Creative Cities and (Un)Sustainability:
From Creative Class to Sustainable Creative Cities

Sacha Kagan
Julia Hahn
Leuphana Universität Lüneburg, Germany

Abstract: The city today is increasingly conceptualized using terms such as *creative cities* or *creative class* and stressing the importance of culture. The effects this development can have on cities and neighbourhoods has been criticised within the wider field of sociology. We explore this critique and place it in the context of the analysis of a culture of unsustainability in order to identify how the concept of creative cities may breed unsustainability. The two cities of Hamburg and Toronto are looked at, considering their implementation of the ideas behind the creative city concept as well as the critical responses from the cultural sector. We then introduce a re-conceptualization of creative cities based on an understanding of the role of the artist in cultures of sustainability. Rethinking creativity and pointing at open dialogue and Richard Sennett's notion of the *craftsman*, we suggest one possible way toward sustainable creative cities.

Keywords: Sustainability, creative cities, cultural diversity, artistic engagement, Hamburg, Toronto

Résumé : La ville est, de nos jours, conceptualisée de plus en plus à travers des termes tels que « ville créative » et « classe créative », suscitant l'attention à l'importance de la culture. Les effets d'un tel développement sur les villes et les quartiers, ont été l'objet de critiques de la part de sociologues. Nous explorons ces critiques et les plaçons dans le contexte de l'analyse d'une culture de l'insoutenabilité, afin d'identifier comment le concept de villes créatives peut générer de l'insoutenabilité. Nous prenons pour exemples les deux villes de Hambourg et Toronto, au vu de leur application des idées sous-tendant le concept de ville créative, et au vu des réponses critiques du secteur culturel. Puis nous introduisons une re-conceptualisation des villes créatives, se fondant sur une conception du rôle de l'artiste pour des cultures de soutenabilité. Nous suggérons des pistes de réflexion pour des villes créatives soutenables, reconsidérant le concept de créativité, et évoquant l'idée de dialogue ouvert ainsi que la figure de « l'artisan » chez Richard Sennett.

Mots clé : la durabilité, les villes créatives, la diversité culturelle, l'engagement artistique, Hambourg, Toronto

---

Sacha Kagan is Research Associate at the Institute of Cultural Theory, Research and the Arts (IKKK, Leuphana University Lüneburg) and the founding coordinator of the international network Cultura21 ('Cultural Fieldworks for Sustainability'). E-mail: sachakagan@googlemail.com. Julia Hahn completed a master's thesis in Cultural Sciences at Leuphana University Lüneburg on the subject of 'creative cities and (un)sustainability'. E-mail: j.hahn99@googlemail.com

Creative cities and unsustainability

Creative cities

The current understanding of the city is one dominated by terms such as *creative city* (Landry 2000) and *creative class* (Florida 2002) which stress the importance of culture and the arts in the urban context. Cultural aspects of city life and artists have become important factors for urban policy, public officials, and businesses. In a global competition of cities, culture, entertainment, consumption, and urban amenities play an important role in enhancing locations (Clark 2004). This shows a change in thinking about the urban space and what drives development in a city. Florida, prevalently used by urban planners and city officials, stresses the importance of place, its characteristics, and how this relates to economic growth. The presence and concentration of artists, scientists, musicians, bohemians, and even gays, is linked to the city's economic development in that these groups foster creativity, which is seen as the new economic value. The creative climate of a city or an urban district is essential because it attracts the creative class (or not). Florida (2002) develops different instruments for measuring this, such as a "creativity index" (p. 235), "3 Ts" (p. 292), and "gay index" (p. 255). Further, Landry (2000) gives his readers urban planning objectives and a "range of approaches and methods to 'think creatively', to 'plan creatively', and to 'act creatively'" (p. xv). The creative potential of a city is essential for the city's survival and prosperity, especially given the global competition for attractiveness and human resources. Certain planning tools for enabling a creative, open environment, such as a mixture of bottom-up and top-down methods, or the removing of obstacles to creativity such as bureaucracies, are mentioned (Landry & Bianchini 1995, p. 56).

Within the creative city concept, the role of art and culture, among other amenities, is to enhance what Florida describes as "quality of place" (p. 232). Art and culture contribute to the general atmosphere of a city or a district, its street life, diversity, and other aspects. This, all together, helps build what Florida refers to as "a world class people climate" (p. 293), which then enables cities to label themselves as creative places and position themselves within the global competition for human resources.

Critique of the creative city

The focus here is on the wider field of sociology and its critique of the ideas behind the creative city concept.[1] This will help increase understanding of the effects the concept can have on a city and its residents. As Porter & Shaw (2009) state: "Egged on by celebrity academics such as Richard Florida …, governments and markets are implementing formulaic urban regeneration strategies …, there is an urgent need to critically assess the nature, impact and meaning of this phenomenon" (p. 1). The effects identified by sociological critiques (i.e., gentrification, segregation, exclusion, displacement) can be related to unsustainable aspects within the creative city concept. By recognizing these consequences and the structures behind them, possible approaches for

---

[1] There are wide discussions on Florida and many texts that critically examine his concepts and their effects: see, for example, Peck (2005) and Hoyman & Faricy (2009).

sustainability within the concept can be introduced, salvaging art and culture's role for sustainability.

In the creative city model, culture is used to increase value, be it symbolically through images or materialized. In this context, Zukin (1990) refers to "real cultural capital," meaning spatially linked cultural capital, which becomes a reason for real investments (p. 38). As Bernt & Holm (2005) state, the cultural capital (of artists) becomes objectified and transfers onto certain places; this, in turn, makes access to it easier, as it can be consumed by anyone who enters this space. Ley (2003) examines gentrification processes and how the high level of cultural capital of artists increases the symbolic value of an area and leads to 'followers' (other professionals with high levels of cultural, but also economic, capital) coming into a neighbourhood. He uses Bourdieu's notions of cultural and economic capital and finds that both of these concepts help to explain gentrification. The artists' high level of cultural capital can "turn junk into art" (Ley 2003, p. 2541), whereas the property markets of inner cities turn art (or the presence of artists) into a commodity, raising land prices by using artists' "critical aesthetic disposition on the streets of old neighbourhoods" as a key tool for gentrification (Ley 2003, p. 2542).

