

Workshop Title: Sustainable Creative Cities: The role of the arts in globalized urban context

Abstract:

The workshop will address the roles of artists and creative workers in the evolution of globalized cities across Asia and Europe, assessing how an “artistic mode of knowing” can contribute to a transition from creative cities to sustainable creative cities: The aim is to facilitate the emergence of local urban processes of social change in partnerships between artists, cultural practitioners and communities, as opposed to top-down urban planning. The workshop outcomes will bear relevance for local governance and for ASEM cultural policy.

FULL TEXT (987 words):

Introduction/Background:

As the arts sectors in Asia and Europe are increasingly affected by global cultural developments, interest is growing in exploring the possible roles of arts and cultures as catalysts in contemporary processes of social and cultural transformations. Researchers across Asia and Europe are discussing how to rethink the concept of “Creative Cities” towards the achievement of urban sustainability, as expressed by the notion “Sustainable Cities”. Networks of artists engaged with communities and with ecology are also growing in both regions. These parallel developments presently stand in need of transversal integration and interdisciplinary approaches, beyond the limited rationality of so-called “sectoral” policies which would limit their scope to predefined sectors of society.

Contemporary urban contexts across Asia and Europe reveal comparable challenges, such as the proliferation of diffuse cities with a pattern that metaphorically evokes an archipelago, or a leopard skin. In these urban archipelagos, the traditional center-periphery order is replaced by different combinations of patterns of space, settlement and mobility, between high- and low-densities of population and of architectural elements. Private and public spaces shift accordingly. The separation between city, suburbs and country is losing its clarity, and with it the established perceptions of culture and nature too are shifting. Urban spaces begin to operate at different speeds and un-planned hybrid voids, which do not fit with the limited and linear formal rationality of urban planning, are emerging. As a consequence, lifestyles and modes of living the urban space are changing, but not always for the better: As much as these evolutions reveal bottom-up creativity in the uses of urban space by inhabitants, they also reinforce unsustainable models such as for example consumerism and commuting traffic.

Furthermore, the logic of the “Creative Class” tends to establish real estate speculations, short-sighted competition between cities, as well as social and ecological imbalances on the long term. That unsustainable model is heralded by the urban economist Richard Florida, who coined the concept in *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002), a book that is still influencing urban policies worldwide. For Florida, social and ecological unsustainability are a fatality in the “spiky world” of creative cities. However, a growing number of artists, concerned local communities and advocates of sustainable cities do not share Florida's fatalism and are exploring alternative developments. They do not try to oppose or cure problematic urban developments from a top-down or outsider perspective which would ignore the specific context and emerging creativity of each community. Rather, they cherish both on the one hand bottom-up, collaborative processes in communities, and on the other hand the transversal and transformative potentials of an “artistic mode of knowing”.

Unlike the formal rationality of planners, the “artistic mode of knowing” develops intuitive processes of learning, exploring, being open to surprises, and being “iterative,” i.e. not deciding/thinking and then implementing in a linear sequence, but learning-while doing and

thinking-while-doing in circular reflexive sequences and in parallel, overlapping, telescoping processes. In other words, it fosters an ability to evolve, rather than enclose ourselves in predefined ideological frames. In the context of complex 'archipelagos' of urban-&-suburban spaces, the evolutionary qualities of such an expanded mode of knowing are especially relevant, not only for a specific category of people labeled as 'artists', but for everyone. And specifically among artists, the transformation at hand is moving them towards inter- and trans-disciplinary collaborations, leaving behind them the outdated modernist roles assigned to the artist in the 'white cube' art institutions.

The workshop will raise some key questions, including: How should arts & culture institutions respond to cultural globalization within cities? What would be appropriate policy frameworks to support these new roles of culture and the arts and create Asian-European synergies to achieve such policy goals?

In doing so, the workshop will review issues related to creative collaborativity, including the development of interdisciplinary networks between artists and communities ; the artistic mode of knowing and its transversal integration in an expanded rationality ; arts education and arts-in-education ; public spaces and the place of the arts therein ; and key civil society values, including human rights, cultural diversity, non-segregation and ecology.

Objectives:

Building-up on the insights gained from participants, the general objectives of the workshop are:

- To best identify roles played by artists and other cultural actors, in the context of globalization, as catalysts in local urban processes of social transformations ;
- To formulate policy recommendations to support the engagement of artists and other cultural practitioners towards sustainable practices and processes in the specific context of rapidly globalizing cities in Asia and Europe.

Key Questions:

The workshop will work in three steps:

1. Identifying and characterizing different roles of artists and other cultural actors (including craftspeople and communities);
2. Locating and embedding these roles in the definition of “Sustainable Creative Cities” and in the context of local governance across Asia and Europe; and,
3. Discussing appropriate arts and culture policy frameworks, so as to thereafter formulate effective recommendations to the ASEM8 Summit.

Several questions will be raised in the process, including:

- Which changes in arts and cultural policies would support such an evolution of the roles of artists and cultural actors?
- Which insights from Asian experience can be transferred to Europe, and vice versa?
- How can cultural policies allow the emergence of cultures of complexity, rather than design cultural programs?
- How to best disseminate best practice and sustain 'communities of practice' (i.e. informal networks held together by shared commitments) across Asia and Europe?

Target Groups (participants, & outcome audience):

The workshop participants will constitute, together, an interdisciplinary expertise, combining and

articulating the insights from: artists and cultural practitioners, representatives of artistic and cultural organizations; academics working on the themes of creative cities and of sustainable cities; architects/urban planners; cultural policy experts; experts on local governance. The workshop's target audience will refer to cultural policy-makers in Asia and Europe as well as local government bodies and city-planners.

Profiles of the two co-organizing institutions:

Institute of Cultural Theory, Research and the Arts (Institut für Kulturtheorie, Kulturforschung und Künste) Leuphana University Lüneburg (Germany)

URL: <http://www.leuphana.de/en/institute/ikkk.html>

The Institute of Cultural Theory, Research, and the Arts (ICRA, or "IKKK" in German), at the Leuphana University Lüneburg, Germany, pursues theoretical and empirical research on culture and the arts, the scientific and cultural transfer from academia to praxis as well as teaching from perspectives based in the humanities, social and economic sciences. The Institute is organized in the following units: Philosophy, Sociology of the Arts, Cultural Marketing and Communication, Literary Studies. The Sociology of the Arts research unit is also working on issues of urban sociology and on the theme of art & sustainability.

Urban Research Plaza Graduate School for Creative Cities Osaka City University (Japan)

URL: <http://www.ur-plaza.osaka-cu.ac.jp/en/about/index.html>

The Urban Research Plaza serves as a centre for research and practice on urban revitalization at Osaka City University. The Plaza works with private and public sectors as well as citizens on urban studies projects in Japan and cities around the world. It is active in building international networks of urban research and policies through annual international symposiums and workshops that gather leading researchers and policy-makers working on urban planning.

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