the process and commitment that put all the parties together with the same goal. This future vision would see the BGCP build on the momentum of the theme groups and action groups in order to develop sustainable initiatives and services at a city scale by continuing to foster an integrated manner though a more formal membership approach.

In fact, the BGCP is now receiving considerable attention, both nationally and internationally. In part this is because it features centrally in a set of ‘good practice’ guides featuring ‘The Bristol Method’

12, that talk about issues such as human capital, collaboration, credibility, networking and management as important components of the Partnership.
But more importantly, the BGCP has stimulated dialogues with government across different scales and has explicitly provided urban leadership. It has modelled the development of a successful community of practice via learning, collaboration and partnership. It does this by offering a neutral space where everybody can join if you have something to say. One of the project managers in the Council puts it as,

Who else could be the legacy organization? That’s the problem in a way, isn’t it? Who else could take it on? The Council? I can’t think of another unless you could have it [legacy] being split up … but it’s a partnership in all but name. (Interview #1)

In this context, Bristol’s award of the title of European Green Capital 2015, which required the bringing together public, private and civil society actors under an environmental and socially cohesive city narrative, has been a notable development in terms of building an integrated method across a fragmented city governance landscape. Seen in this context, the European Green Capital award marks a new form of urban entrepreneurialism that challenges presumptions that this agenda unequivocally advances the interests of capital. What we see in the Bristol case is a form of urban entrepreneurialism that actively engages heterogenous organizations and interests, and is helping implement new ideas in public practice. The city has developed strong partnerships with a whole range of stakeholders encompassing surrounding municipalities, universities, businesses and communities. In particular there is now a strong emphasis on working with non-traditional partners and an on-going programme of awareness-raising and practical projects with citizens.

**Conclusion**

This paper began by drawing attention to the long history of urban entrepreneurialism that positioned spectacular events as a means of stimulating urban growth and development. We then focused on more recent examples of mega events and arts initiatives that have explicitly attempted to develop a legacy as part of this process. Existing discussions of urban entrepreneurialism tend to emphasise the roles of government and private sector interests in the ongoing competition between cities to attract mobile capital investment. The result is an emphasis on wealth creation, and urban entrepreneurialism is considered in its capacity to yield economic profits. It is argued that these events are usually exclusionary, exemplified in the case of creative classes, business improvement districts and mega events. Our claim is that there are alternative forms of urban entrepreneurialism and more positive ways of engaging heterogeneous actors. This is not simply a post-austerity politics of urban entrepreneurialism, in which both capital and the state are looking for new ‘partners’ to deliver on their ambitions, but rather the identification of alternative spaces of entrepreneurialism and diverse manifestations of ideological practices.

While the wider literature on urban entrepreneurialism signals the importance of the process oriented accounts, we would argue that not enough attention has been paid to the role of heterogeneous actors and alternative urban imaginaries. While the European Green Capital Award could be seen as an example of transnationalized urban policy, with its associated assemblages of experts and expertise (McCann, 2013), in the case of Bristol it has led to the development of the Bristol Green Capital Partnership. This approach explicitly distances itself from the traditional models and actors of urban politics, and reinforces
the role of civil society organizations by explicitly positioning them as creating sustainable city futures. While it is still important to recognize the role of capital, state and big actors, it is also important to recognize that current forms of urban entrepreneurialism are stimulating new cross-cutting relationships. Bristol’s explicit ambition to be a green, inclusionary and diverse city opens up new discussions about the importance of the green agenda, and what it might mean for established understandings of urban politics.

Finally, Bristol’s experience with the EGCA provides an example for other cities which focus on the default locked in mode of growth led entrepreneurialism. Those cities that experience coordination or fragmentation problems can consider the ‘projects and events’ model of urban entrepreneurialism not only as being rooted in political economies and structural organization of a specific location, but also as an understanding of the ways in which urban entrepreneurialism are transformed into long terms visons and values. Nevertheless, it is also important to note that the EGCA’s stand out in comparison to other mega-events due to their temporal dimension, i.e. those cities are awarded for a whole year to demonstrate various activities rather than a short period of time. Further research can explore how the temporality of mega events can be used as instruments for place branding.

Notes
1. http://www.businesswest.co.uk/about
2. https://www.businesswest.co.uk/media/BAhbBlbHOGZmSSldNTI1Njg5MjVlMTM5MDAyoNjrKMDBiM2M0JGRVQ/2050_PDF_for_website.pdf, p.2
6. The details of Bristol’s applications and the feedback can be found at http://ec.europa.eu/environment/europeangreencapital/press-communications/egcapublications/index.html
7. They include local organisations such as All About Food, Knowle West Media Centre, Change World, Growing Support, Horstmann, Sustainable Knowle.
8. Such as Bristol Green Doors, Green Bonds, Urban Growers
11. Some of the other projects linked to Bristol2015 include City Ideas Studio; Our Green City: Global Challenges, Bristol Solutions; and 91 Ways to Build a Global City (see Hewson, 2015 for more information)
13. For the 2010/2011 competition, there were only 10 criteria. ‘Nature and biodiversity’ and ‘Energy performance’ criteria were added later on. Also the tenth criterion on the table was referred as ‘Sustainable management of the local authority’ instead of ‘Eco-innovation and sustainable employment’. The eleventh criterion on the table was ‘Sustainable land use’ which was then changed into ‘Integrated environmental management’.

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