Bourdieu (1999) also describes the "club effect"[2] as a process that excludes according to economic, cultural, and also social capital. Select spaces acquire social and symbolic capital based upon "people and things which are different from the vast majority and have in common … the fact that they exclude everyone who does not present all the desired attributes …" (p. 129). This "club effect" shows that consequences like segregation and symbolic violence can result from a policy that "favors the *construction of homogeneous groups on a spatial basis*" (p. 129) This can be connected to the creative city concept, in which arts and culture function as enablers for a creative urban milieu, in turn enhancing the city economically and often resulting in gentrification. Artists or 'creatives' play an important role here and can be seen as pioneers of gentrification, as they give their cultural capital to a certain district or space. As Bernt & Holm (2005) describe, gentrified spaces become more and more general, losing the specific characteristics that enabled their cultural distinctiveness.

Further, the concepts behind New Urban Sociology and Urban Political Economy can help explain developments brought about through the implementation of the creative city concept and what it means for culture. Kirchberg (1998a) uses this approach and focuses on urban development and the embedded importance of culture. Urban Political Economy, which defines urban development as a result of the struggles between the exchange value and the practical value of urban space, sees segregation and the spatial allocation of social groups as a result of the privatization of public spaces which have been symbolically acquired (Kirchberg 1998a). According to Urban Political Economy, city development is a result of the power struggle between the "growth machine" (Molotch 1976) and residents. Within this, culture is often used by the "growth machine" to upgrade a district, but also by residents to identify with their surroundings. Culture, used as a method to increase value, can additionally exclude through symbolic barriers. This grants access to only a partial public made up mostly of consumers, as these benefit the economy of symbols (Kirchberg 1998b, p. 86). Other, non-target groups are left out of these spaces,

---

[2] The notion of *club effect* has a source within economics, where it is referred to as *club goods* (see Buchanan 1965).

which ultimately leads to a 'closed' city. For example, in "Naked City: The Death and Life of Authentic Urban Places," Zukin (2009), referring to Jane Jacobs, writes about the re-building of public spaces in New York City and what consequences this has for certain groups: "These forces of redevelopment have smoothed the uneven layers of grit and glamour, swept away tracks of contentious history, cast doubt on the idea that poor people have a right to live and work here too – all that made the city authentic" (p. xi).

The assessments made by the Urban Political Economy approach can be applied to the creative city concept in that the concept relies on culture, art, and 'creatives' to enhance a city's economic development. The consequences and results of the instrumental use of culture mentioned above are also part of the creative city concept in that it is used to create the quality of a place. If cities rely on attracting the creative class as a strategy for economic growth, the result can be a struggle over space and identity of a city. This is not only the case within the city's region , but also on the global stage, where cities compete over 'creative' human resources because, as Florida (2008) notes, there is a clustering force of talent, which results in the success of a few "superstar cities" (p. 129. He describes a "spiky world" (p. 17) in which "those trapped in the valleys are looking directly up at the peaks, the growing disparities in wealth, opportunity, and lifestyle staring them right in the face." (p. 38). Bourdieu's (1999) description of "site effects" shows that the position of individuals in *social* space results in their location in *spatial* space, "with the inhabited (or appropriated) space functioning as a sort of spontaneous symbolization of social space" (p. 124). He shows the sociological dimension of what Florida describes and refers to "the *construction of homogeneous groups on a spatial basis*" (Bourdieu 1999, p. 129), which can also be a consequence of the competitiveness within the creative city concept. If the peaks continuously attract 'creatives' and as a result exclude other groups, they themselves will eventually become more and more homogenous. This can be seen as a contradictory tension within the creative city concept, and as a self-fulfilling prophecy, the more 'creatives' a city attracts, the more it becomes full of this rather homogenous group, resulting, for example, in gentrification.

Creative cities: Hamburg, Germany and Toronto, Canada

Although there are numerous examples of cities that have applied Florida's ideas the focus here is on an overview of two specific cases. The present situations in Hamburg, Germany, and Toronto, Canada, offer a closer look at the relationship between the creative city concept and city residents. These two cities were chosen because they are exemplary for the implementation of the ideas behind Florida's creative class and because, in both cities there has been resistance against the direction the cities are taking.

Hamburg's mission statement, "Metropole Hamburg – Wachsende Stadt"[3] (Metropolis Hamburg – Growing City), shows how the city is trying to position itself globally by, for instance, building cultural landmarks such as the *Elbphilharmonie*[4] or *Hafen City*[5]. In Toronto,

---

[3] www.hamburg.de/standort-hamburg/324630/standortpolitik.html

[4] www.elbphilharmonie.de/home.en

[5] http://en.hafencity.com (Europe's largest inner city urban development project along Hamburg's Port, aimed at attracting new high income residents)

redevelopment and reinvestment in the downtown area "are supported by an array of policy documents that bring together the rhetoric of urban renaissance … with the concept of Richard Florida's 'creative class'" (Lehrer 2009, p. 147), which aim to move the city towards creative industries, arts, and architecture. As Lehrer describes, results have been gentrification and a high concentration of artists especially in the area of Queen Street West. Out of this situation came the formation of a group of residents named Active 18, which started negotiating with the city and developers and became involved in the planning processes of their neighbourhood. Even though there were only small gains on the side of the resistance group, such as the fact that developers had to face a public debate, Lehrer hopes "[that] for the benefit of good planning … Toronto's urban renaissance strategies will continuously meet resistance" (p. 156).

