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Workshop 3 – Sustainable Creative Cities: The Role of the Arts in Globalized Urban Contexts (4th Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe Conference, Brussels, Belgium, 1-3 October 2010)

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Summary of Conference Report[1]:

Workshop 3 – Sustainable Creative Cities:
The Role of the Arts in Globalized Urban Contexts
4th Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe Conference
(Brussels, Belgium, 1-3 October 2010)

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Co-organized by: The Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF); the Institute of Cultural Theory, Research, and the Arts (ICRA, or IKKK in German) at Leuphana University Lueneburg (Germany); and the Urban Research Plaza, Graduate School for Creative Cities, at Osaka City University (Japan)

This workshop was organized within the framework of the fourth Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe Conference, "Changing Challenges, New Ideas," which took place in Brussels, Belgium, 1-3 October 2010.[2] During the workshop, participants reflected on the notion of *sustainable creative cities*, *the arts,* and *the role of the arts* in contemporary urban contexts across Asia and Europe, coming to the conclusion that a shift in policies is required, away from 'creative class' and global competition among so-called 'creative cities' and towards more ecological-social-cultural engagements and more genuinely participative urban developments.

In an opening presentation on 'Re-thinking Creative City Theory', Masayuki Sasaki, Professor at the Graduate School for Creative Cities at Osaka City University, reflected on the notion of

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[1] This is a summary of a short workshop report edited by Sacha Kagan and Katelijn Verstratete, which can be found at www.leuphana.de/institute/ikkk/aktuell/ansicht/datum/2010/11/08/sustainable-creative-cities-the-role-of-the-arts-in-globalised-urban-contexts.html. A longer report, including detailed discussions and several 'good practice' cases, will be available in early 2011.

[2] Full details and all conference reports are available on the conference webpage: www.asef.org/index.php?option=com_project&task=view&id=630

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creative city and on the unsustainable impact that Richard Florida's 'creative class' theory has had on the development of creative cities. He pointed out the importance of a culture-based production system where small-sized businesses are supported and a network of horizontal and regional cooperation is set up. He also stressed the importance of social participation and the role the arts have to play in social inclusion. Research and education programmes for development of human capabilities in creative cities are needed, as was illustrated by lessons learned from cities in Japan. A high level of cultural diversity is required for a social transformation towards more sustainable cities. Real and diverse spaces of creativity and active citizen participation are important building blocks for an educational and industrial system to foster creativity.

The participants were then invited to engage in further discussion on what 'sustainable creative cities' are or could be. They agreed that a sustainable creative city should embrace participatory, bottom-up, intergenerational approaches where 'trial and error' (i.e., iterative) experiments are fostered. In such a city, long-term developments and processes are regarded as important, rather than products. The whole city mobilizes creative potential to re-invent the 'logic of the house' or *oikos logos* (the Greek etymology of the word *ecology*). Viewed as living organisms, sustainable creative cities build on their capacities and resources to create tangible and intangible values for the present and the future. Bio-cultural diversity should be a basis for urban resilience.

Sustainable creative cities include understanding art as process (i.e., art as a verb, not only a noun). They also provide infrastructural support, engage with spiritual/mental and physical/environmental contexts, and understand how these elements are played out. They foster individual and societal opportunities to learn skills in perception, and an ability to articulate and share common values such as creativity, conservation, expression, and diversity. The process is inclusive and genuinely participative, allowing urban and non-urban actors to engage.

Reflections focused on how art can be not only a way to express feelings, emotions, and ideas but also a way to create meaning in a certain place and time through creative expression, keeping things dynamic and evolutionary. Art can be an experimental and rule-breaking process based on subversive imagination, creating messages that articulate contemporary discussions. It can question existing assumptions and make independent suggestions concerning societal issues, and offer alternatives. Art, as a verb, should not be understood as limited to a specific sector of society (i.e., the arts), but professionals who do work in the artistic sector can be catalysts for others to become reflective practitioners. Artists can open up new worlds of possibilities and spaces for dialogue, sharing their creative thoughts with communities. Artists can work in service to society and contribute to long-term social transformations through creative forms of education.

The participants also discussed how policy for sustainable creative cities should be made and who the decision-makers are if a genuinely participatory process is followed. The group discussed the key cultural values that were attached to sustainable creative cities and wondered what cultural infrastructure would be needed to support those values. Moving governments away from catering to the so-called 'creative class' and towards allowing more participatory processes is important, but what are the preferred modes of participatory processes? And how do cities deal with vested interests and politics/power issues? These important questions were raised but no definitive solutions were drawn out of the workshop, nor were the participants willing to propose ready-made solutions in the form of toolkits for creative cities. The experts all agreed that the 'Florida model'

needs to be opposed as it is not taking sustainability into consideration. Also, specific consideration should be given to Asian urban contexts and to the issue of cultural infrastructures in Asia.

The participants developed three recommendations to send forward to the eighth Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM 8 Summit), which followed the 'Connecting Civil Societies' Conference:

1. To meet the demands of living well together in the future, we recommend that the art of city-making embrace ecological growth as social, environmental, cultural, and economic diversity; and governance as transparent forms of genuine, effective participation, dialogue, and mutual learning. The arts can serve these processes as a dynamic catalyst and as a generator of imagination among all other disciplines. To this end, we recommend the creation of enabling environments for the development of larger numbers of smaller arts organizations/initiatives, which engage in participatory and transdisciplinary processes directly responsive to the needs of diverse communities.

2. We call for inter-sector, transversal, and sensitive approaches to urban development. Such approaches should allow indeterminate common spaces for shared use in our cities. We recommend ASEM governments to integrate the significant contributions of artwork and art-creating processes in urban development. We urge them to establish an enabling environment for the active involvement of artists and other creative practitioners in urban development policies. This would include determining the modalities of such participatory processes.

3. To generate the capacity and the capabilities for sustainable cities, the arts have a role to play in formal, informal, and non-formal education as well as in lifelong learning. Furthermore, we urge ASEM governments to actively consider looking beyond arts education towards a deeper role for art-in-education. Such an approach should include artistic ways of learning (with experiential learning, question-based learning, and non-linear problem-solving skills). We also recommend the inclusion of artists and other creative practitioners in consultative bodies on education policies.

Aware of the fact that different sectors and different (sub)cultures attribute different meanings for the same words, and that the use of some complex terms should not be avoided, the group agreed that a glossary would accompany the workshop report. That glossary (which is appended to Kagan and Verstratete's short report) is useful reference tool for understanding cross-cultural and transdisciplinary use of such multi-faceted terms as *art, bio-cultural diversity, complexity, resilience*, and *creative education*.