BRIEFING REPORT
01/11/2010

4th Connecting Civil Societies in Asia and Europe (CCS4) Conference
1-3 October 2010, Brussels, Belgium
An official side-event of the 8th Asia-Europe Meeting (ASEM) Summit

Workshop 3 | Sustainable Creative Cities:
The role of the arts in globalised urban contexts

The participants in workshop group 3 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 of so-called 'creative cities' and towards more ecological-social-cultural engagements and more genuinely participative urban developments.

1. The process

The preparatory phase for the workshop involved 2 rounds of online inputs from participating experts from Asia and Europe over a period of 2 months, on the basis of a concept paper prepared by the workshop hosts.[1] This preparatory work helped to define the parameters for the debate and identified the main focus points and key values.

During the workshop, specific attention was also given to those experts who were not able to give input during the preparatory phase. Short introductions were made to place the topic in relation to the experience of each expert. After an Impulse Presentation on 'Re-thinking the creative city theory" by workshop co-host Prof. Dr. Masayuki Sasaki, the workshop was facilitated by workshop co-host Sacha Kagan on the basis of both one-on-one discussions while walking, and group debates. The discussions focused on the one hand on the notion of sustainable creative city, the arts and the role of the arts, and on the other hand on working towards concrete recommendations.

Much time was spent on the exact wording for the recommendations. 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 must accompany the workshop report (cf. the appendix to this report). The group also decided that in addition to the current short workshop report, a longer document will be created by the group, and that the participating experts will communicate the results of the workshop in their respective networks.[2]

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[1] Please find the workshop's concept paper, agenda and list of participants online at http://www.asef.org/images/stories/ccs4/workshop%203%20agenda.pdf . The online preparatory phase also involved inputs by Ada Wong (Hong Kong Institute of Contemporary Culture), Low Kee Hong (Singapore Arts Festival) and Jordi Pascual (Agenda 21 for Culture - United Cities and Local Governments). Besides the participants listed in the online document mentioned above, the workshop was also joined by Waltraut Ritter (Hong Kong Foresight Centre).

[2] The longer document, including a more detailed discussion and several 'good practice' cases, will be available online by December 1st 2010, at http://www.leuphana.de/institute/ikkk/aktuell/ansicht/datum/2010/11/02/sustainable-creative-cities-the-role-of-the-arts-in-globalised-urban-contexts.html

2. Discussions on Sustainable Creative Cities, the arts and the role of the arts

In his presentation on "Re-thinking creative city theory" Prof. Sasaki reflected on the notion of "creative city" and on the unsustainable impact that Richard Florida's "Creative Class" theory (cf. glossary) 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 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 would be important building blocks for an educational and industrial system to foster creativity.

What is a sustainable creative city?

The participants were then invited to engage in further discussion on what "sustainable creative cities" are or would be. The results of the 'walking' discussion were the following reflections:
A Sustainable Creative City should embrace participatory, bottom-up, intergenerational approaches where 'trial and error' (i.e. iterative – cf. glossary) experiments are fostered. In such a city, long-term developments and processes are regarded as important, rather than products. The whole city is mobilizing creative potential to 're-invent' the 'logic of the house' or "oikos logos" (Greek etymology of the word 'ecology' – cf. glossary). 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 (cf. glossary) should be a basis for urban resilience (cf. glossary).

Sustainable Creative Cities include understanding art as process (i.e. art as a verb, not only a noun), through infrastructural support, by engaging with spiritual/mental and physical/environmental contexts, how these elements are played out with 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 should be inclusive and genuinely participative allowing urban and non-urban actors to engage.

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 towards allowing more participatory processes is important, but what are the preferred modes of participatory processes? And how to deal with vested interests and politics/power issues? These important questions were raised but no definitive solutions were drawn out of the workshop, nor would it be advisable 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 (cf. glossary) into consideration. Also, specific consideration should be given to Asian urban contexts and to the issue of cultural infrastructures in Asia.

What are the roles of the arts?

Before delving into the recommendations, several participants expressed the need to discuss the different definitions of art and the role of the arts, in order to reach a better common understanding in relation to the topic of the workshop.

Reflections focused on how art (cf. also the glossary) 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 catalysers for others to become reflective practitioners (cf. glossary). 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 (cf. glossary).

