

Street and Pavement Infrastructure: Occupy Well Street

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The Urban Context of Creative Economies: From Global Discourse to Local Hackney

The global popularity of employing ‘creativity’ as an urban-economic strategy has heralded a creative urban age. Cities worldwide are heeding Landry’s ‘Creative City’ concept of harnessing local creative potentials for economic revitalisation; or replicating Florida’s ‘Creative Class’ thesis of place-making to attract highly-skilled creative workers, who are the magnets for knowledge-intensive and creative industries fostering growth. 1 | The UK has also become a renowned model, particularly London, as it was where creative industries as an economic policy and valued sector first emerged with the ‘Creative Industries Task Force’ created in 1998. 2 |

Be it a policy emphasis on the organisational culture of city-making, consumption services or production industries, the synergetic relationship means these creative discourses generally favour particular urban locales, entrepreneurial practices and the ‘creative class’, thereby producing spatial, social and economic inequalities. “Creative advantage presupposes creative disadvantage”, which can play out as uneven opportunities amongst cities but also at a more localised, intra-urban level. 3 |

Within London, Hackney borough extensively pursues a ‘Creative Hackney’ agenda which we have identified as a cause of inequalities and imbalanced power dynamics on Mare Street – best exemplified by the intersections of Westgate Street and Well Street. 4 | Just 250 metres away from each other, they represent two different lifeworlds. Westgate Street sits proximately to the trendy Broadway Market and railway arches, and is surrounded by a growing cluster of creative studios, design offices and artistic pop-ups, along with upmarket café-restaurants to serve the creative workers. On the other hand, the long-established, everyday neighbourhood of Well Street is close to social housing estates and is linguistically and ethnically diverse, providing ‘ordinary’ domestic services to a large, lower-income population.

Our concern is that council support for creative class, enterprises and workspaces overlooks or undermines existing, ordinary businesses and communities. As a result, these areas are either left out of economic regeneration or being subsumed into a ‘creative’ make-over that erases the social diversity of Hackney. Our project thus aims to critique and address the uneven dynamics of creative regeneration manifested on Mare Street, by strengthening the presence/representation of the ordinary Well Street cluster. In doing so, we hope to empower traders and users of Well Street in making

1 | Landry, C. (2000) *The Creative City: A Toolkit for Urban Innovators*. London: Routledge.

Florida, R. L. (2002) *The Rise of the Creative Class: and how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life*. New York: Basic Books.

2 | Flew, T. (2011) *The Creative Industries: Culture and Policy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE.

3 | Peck, J. (2005) ‘Struggling with the Creative Class’, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 29(4), pp. 740–770, on p. 767.

4 | Hackney Council (2005) *Creative Hackney A Cultural Policy Framework for Hackney*. London: Hackney Council.

Hackney Council (2010) *Creative Hackney: Cultural Policy Framework*. London: Hackney Council.