

# How Immigrants Are Transforming Cities

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# Economic transformations

- In the past few decades, the advanced economies of Europe, North America and Australia and New Zealand have undergone fundamental changes:
  - decline of the agricultural and manufacturing sectors
  - growth of the service and knowledge industries
  - international migration (nature and function of immigration have changed over time)
- Unskilled people -- immigrants from Third World countries in particular -- find it hard to benefit from the knowledge economy.
- These converging processes alter the opportunity structures, shape and reshape forms of inclusion and exclusion, and add new dimensions to the already existing economic, social and cultural diversity.

# Political focus of socio-cultural issues

- Socioeconomic and spatial bifurcations, affecting quality of urban life.
- Matter of serious political concern.
- Oddly enough, the political focus (in Europe) has shifted from socio-economic to socio-cultural issues.

# Central role for government

- National and urban governments have developed a wide range of approaches that aim at fostering the incorporation of immigrants in the host society.
- Recently, they embarked on tougher integration policies, placing increasing emphasis on native norms, values and behaviour and on disciplining the Other.
- The idea has taken root that:
  - assimilation (and spatial dispersion) are the only way, and
  - the government is the only force capable of shaping these complex social processes



# Cultural diversity offers opportunities

- Experiences in traditional countries of settler immigration show that cultural diversity holds great attraction for a broad public.
  - Food
  - Music, entertainment
  - Clothing
  - Fun shopping
  - Experiences -- *Ghetto as tourist attraction*





























D'BRANDE WYNS KEETEL

金記 KAM KEI





NIEUWMARKT  
CENTRUM

新廣場





# Cultural diversity offers opportunities

- Rise of immigrant/ethnic entrepreneurship in particular neighborhoods: local opportunity structure favorable for development of SMEs
- Commodification of cultural diversity offers social and economic opportunities (entrepreneurship, neighborhood revitalization, tourism and leisure industry) – *diversity dividend*

# Cultural diversity offers opportunities

- A lasting development?
  - travel guides and Internet shopping guides
  - locations of festivals and parades
  - destinies of city safaris
  - integral part of place marketing of cities



# Conditions

- *Development of inter-ethnic growth coalition* (civic boosterism, festivalization of urban space, embeddedness of immigrant ethnic entrepreneurs in urban tourism and entertainment industry and in place marketing campaigns)
- *Favorable regulation* (accessibility, cleanliness, safety)
- *The ‘right’ supply of ‘familiar exotica’* (‘cultural markers’, neighborhoods as nodal point of ethnic social networks)
- *Marketing* – role of entrepreneurs and ‘critical infrastructure’

# Risks and perverse effects

- Multiculturalism reduced to consumption of 'sanitized ethnic Other'
- Enhancing ethnic stereotypes
- Gazing at the ethnic Other
- New differences and even conflicts within and between ethnic groups
- Cultural diversity becomes dull and predictable
- Disruption of 'natural' economic-geographic processes (fossilization of urban landscapes)





貓頭鷹餐廳





## Further reading...

- Bodaar, A. & J. Rath (2005) 'Cities, Diversity and Public Space', *Metropolis World Bulletin*, 5, pp. 3-5.
- Rath, J. (2005) 'Feeding the Festive City. Immigrant Entrepreneurs and Tourist Industry', pp. 238-253 in E. Guild & J. van Selm (Eds.), *International Migration and Security: Opportunities and Challenges*. London and New York: Routledge.
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