

Keynote Speech for the GlobalCONNECT2006 Conference (MaRS Center, Toronto, December 7<sup>th</sup>, 2006)

Let me welcome you to Toronto and express my wishes that your stay here been stimulating and instructive. As Poet Laureate of Toronto I would like to think that our civic aesthetic as been at least remarkable as our technological aesthetic.

I'm especially delighted to be here at Mars, because we in Toronto consider MaRS to be an icon of the creative city. It represents the apotheosis of technology meeting with creativity, producing more sustainable and livable cities, with prosperous economies and prosperous citizenship.

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I have been asked to share with you some thoughts on the future of cities.

The theme of this conference has been innovation. Innovation falls under the banner of creativity, and creativity does not occur where there trust is lacking in social capital. The job of generating civic trust is in the hands of governance, innovators, entrepreneurs all those who understand that civic spirit is the engine of a good economy,

In the future all cities will be distinguished by one thing only. The nature of their enthusiasm. IT, virtuality, globalization, consumer isotropy will make all cities equally enticing to tourists and investors. Though it will appear that a city is attractive because of certain types of technology, the city wants to attract people who not only specialize in those technologies, but who see that city as a livable place with a strong creative ethic. An aesthetic of the city is more than its expertise in innovation. Besides which, innovation begins on the street in the casual genius of civic encounter. A city that is not creative in all sectors cannot hope to be creative in some sectors.

Wealth generation is limited when wealth is not seen as a product of civic allegiance. The very word allegiance sounds archaic. Does it still have a place on the competitive stage? People need to belong, to a work place, a community, a way of life. Out of that emerges love and loyalty. A city with these qualities is a perpetual motion machine. It is prosperous because it has city spirit. This spirit is seductive to investors and visitors. It makes for a livable town.

Collaboration is not how a city is made. Collaboration exists by converging alliances and partnerships, often provisional. It is a transactional model. The job of making a city cohere in spirit is about loyalty, is about joining together. All leaders know this, that special interests must choreograph themselves to a common vision. When business is the

interest, the most intelligent thing is to re-invest in the spirit that made invention possible-- the city. And that spirit in turn, becomes the engine to economy.

The creative city is more than just innovative. It manufactures an appetite for life. It respects the random, not just as new information for design, but as the currency of civic allowance. People will not volunteer their ideas if they live in the regulated environment of gentrified enclaves, free only to exercise imagination in front of computer screens.

All this to say, that a knowledge economy depends on knowing the roots of creativity. A knowledge economy is more than information. It isn't seduced into the quick harvest. It doesn't barge on insight before insight has had a chance to flower. A knowledge economy understands that the outsourcing of design is at an end, if the design of the architecture between citizens isn't attended to.

And the architecture between citizens is very vulnerable in the future city. It is negotiated space that we live in. It is not adventure, but security that has become the municipal zeitgeist. Surveillance, excessive protocol and proceduralism are becoming the ambience of urban life. In such an environment, it won't belong before innovation is demoted to merely new-level growth.

The factors accomplishing this are many. I would suggest to you that the lack of civic and national commonality accounts for colonies of life styles, ideologies and extremist positions that bewilder the field of policy. The industry of appeasement is replacing the industry of civic care. The ethic of entitlement replaces the ethic of sufficiency, and though this may appear good for capitalism, it spells bad news for sustainability.

Many are the dangers for the future of cities, But the worst thing that can afflict a city, even in its apparent prosperity, is the deterioration of city-soul, that which inspires citizens to self-identity and mutual recognition. Its recovery depends on (1) seeing another citizen as a resource of sacrifice and not just as a resource. (2) using the concept of innovation as a forum of shared wonder and delight. (3) seeing the city not just as opportunities of networks, but as a gracious forum of encounter and unexpected intimacies, with gratitude for what that city has yielded.

With these elements recovered, we are guaranteed creative cities and competitive cities, because we will have cities that will have stayed human.

The task of business and governance is to enact a psychology of creativity with a credible benevolence, beyond the machinery of excitement, acquisition and entertainment. For just as there is an ecology of environment that demands more than the short term solution, there is an ecology of the human heart that demands a faith witnessed in and by the most talented members of our society.

I wish you all Godspeed in that witness.

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