These reflections echoed the notions discussed in the concept paper and online preparatory phase, i.e. the importance of an "artistic mode of knowing" (or "artistic rationality" – cf. glossary) as an opportunity to move beyond the developmental autism of narrowly-rational modernization policies.

These reflections also led to a discussion of the role of the arts and the meaning of their 'independence' in an interdependent world. The facilitator evoked the many "declarations of interdependence" that flourished across cultural actors and civil society in the past decade, stressing "the ways in which our fates are bound together, both with distant and future humans, and with the non-human natural world."[3] A complex (cf. glossary) balance between independence and interdependence has to be found.

3. Presentation and discussion of the recommendations

The participants elaborated the following 3 recommendations, to be delivered to the 8th ASEM Summit following 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 –cf. glossary- directly responsive to the needs of diverse communities.
2. We call for inter-sector, transversal (cf. glossary) 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 (cf. glossary) 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

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[3] This quote is taken from an online article at: http://www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-vision_reflections/interdependence_3658.jsp

include artistic ways of learning (with experiential learning, question-based learning and non-linear problem-solving skills – cf. glossary). We also recommend the inclusion of artists and other creative practitioners in consultative bodies on education policies.

The formulation of these recommendations in the workshop unfolded a number of further discussion points, including:

- The necessity to reorient keywords from dominant discourses (such as "growth") away from their unsustainable meanings (e.g. quantitative economic growth fuelling a society of hyper-consumption) and towards more sustainable alternatives (e.g. a more qualitative and more spiritual idea of growth, better embedded in the imperatives of ecological resilience);
- The strategic importance of fostering transversal social-ecological dimensions not only across small arts and cultural organizations, but also in existing/established larger art/cultural organizations;
- How to best stress our opposition to cultural policies supporting grandiose "flagship" art, generating superficial image-returns for city marketing, narrowly elitist "art for art's sake" and creative industries (cf. glossary) serving globalized markets within a short-sighted competition between cities;
- The challenge of achieving genuinely participative processes (cf. glossary) on the ground, and about the modalities and extent to which artists should and could be engaged in transforming urban development policies;
- The need to "de-plannify" urban planning and about the value of, and need for more undesignated spaces in the city, where communities and creative practitioners can experiment more sustainable ways of life (by contrast to exceedingly planned creative/cultural districts).

A fuller discussion of the reflections developed by participants in the process towards the formulation of the recommendations (including the online preparatory phase and the workshop itself), will be conducted in the upcoming *longer document* (cf. the web link in footnote 2 above). The *longer document* will also include some "good practice" cases selected by the workshop participants, offering concrete examples of urban cultural activities working in the spirit of this workshop report.

The workshop "Sustainable Creative Cities: the role of the arts in globalised urban contexts" was co-organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation (ASEF), the Institute of Cultural Theory, Research, and the Arts (ICRA, or IKKK in German) at the Leuphana University Lueneburg (Germany) and the Urban Research Plaza, Graduate School for Creative Cities, at Osaka City University (Japan), within the framework of the 4th Connecting Civil Societies Conference: Changing Challenges, New Ideas which took place on 1-3 October 2010 in Brussels, Belgium.

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

The 4th Connecting Civil Societies of Asia and Europe (CCS4) Conference was jointly organised by the Asia-Europe Foundation and the Europe-Asia Policy Forum consortium: the European Policy Centre (EPC), the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS) and the Singapore Institute of International Affairs (SIIA).

Appendix | Glossary

This glossary is intended as a reference for some terms used in the document above. However, it does not in any way give full definitions of the terms discussed, and it only gives very brief, summarized explanations as discussed by the participants.

Agenda 21 for culture:
Declaration approved in 2004 by the world organisation of cities (United Cities and Local Governments). It has 67 articles. It is the only declaration relating sustainable development and local cultural policies. Cultural rights, intercultural dialogue, citizen participation, grassroots creativity and transversality are some of the keywords. Agenda 21 for culture is translated into 19 languages, has written 5 thematic reports and connects 409 cities, local governments and other organisations worldwide.