In addition, the fact that Florida himself lives and works in Toronto has effects on the city. A Toronto-based collective called 'Creative Class Struggle' specifically challenges the ideas of Florida, their adoption in urban policy, and his presence in the city. Additionally, their website mentions the current situation in Hamburg under the title: 'Activists in Hamburg Resist Creative Class Policies' (Creative Class Struggle, n.d.). They refer to the *Gängeviertel*, a downtown area in Hamburg made up largely of heritage buildings. The buildings were sold by the City of Hamburg to an investor group in 2008, which intended to tear most of them down in order to build high-end offices and residential towers. In the summer of 2009, these buildings were occupied by artists, musicians, and activists who opposed Florida's ideas in their manifesto "Not in Our Name," which was published by several German newspapers. It opens with: "A spectre has been haunting Europe since US economist Richard Florida predicted that the future belongs to cities in which the 'creative class' feels at home."[6] They feel instrumentalized by Hamburg because it uses Florida's concepts as a 'recipe' for developing the city, trying to turn it into an ideal place for the creative class. Instead, as the manifesto states, the city is becoming increasingly segregated and gentrified. They also mourn the decline in arts funding over many years, while at the same time artists are used by the city to enhance certain districts. For them the city is not a brand, it is a community, which is why they claim their right to the city and include all residents of Hamburg. Somewhat surprisingly, in the fall of 2009 the city government decided to buy back the *Gängeviertel* and grant the squatters time to find a concept for its future use.[7] It seems the City has realized that having these artists – these members of the creative class – in a downtown location is in its own interest. The developments in Hamburg and Toronto can be put in the broader context of a critique of the culture of unsustainability in order to connect characteristics of unsustainability to those of the creative city concept.

The culture of unsustainability and creative cities

Though the term *sustainability* has many definitions and understandings, the working definition here will be: "[a] concept that speaks to the reconciliation of social justice, ecological integrity, and the well being of all living systems on the planet. The goal is to create an ecologically and socially

---

[6] A full English version can be found here: www.signandsight.com/features/1961.html

[7] For an overview of developments in the Gängeviertel see: www.spiegel.de/international/germany/ 0,1518,670600,00.html. See also the website of the initiative in German: http://das-gaengeviertel.info/haupt-menue/home.html

just world within the means of nature without compromising future generations" (Moore 2005, p. 78).[8] This definition will allow a normative assessment and review of developments in cities and the creative city concept.

A general critique of characteristics of our society, which are also a part of the creative city concept, can be connected to the notion of *unsustainability*. This points to the importance of cultural change in order to achieve more sustainability. In "Angst and Unsustainability in Postmodern Times," Kirchberg (2008) connects characteristics of modernity with the sustainability discourse. He specifically looks at Bauman (2007) and Sennett (1999 and 2006) and their critiques of contemporary society in order to find possible explanations as to why its characteristics are unsustainable.[9] The exploitation of human resources and their waste is an important critical factor for Bauman and Sennett. This can be connected to the sustainability discourse as it shows "parallels [to] a wasteful and unsustainable lifestyle" (Kirchberg 2008, p. 94). Bauman mentions angst as the main factor behind present individual and social behaviour. For him, our time is based on a "ground on which our life prospects are … admittedly shaky – as are our jobs and the companies that offer them, our partners and networks of friends … and the self-esteem and self-confidence that come with it" (Bauman 2007, quoted in Kirchberg 2008, p. 98). What Bauman describes can be related to the creative class and their lifestyles.

Sennett's critique of the flexibility required by global capitalism and the "corrosion of character" that results can also be seen in the sustainability context: "Character as such a sustainable trait, is now lost … in an economy that is solely focused on (unsustainable) short-term yields and short-term satisfaction" (Kirchberg 2008, p. 95). In the context of (creative) cities, the corrosion of character described by Sennett also has effects on the local level of urban neighbourhoods, as their role as a place of building and maintaining identity erodes and they cease to be sustainable communities. Regarding the concept of creative class, the flexibility described is a characteristic of this group, a requirement, but also voluntary to a certain degree. As Kirchberg notes, "sustainable positions in the labor environment are replaced by 'projects' [and] temporary assignments" (p. 95).[10] The argument can be made that the characteristics of the creative class, such as an individualistic active lifestyle (Florida 2002, p. 231) and flexibility, can also be labelled as unsustainable. Even though the creative class seems to prefer unique, distinctive places, the results of creative city policies are often very different, as described previously. These consequences are unsustainable in the sense that they do not focus on local situations and therefore can cause a 'corrosion of neighbourhoods' or the loss of residents' identification with the city itself.

---

[8] See also Kagan (2008a). On the development of the concept of *sustainability* and its differentiations from '*sustainable development*', see Robinson (2004).

[9] Even though Sennett and Baumann do not explicitly use the terms *sustainability* or *unsustainability*.

[10] Boltanski & Chiapello (2005) have studied this extensively. Following Weber they identify a new spirit of capitalism and describe its current form. It shows in the project-based *cité* which integrates the artistic critique of the 1960s, which, for example, condemned the loss of authenticity and creativity through capitalism. This new *cité* incorporates the critique into its own justification system and builds its new characteristics around it. Working techniques developed and experimented with in the arts were transferred to this new *cite,* disarming both the artistic and social critique.

If the creative class is the role model for the urban citizen and cities are shaped accordingly, then their (unsustainable) characteristics can have effects on the urban environment. The 'spiky world' Florida describes is an extremely unsustainable condition. In an article from *The Toronto Star*, Whyte (2009) describes the effects of Florida's presence in Toronto and sheds light on what kinds of 'other' people are needed to ensure the lifestyle of the creative class. As a participant in a public forum remarks, "Richard Florida's exotic city, his creative city, depends on ghost people, working behind the scenes. Immigrants, people of colour. You want to know what his version of creative is? He's the relocation agent for the global bourgeoisie. And the rest of us don't matter" (quoted in Whyte 2009). This statement illustrates what Sennett and Bauman describe and what Kirchberg brings into a sustainability context: the "wastefulness of the current use of human resources" (Kirchberg 2008, p. 94), described as a characteristic of modernity, and how the focus on the mobility of 'creatives' within this system increases unsustainability, on a global and local level.

In a further step, Kirchberg looks at the role of the arts within this unsustainable situation. For him, artists have the ability to influence future developments in society by, for example enabling new ways of thinking that associate the cognitive and experiential.[11] The sociology of the arts can examine the issue of sustainability and what the arts are or are not doing to promote it and encourage participation in sustainability issues.

In the context of the creative city concept, the emphasis on arts and culture can be helpful for achieving more sustainability. As Kirchberg notes, given the importance of the cultural dimension to sustainability and the key role arts and culture play in social change, a closer look at the culture(s) of sustainability and the role of artists will contribute to a better understanding of what this can mean for the sustainability of cities.

Cultures of sustainability and the role of the artist

Duxbury, Gillette & Pepper (2007) highlight the importance of culture for sustainable community development in urban contexts, pointing at the relevance of the search-process of sustainability not only at global or national, but also at the local level. They advocate for culture's "potential to transform communities and individuals in positive and meaningful ways over the long term," and refer to Jon Hawkes' four-pillar model of sustainability (Hawkes 2001) which includes cultural vitality as a major dimension of sustainability. They also discuss sustainability's "ethical underpinnings" as grounded in "a holistic and creative process" and requiring cultural diversity and self-determination (i.e., allowing "the community to define sustainability from its own values and perspective").

The cultural dimension of sustainability implies the inclusion of culture in the discussion of local sustainable development and of sustainable communities based on an understanding of the contribution that culture (in the form of 'cultural expressions' of a community, cultural activities, and the arts) makes 'to social capital and cultural capital. It also implies an understanding of 'culture(s) of sustainability' as set(s) of norms and values, social conventions, and institutions informing the transition to more sustainable practices. At a more abstract level, the question of

---

[11] See Dieleman & Huisingh (2006).

culture(s) of sustainability also touches upon transformations in worldviews and paradigmatic bases for the knowledge of the world around oneself, that is, epistemological issues.

Not all human cultures are sustainable *per se*.[12] The culture(s) of sustainability is/are *uniplural*, keeping a complementary tension between the imperative of cultural diversity and a shared basis of understandings allowing the exploration of forms of human organization that maintain mutually beneficial relations between social systems and ecosystems. In the context of globalization, which provides opportunities for 'Earth Citizenship' as much as risks of self-annihilation, the culture of sustainability can be understood as the international and translocal commons of a necessary literacy, which is both an ecological literacy and a literacy of complexity.[13]

Cultural diversity, like biodiversity, is indispensable to the resilience of the human species on Earth: Resilience refers to the capacity to adapt to sudden change (whether exogenous or endogenous), which is by definition unpredictable. Sustainable systems can only exist as long as diversity is preserved, so that the shocks of the unexpected may give way to the responses of resourceful social and ecological systems. Therefore, the preservation and advancement of diversity (both biodiversity and cultural diversity) toward an optimal level (that is, not maximum, infinite diversity, but enough diversity to allow resilience) is a fundamental normative target for sustainability.

The literacy of sustainability, which at a general level can be considered as a common culture, departs from the currently dominant culture of globalization based on the literacy of modernity. The latter, acquired from Descartes and Bacon and fully blossoming in the scientific disciplines of the nineteenth century and in the techno-science of the twentieth century, is based on disjunctive thinking, simplification by reductionism, and atomization of knowledge and experience. It has allowed the economic and technological developments of the past century, but it has also engendered the global crisis of unsustainability by developing an advanced form of cultivated autism in modern societies' and modern individuals' relationships with their environments.[14]

In contrast, an ecological literacy – or *eco-literacy* as coined by Fritjof Capra (1996, 2002) – encompasses the development of an understanding and sensibility for:

- the link between resilience and diversity (both cultural and biodiversity, and their inter-relations);
- the dynamic balance at work in nature and society (meaning that ecosystems and societies be perceived as flexible, ever-fluctuating networks) and its relative vulnerabilities; and
- the creativity and open interdependence of webs of life (based on an understanding of emergence as the source of creativity and evolution).[15]

---

[12] In history, several forms of human civilizations have self-destroyed, offering numerous examples of unsustainable cultures: see Diamond (2004) and, for a critical, more complex account, McAnany & Yoffee (2009).

[13] This *glocal* (global-local) challenge was expressed by Edgar Morin across his works (e.g., Morin 2006, 2007).

[14] Authors from diverse horizons have analyzed this crisis: see Ellul (1977), Morin (1977), Luhmann (1986), Abram (1996), Bourg (1997), and Brocchi (2008).

[15] A short introduction on eco-literacy, resilience, and related concepts can be found in Kagan (2009).

A literacy of complexity constitutes a further step toward sustainability. Sustainability cannot be based merely on a holistic sensibility, overemphasizing the unity and integration of the biosphere and harmony in human societies, and replacing the simplistic paradigm of modernity with a simplistic 'New Age' paradigm. Rather, it should be attentive to complexity, that is, combining and contrasting unity, complementarity, competition, and antagonism. In Edgar Morin's words: "The systems sensibility will be like that of the musical ear which perceives the competitions, symbioses, interferences, overlaps of themes in one same symphonic stream, where the brutal mind will only recognize one single theme surrounded by noise" (Morin 1977, pp. 140-141).[16]

An ecological literacy of complexity also requires a sensibility to the intelligence of the non-human (and a capacity to bridge perceptions with the non-human), a domain in which indigenous cultures can teach us a lot (Abram 1996).

Such (a) culture(s) of sustainability can be nurtured by an aesthetics of sustainability, based on Gregory Bateson's understanding of aesthetics as the "sensibility to the pattern which connects" (Bateson 1979; Kagan, 2010a). This sensibility has been at the core of the development of numerous ecological-artistic practices over the past 40 years. As noted by Duxbury, Gillette & Pepper (2007), *eco-arts* have widely influenced current "thinking about the role of culture in sustainability."