Art:
As the above document (workshop report) suggests, differences and commonalities have been found among workshop participants with regard to our understandings of art. Some commonalities were summarized in the document above. Concerning the differences, they can be seen at least partly under an Asian/European dichotomy. In the, originally, European and now globalized tradition of modernity, art is seen as a distinct social sector (involved in the production and consumption of sets/systems of objects with symbolic values). Under Asian perspectives, art can be understood more widely as rooted in the creativity of the natural world, seeing human cultures as embedded in nature and not only as setting themselves apart from nature. In the words of Chatvichai Promadhattavedi: "Art is a manifestation of the necessity of man to communicate to one another, noting that this is as much an organic need of all living things to send messages to each other, either to act together or act against threats, to co-operate for survival. The methods of communication rely on the all perception channels, skills in all the senses, conditioned by biological and cultural imprints." As pointed out by David Haley, "Asian perspectives include the Indo-Arian, Sanskrit etymological root of the word art, '*rta*'. This can be understood as the dynamic process by which the whole cosmos continues to be created, virtuously. This suggests a transdisciplinary aesthetic and ethical imperative to engage the world ecologically."
In the 20th century, with a growing understanding of "art as process" (recognizing the forming of social processes and of modes of knowing reality, as artistic work), some European art-worlds have begun opening up to inspirations from Asian perspectives on art. Still today, for example concerning the question of independence/interdependence (as discussed in the workshop report), Asian-European dialogues have a deep potential for expanding our understandings and 'working definitions' of art.

Artistic rationality:
Art is not necessarily "irrational" but, on the contrary, can potentially expand rationality beyond the limitations of modernist thinking. In cognitive terms, the superiority of an "artistic rationality, (as coined by Hans Dieleman) lies in the balanced usage of 'both hemispheres' of the human brain, i.e. both the capabilities for analytical and for intuitive thought. Ultimately, an "artistic rationality" may lead to a transdisciplinary practice of "artscience" (bridging art and science).

Bio-cultural diversity:
The expression "bio-cultural diversity" points to the complex interdependency of biological diversity and cultural diversity, and in this case to the importance of this interdependency for urban resilience (see also "resilience"). The importance of the link between biodiversity and cultural diversity is increasingly recognized at the international level (e.g. at the UNESCO) as a priority for sustainable living.

Complex / complexity:
Complexity is the combining and contrasting of unitary, complementary, competitive, and antagonist relationships, in the "unity in diversity" of our real world. Reality does not fit nicely in human concepts, theories and ideologies. French complexity researcher Edgar Morin, pointed to the necessity for a sensibility to complexity: "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" (Edgar Morin, La Méthode, vol. 1: la nature de la nature, Paris: Seuil, 1977, pp. 140-141).

Creative class: see "Florida (Richard)"

Creative education:
This expression may be related to 'art-in-education', but generally refers to forms of education that are experiential, learner-led, non-didactic, and may incorporate elements borrowed from art practices (e.g. drama games, making, singing). Creative Education is a two-pronged approach in education:
- Teaching for creativity, meaning teaching to enhance creative problem-solving, sensitive experiences and lateral thinking, as well as critical thinking.
- Teaching creatively and moving away from the usual or traditional teaching methods, and finding methods and approaches which are more flexible to learners' interests.

Learners are diverse and this is true at all levels of education. Creative Education is not only relevant to primary and secondary education, but at all levels of education, both formal and non-formal. See also 'informal and non-formal education' in this glossary.

Creative industries:
Creative industries refer to economic sectors involved in the generation and exploitation of value from intellectual property. Their exact definition is not internationally agreed upon, but for example, the UK government's DCMS lists as creative industries: Advertising, Architecture, Arts and antique markets, Crafts, Design, Designer Fashion, Film, video and photography, Software, computer games and electronic publishing, Music and the visual and performing arts, Publishing, Television, Radio.
Creative industries are considered, in contemporary economic discourses, to be the engine of a new 'knowledge economy'. However, these discourses often do not address the ecological and social unsustainability of the economic development models they are promoting in a satisfactory way.

Ecology / "Oikos Logos – the logic of the house":
A definition of ecology may include the study of organisms, their relationship to each other, and their relationship to their environment. This notion of relationships has been taken from its use in the natural sciences to the social sciences, predominantly through the work of Gregory Bateson and Ilya Pregogine, and the work of Deep Ecologists like Arne Naes and Fritjof Capra.
The ecology of cities is also about cultural heritage and identity, and governments should recognise the cultural significance of nature and the natural significance of culture in urban ecologies.