An ecological literacy of complexity will also be a literacy of ambiguity. Complex relations require, not a linear logic, but a complex *dia-logic*: "dia-logic signifies the symbiotic unity of two logics, which, all at the same time, feed each other, compete with each other, parasite each other, oppose each other and fight each other to death" (Morin 1977, p. 80). In this context, artistic reflexivity can bring especially relevant contributions to the constitution of cultures of sustainability. In action research-oriented collaborations between science and civil society, the arts can co-develop the *dia-logic* which will allow us to think about complexity.

The arts offer a social arena where, under certain circumstances, multiple forms of reflexivity can be developed, facilitating detachment from routines and conventions, subversive imagination, and community empowerment (Dieleman 2008). Furthermore, in the search process for uniplural culture(s) of sustainability, artists and other cultural agents working in interdisciplinary collaborations may play key roles as change agents, fostering intercultural cross-pollination between different social networks and different urban contexts (Kagan 2008b).

Toward sustainable creative cities
Hamburg: Why did the City listen?
The circumstances in Hamburg are insightful in the context of this article because they show effects and reactions within a city that has largely accepted Florida's ideas. The current developments could also be understood as extremely unsustainable ones. As the critique by the resistance group in Hamburg describes, the scarce funding for art and culture (outside of major projects such as the *Elbphilharmonie* or *Hafen City*) has forced positioning of neighbourhoods as colourful and eclectic to support marketing strategies that are used to create the brand *Hamburg* (Not in Our Name 2009). Nevertheless, it is also important to acknowledge the different reactions the City of Hamburg had

---

[16] Page numbers are based on the 1981 reprint edition.

towards the squatters.[17] Even though the squatter's manifesto criticizes the City's policies and its adoption of Florida's ideas quite directly, the argument could also be made that only through the lens of the creative city concept did the city even acknowledge the group in the first place. The fact that the City of Hamburg decided to buy back the *Gängeviertel* and give the squatters an opportunity to come up with a concept for its use shows this policy change. In a recent interview, Kirchberg notes his surprise regarding Hamburg's decision. Referring to Landry, he sees the City's current support of the developments in the *Gängeviertel* as a "paradigmatic change" in which the city views this "problem" as an opportunity (Kirchberg 2010).

In a video interview on the *Gängeviertel*, Florida highlights the equity and work that artists put into buildings or neighbourhoods.[18] For him they should be given an ownership state reflecting the value that they bring to a place. This would allow artists and 'creatives' to act as investors, enabling them to sell if they choose to (and move on to a different neighbourhood) or stay. Here Hamburg has the chance to create a dialogue of principles, based around the idea that art is vital to economic growth and therefore has to be protected and nurtured. Florida suggests this could become a model and be applied around the world. The question here is whether there really is a "paradigmatic change" as Kirchberg suggests or whether the City, following Florida, continues only to see artists as part of the real estate system, in which their value shows in the ownership of buildings. Although Florida (2009) wants cities to "treat your artists right," the question remains whether the concept of viewing their work and efforts solely in economic terms really takes into account what the artists themselves are criticizing and what they bring to neighbourhoods and cities.

Nevertheless, the argument could also be made that by Florida's concept stressing the importance of 'creatives' and artists for a city, they were regarded as legitimate actors with valid demands. Kirchberg (2010) advocates that Hamburg should refrain from interfering too much and allow a system of self-management in the *Gängeviertel*, which is in fact the kind of creative cluster that is continuously referred to in the creative city concept.

This example shows a possible way that sustainability issues, such as the demand for socially more just cities, can be integrated into the creative city concept.[19] Of course, Florida's ideas are still highly problematic, especially from a sustainability point of view, but they do help draw attention to the importance of arts, culture, and creativity for urban policy. The aim would be to modify the creative city concept by using its most important aspects (arts, culture, 'creatives', creativity) and

---

[17] These different reactions might also have to do with the fact that the activists in the *Gängeviertel* are not 'typical' squatters. Well-known and established artists are part of the group, giving it a higher level of legitimacy and integrity.

[18] Florida's interview is no longer online, but was previously available on the ZDF.de website: http://aspekte.zdf.de.

[19] The initiative 'Komm in die Gänge' also developed a concept for the further use of the Gängeviertel, which included other sustainability aspects such as public spaces not requiring consumption and an emphasis on an ethnic and cultural mix within the living spaces. The preservation of historical buildings goes against the city's emphasis on economic growth and a continuously expanding city. Restoring the old buildings helps maintain a sense of identity for residents.

further integrating them with sustainability issues.[20] With this in mind, a first step would be to reconsider the notion of creativity in this context.

Rethinking creativity

As mentioned earlier, in eco-literacy the process of *emergence* is understood as the source of creativity and evolution: A culture of sustainability implies an expanded understanding of creativity as a property of all evolutionary networks of life, linked to the notion of emergence, and not only as a human attribute. Emergence is a very complex concept: It points at the creation of a new logic at the level of a system, whereby no analysis of the interactions between the different constituents of the system can suffice to account for the arising of coherent and novel structures at the level of the whole system. Emergence "has been recognized as the dynamic origin of development, learning and evolution" (Capra 2002, p. 14).[21] From there, the concept of creativity can be understood as a basic biological phenomenon: "Creativity – the generation of new forms – is a key property of all living systems" (p. 14).[22] Life is constantly creative: "And since emergence is an integral part of the dynamics of open systems, we reach the important conclusion that open systems develop and evolve. Life constantly reaches out into novelty" (p. 14).

At the level of human communities, creativity as emergence relates to the unplanned, undirected, non-designed creation and experimentation of new social forms. If social organizations and communities are understood as living, learning beings, it is at the level of informal "communities of practice" (Wenger 1998) and social networks that new cultures can emerge. It is at the level of the informal networks and cultural *scenes* of a city that the openness to disturbance, and therefore the potential for emergence, is the richest – not at the level of formal organizations and planned developments. "Facilitating emergence includes creating that openness – a learning culture in which continual questioning is encouraged and innovation is rewarded" (Capra 2002, p. 123). Therefore, an emergence-friendly 'creative city' policy should only give guiding principles, provide open-ended impulses, and establish spaces where informal social processes are facilitated, and should avoid any deterministic design.

Keywords for sustainable creative cities

Unlike the traditional modernist notions of individual creativity and of autonomous art, which are supporting Richard Florida's 'spiky world' view, the alternative understanding of *creativity* that we suggest follows an ecological paradigm more compatible with the search process of sustainability (and based on complexity theories). Such an understanding of creativity also echoes earlier appeals for a more collaborative, connective, social-ecological self-definition in the art worlds (e.g., Gablik

---

[20] The concept does include sustainability issues, especially regarding environmental aspects such as clean air, bike paths, or overall climate as reasons why people are drawn to places (Florida 2002), but the aim is to broaden the regard for sustainability based on the definition used above.

[21] Page numbers are from the Anchor Books edition (2004) of Capra (2002).

[22] While describing the evolution of life on Earth, Fritjof Capra (2002) even claimed that the "planetary network of bacteria has been the main source of evolutionary creativity" (p. 29), thereby relativizing our tendency to consider humans always as the most, or only, creative species on Earth.

1991) and it offers an effective leverage point to re-conceptualize *creative cities* within the agenda of sustainable cities.

Sustainable creative cities will require that local contexts and neighbourhoods, and all local communities (i.e., both humans and other living species), be respected as equal partners of artists and other 'creatives'. On one hand, the search for sustainability imposes certain limits to the autonomy of artists and 'creatives', who can no longer be considered as fully irresponsible and individualistic agents allowing their cultural capital to ground processes of gentrification (just as the economy can no longer be allowed indefinite and inconsiderate growth). On the other hand, the search for sustainability also requires an evolutionary openness to the emergence of ways of life, which are both locally sustainable and informed by the global dimension of sustainability. In this respect, creativity is also an imperative for sustainability, and artists and other 'creatives' should be given the necessary opportunities and degree of autonomy so as to foster creative local developments. Therefore, the kind of autonomy that is required is less the modernist autonomy of art for art's sake, and more the *dialogical* autonomy of trans-local interdisciplinary teams engaged for the self-management of local communities. David Bohm (2004) described *dialogue* as a basis for social intelligence and creativity. He understood dialogue as a genuine connectivity in conversations/social interactions, based on a caring openness to the other (and acknowledgment of one's own limits and fragility), as opposed to the mere contest of wills of the *discussion* (whereby each discussant tries to 'convince', that is, to impose forcefully upon others, one's truth, one's will, and/or one's individual creativity). Thanks to its openness, Bohm's *dialogue* defines an inter-subjective space of shared experience where creativity can emerge.

If understood as emergent, creativity is not a process that arises necessarily in designated 'creative' individuals according to their talent, human capital, or cultural capital, but it can also arise in the minds of 'ordinary' members of local communities under certain circumstances. Artists and other 'creatives' should thus be understood as the facilitators, openers, and catalysts of creative processes, rather than their owners, authors, or sole originators. Furthermore, creativity is not the only quality that should be stressed in sustainable creative cities, but it should be complemented by other qualities that contribute to the dialogical value of communities of practice, such as *craftsmanship*, as described by Richard Sennett.

For Sennett (2008), *craftsmanship*, the wish to do work well for its own sake, is an inclusive category as it is based not on talent, but on motivation and ability. This makes it possible for "nearly anyone [to] become a good craftsman" (p. 268).[23] In addition, this means that the shared capacity to work offers a common ground for encountering others. As Sennett states, "the craft of making physical things provides insight into the techniques of experience that can shape our dealings with others" (p. 289). For him there is a connection between the material challenges the craftsman encounters and the skills required for human relationships.[24] Related to social dialogue within communities, the notion of craftsmanship can encourage connections between all members built

---

[23] The notion of *craftsmanship* also achieves a sense of self-worth and supports values that encourage a strong togetherness. This goes against the 'corrosion of character' that Sennett (2008) describes. In a craftsman approach, "people are anchored in tangible reality, and they can take pride in their work" (Sennett 2008, p. 21). This approach, additionally, can create sustainability within an individual's character.

[24] Sennett only refers to human relationships, but the non-human world would have to be added here.

upon joint experiences and possibly help overcome social divisions. Further, Sennett ties art and craft together based on the expressive implications behind all practices. Built around these qualities and effects of craftsmanship, artists, 'creatives', and 'ordinary' members of communities are able to interplay on a sufficiently levelled playing field, which is an essential quality behind a sustainable creative city.[25]

Some existing art-based projects are moving towards such practices, with the artists as catalysts for a dialogical relationship within creative communities. For example, in Hamburg in 2007, the team *Migrantas* (composed of an artist, a graphic designer, a sociologist, an urban planner, and a journalist) started the project "Bundesmigrantinnen – Images of Migration in Germany´s Urban Space."[26] They organized workshops with migrant women from different backgrounds, exchanging experiences and expressing them in simple drawings (made by the women), which were then translated into pictograms (by the team) (see Figure 1). The drawings and pictograms were exhibited together in art spaces, and the pictograms were also turned into large-scale posters shown in urban public space. In Wilhemsburg (a multicultural city district of Hamburg along the river Elbe), the 2008 project "Culture|Nature" highlighted existing exemplary local initiatives and linked them with inspiring international artists. For example, the residents' association *Interkultureller Garten e.V.* and the ecological artist Susan Leibovitz Steinman worked together on "gardening art" in public urban spaces and held "kitchen table diplomacy" meetings (Haarmann & Lemke 2009). In cities across the world, exemplary projects are fostering the creative collaborations of art and social-ecological communities – for example, David Haley's "Wild Wild Walks" in Manchester (U.K.) whereby teams of residents, artists, experts, and policymakers walk together to (re)discover biodiversity in urban spaces.[27]

---

[25] A further aspect of *craftsmanship* emphasizes the importance of asking ethical questions throughout the entire work process, not only at the end. Based on pragmatism, which stresses the link between means and ends, Sennett (2008) looks at the different "stages and sequences of the work process, [in order to indicate] when the craftsman can pause in the work and reflect on what he or she is doing" (p. 296). This aspect can help integrate sustainability issues into work processes, giving a normative framework and pointing to possible consequences of one's doing.

[26] See the team's website: www.migrantas.org

[27] We are not aware of such ecological-social projects in Toronto. For further information on walking-based art projects, see http://assist2010.ning.com

Figure 1. Pictogram poster developed by the project "Bundesmigrantinnen – Images of Migration in Germany´s Urban Space"

In this article we have only been able to briefly touch on some dimensions towards an understanding of sustainable creative cities. We explored how contemporary critiques of the concepts of *creative city* and *creative class*, when placed in the context of the analysis of a culture of unsustainability, helps to highlight how the concept of creative cities may breed unsustainability. Using the cities of Hamburg and Toronto as examples, we proposed a re-conceptualization of creative cities based on an understanding of the role of the artist in cultures of sustainability. Richard Sennett's notion of the *craftsman* provides one pathway in this re-thinking process towards sustainable creative cities. Further key issues should be explored such as the question of how to become "skilled practitioners of interdependence" (see Kelley 2008, pp. 73-76) and necessary policy changes, such as rethinking Local Agenda 21 (see Kagan & Sasaki 2010; Kagan 2010b).

References

Abram, D. (1996). *The spell of the sensuous: Perception and language in a more than human world*. New York: Pantheon.

Bateson, G. (1979). *Mind and nature: A necessary unity*. New York: Dutton.

Bauman, Z. (2007). *Liquid times: Living in an age of uncertainty*. Cambridge: Polity.

Bernt, M. & Holm, A. (2005). Kunst. Produkt. Gentrification. In S. Dillemuth, J. Strau & A. J. Wieder (eds*.*) *Jetzt und 10 Jahre davor. Zu den Verhältnissen von Kulturproduktion und Stadtentwicklung.* Berlin: Katalog Kunstwerke.

Boltanski, L. & Chiapello, E. (2005). *The new spirit of capitalism*. London, New York: Verso.

Bohm, D. (2004). *On dialogue*. London: Routledge.

Bourdieu, P. (1999). Site effects. In P. Bourdieu et al. (eds.), *The weight of the world: Social suffering in contemporary society* (pp. 123-129). Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Bourg, D. (1997). *Nature et technique: Essai sur l'idée de progrès*. Paris: Hatier.

Brocchi, D. (2008). The cultural dimension of sustainability. In S. Kagan & V. Kirchberg (eds.), *Sustainability: A new frontier for the arts and cultures* (pp. 26-58). Frankfurt am Main: VAS (Verlag für Akademische Schriften).

Buchanan, J. M. (1965). An economic theory of clubs. *Economica*, 32, 1-14.

Capra, F. (1996). *The web of life: A new scientific understanding of living systems*. New York: Anchor Books.

Capra, F. (2002). *The hidden connections: A science for sustainable living*. London: HarperCollins.

Clark, T. N. (2004). Urban amenities: Lakes, opera, and juice bars: Do they drive development? In T. N. Clark (ed.), *The city as an entertainment machine* (pp. 103-140). Amsterdam: Elsevier.

Creative class struggle. (n.d.). http://creativeclassstruggle.wordpress.com/ [16 March 2010].

Darlow, A. (1996). Cultural policy and urban sustainability: Making a missing link? *Planning Practice and Research, 11*(3): 291-301.

Diamond, J. (2004). *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed*. New York: Viking Adult.

Dieleman, H. (2008). Sustainability, art and reflexivity: Why artists and designers may become key change agents in sustainability. In S. Kagan & V. Kirchberg (eds.), *Sustainability: A new frontier for the arts and cultures* (pp. 108-146). Frankfurt am Main: VAS (Verlag für Akademische Schriften).

Dieleman, H. & Huisingh, D. (2006). The potentials of games in learning and teaching about sustainable development. *Journal of Cleaner Production (special issue on Education for Sustainable Development), 14*: 9-11.

Duxbury, N., Gillette, E. & Pepper, K. (2007). Exploring the cultural dimensions of sustainability. *Creative City News: Special Edition 4*. Vancouver: Creative City Network of Canada. www.creativecity.ca/se-newsletters/special-edition-4/index.html [25 January 2010].

Elbphilharmonie (n.d.). www.elbphilharmonie.de/home.en [16 March 2010].

Ellul, J. (1977). *Le système technicien*. Paris: Calmann-Lévy.

Florida, R. (2002). *The rise of the creative class: And how it's transforming work, leisure, community and everyday life.* New York: Basic Books.

Florida, R. (2008). *Who's your city? How the creative economy is making where you live the most important decision of your life.* New York: Basic Books.

Gablik, S. (1991). *The reenchantment of art*. London: Thames and Hudson.

Haarmann, A. & Lemke, H. (eds.). (2009). *Culture/Nature: Art and philosophy in the context of urban development*. Berlin: Jovis Verlag.

Hafencity (n.d.). www.hafencity.com/en/home.html [16 March 2010].

Hawkes, J. (2001). *The fourth pillar of sustainability: Culture's essential role in public planning*. Melbourne: Common Ground.

Hoyman, M. & Faricy, C. (2009). It takes a village: A test of the creative class, social capital and human capital theories. *Urban Affairs Review, 44*: 311-333.

Kagan, S. (2008a). Sustainability as a new frontier for the arts and cultures. In S. Kagan & V. Kirchberg (eds.), *Sustainability: A new frontier for the arts and cultures*. (pp. 14-24). Frankfurt am Main: VAS (Verlag für Akademische Schriften).

Kagan, S. (2008b). Art effectuating social change: Double entrepreneurship in conventions. In S. Kagan & V. Kirchberg (eds.), *Sustainability: A new frontier for the arts and cultures* (pp. 147-193). Frankfurt am Main: VAS (Verlag für Akademische Schriften).

Kagan, S. (2009). Qué TAL ? – Transdisciplinary action-research & literacy. Paper presented at the 2009 Summit of the World Alliance for Arts Education, October 31 - November 2, 2009, Newcastle, U.K. www.slideshare.net/group/rfg7 [19 March 2010].

Kagan, S. (2010a). Cultures of sustainability and the aesthetics of the pattern that connects. *Futures: The Journal of Policy, Planning and Futures Studies, 42*(10): 1094-1101.

Kagan, S. (2010b). From the unsustainable creative class to the sustainable creative city: An emerging shift in cultural policies? Paper presented at the 3rd conference of the Sociology of Culture Research Network of the European Sociological Association (ESA), October 7-9, 2010, Milano. http://ssrn.com/ abstract=1692189 [15 November 2010].

Kagan, S. & Sasaki, M. (2010). *Sustainable creative cities: The role of the arts in globalized urban context.* Workshop concept paper for the "4th Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe Conference: Changing Challenges, New Ideas," an official side event of the ASEM8 Summit, Asia-Europe Foundation, 2-3 October 2010, Brussels. www.leuphana.de/institute/ikkk/aktuell/ansicht/datum/2010/ 10/02/the-ikkk-hosts-a-workshop-at-the-official-side-event-of-the-asem-8-summit.html [2 August 2010].

Kelley, C. (2008). *Culturing sustainability: A cookbook for artists and educator*s. Master's thesis, Athabasca University, Athabasca, Canada. http://islandsinstitute.ning.com/forum/topic/show?id=1163070 %3ATopic%3A16092 [5 March 2010].

Kirchberg, V. (1998a). Stadtkultur in der Urban Political Economy. In A. Göschel & V. Kirchberg (eds.), *Kultur in der Stadt. Stadtsoziologische Analysen zur Kultur* (pp. 41-54). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Kirchberg, V. (1998b). Money, art and public places. In A. Göschel & V. Kirchberg (eds.), *Kultur in der Stadt. Stadtsoziologische Analysen zur Kultur* (pp. 81-99). Opladen: Leske + Budrich.

Kirchberg, V. (2008). Angst and unsustainability in postmodern times. In S. Kagan & V. Kirchberg (eds.), *Sustainability: A new frontier for the arts and cultures* (pp. 95-105). Frankfurt am Main: VAS (Verlag für Akademische Schriften).

Kirchberg, V. (2010, February 14). Kreativität kann man nicht planen. *Die Tageszeitung.* www.taz.de/1/nord/artikel/1/kreativitaet-kann-man-nicht-planen/ [18 September 2010].

Komm in die Gänge (n.d.). http://das-gaengeviertel.info/ [16 March 2010].

Landry, C. (2000). *The creative city: A toolkit for urban innovators.* London: Earthscan.

Landry, C. & Bianchini, F. (1995). *The creative city.* London: Demos.

Lehrer, U. (2009). Urban renaissance and resistance in Toronto. In L. Porter, & K. Shaw (eds.), *Whose urban renaissance? An international comparison of urban regeneration strategies* (pp. 147-156). London: Routledge.

Ley, D. (2003). Artists, aestheticisation and the field of gentrification. *Urban Studies, 40*(12): 2527-2544.

Luhmann, N. (1986). *Ökologische Kommunikation: kann die moderne Gesellschaft sich auf ökologische Gefährdungen einstellen?* Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag.

McAnany, P.A. & Yoffee, N. (eds.). (2009). *Questioning collapse: Human resilience, ecological vulnerability, and the aftermath of empire*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Molotch, H. (1976). The city as a growth machine: Toward a political economy of place. *The American Journal of Sociology, 82*(2): 309-332.

Moore, J. (2005). Is higher education ready for transformative learning? A question explored in the study of sustainability. *Journal of Transformative Education, 3*(5): 76-91.

Morin, E. (1977). *La méthode, volume 1: La nature de la nature*. Paris: Seuil.

Morin, E. (2006, May 5). Une mondialisation plurielle. *Le Monde*.

Morin, E. (2007). *L'an I de l'ère écologique. Et dialogue avec Nicolas Hulot*. Paris: Tallandier.

Not in our name: Jamming the gentrification machine: a manifesto (n.d.). www.signandsight.com/ features/1961.html [16 March 2010].

Oehmke, P. (2010, January 7). Squatters take on the creative city: Who has the right to shape the city? *Spiegel Online*. www.spiegel.de/international/germany/0,1518,670600,00.html [16 March 2010].

Peck, J. (2005). Struggling with the creative class. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 29*(4): 740-770.

Porter, L., & Shaw, K. (2009). Introduction. In L. Porter & K. Shaw (eds.), *Whose urban renaissance? An international comparison of urban regeneration strategies* (pp. 1-8). London: Routledge.

Robinson, J. (2004). Squaring the circle? Some thoughts on the idea of sustainable development. *Ecological Economics, 48*: 369-384.

Sassen, S. (2002). Cities in a world economy. In S.S. Fainstein & S. Campbell (eds.), *Readings in urban theory* (2nd ed.) (pp. 32-56). Oxford: Blackwell.

Sennett, R. (1999). *The corrosion of character: The personal consequences of work in the new capitalism.* New York: Norton.

Sennett, R. (2006). *The culture of the new capitalism*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Sennett, R. (2008). *The craftsman*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

Standortpolitik. (n.d.). www.hamburg.de/standort-hamburg/324630/standortpolitik.html [16 March 2010].

Wenger, E. (1998). *Communities of practice: Learning, meaning, and identity*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Whyte, M. (2009, June 17). Why Richard Florida's honeymoon is over. *The Toronto Star*. www.thestar.com/ article/656837 [16 March 2010].

Zukin, S. (1990). Socio-spatial prototypes of a new organization of consumption: The role of real cultural capital. *Sociology, 24*(1): 37-56.

Zukin, S. (2009). *Naked city: The death and life of authentic urban places*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.