Experiential learning:
Experiential learning is learning by doing, learning from experience. It stresses the value of embodied knowledge as opposed to abstract intellectual knowledge, and of contextual (i.e. eco-logical) knowledge as opposed to the belief in universal laws. In the arts, the importance of the context is also stressed by the notion of "site-specificity" (art that relates to its specific geographic, social, ecological context). This term, also offers a third path between objective and subjective form of knowing.
See also the terms 'artistic rationality,' 'iterative' and 'reflective practitioner' in this glossary.

Florida (Richard, & the "creative class"):
The urban economist Richard Florida has, with his discussion of the "Creative Class", gained a wide influence on urban planners and city officials in the past decade. His views have framed much of the recent "creative city" policies, stressing the importance of culture and the arts in an urban context marked by the global competition of cities, whereby culture, entertainment, consumption, and urban amenities enhance locations and allow economic development. As the argument goes, in the context of a contemporary creative economy and knowledge society where creative industries are engines of growth, the higher concentration and activity of "creatives" (e.g. artists, designers, musicians, scientists) in a city fosters economic development. In the economic competition, the "winners" are the cities and urban districts that are more attractive to the members of the "creative class."
Florida's theory was criticized on many accounts, i.e. on the validity of the category "creative class," on the unsustainability of the economic development in cities aiming to only attract the "creative class" and on the effects of his influence on cultural policy. Indeed, the effects of Florida's influence on cultural "creative city" policies are increasingly denounced worldwide, as fostering gentrification and the segregation, exclusion, and displacement of the poor (ultimately reducing the attractiveness of gentrified places for 'creatives').

The "creative class" model leads to a disconnection of artists and other creative workers from local urban communities, constituting an unsustainable model of cultural policy.

Informal and non-formal education:
Both terms refer to ways of learning that are not part of formal, institutional, education curriculum. Informal education, or learning may take place as part of everyday life, it is often un-planned and may be experienced as tacit knowledge (i.e. the knowledge itself is informal, as well as the means of delivery). Non-formal education sits between formal and informal modes of education. It may use semi-structured forms of learning, such as workshops rather than lectures, yet it may be based on a formal curriculum (i.e. the delivery of the education is not formal).

Iterative:
"Iteration means the act of repeating a process usually with the aim of approaching a desired goal or target or result. Each repetition of the process is also called an "iteration", and the results of one iteration are used as the starting point for the next iteration" (Wikipedia article on iteration – retrieved on September 14th 2010). An "iterative" process in the context of "artistic rationality" means, as was argued in this workshop's concept paper: "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." Iterativity is the principle of allowing iterative processes to happen and of continuously learning from them.

Non-linear (problem-solving):
Non-linearity is interesting for us here as an alternative to 'cause and effect', linearity. Linear problem-solving is the traditional methodology of planning schemes (including the local Agenda21 processes): First formulate a vision, then diagnose the problems, then develop alternatives, then seek consensus, then take decisions, and finally implement and execute. The problem with this way of working is that it is rigid, disjunctive (i.e. autistic) and incapable to properly incorporate "experiential learning" and "artistic rationality" into decision-making. Instead, non-linear problem-solving is based on "iterative" processes and on "questions-based learning" i.e. a capacity to ask wider questions, reframing the problems in new ways rather than being trapped into the path-dependency of pre-established problem-definitions.

Participative processes:
The question of participative processes relates to the modalities of participative democracy, i.e. decision-making processes directly involving local communities, rather than limited forms of consultation. Beyond 'participation' as a consensual keyword and superficial slogan, the challenge to address is how decision-making processes can be genuinely participative, and how issues are managed, such as conflicts, toleration of dissent, diverging interests and values, rights of minorities and marginalized people, power-sharing and individual freedom of expression.
In the arts, a participatory event allows the spectators to interfere and interact. The art-piece is not seen as a finished product that the audience can observe, but the active participation of the audience makes it complete. In the workshop, we also discussed the importance of acknowledging artistic processes and artworks as valuable within the very process of taking decisions: Art sometimes can 'open the eyes' more than only intellectual discussions. See also 'experiential learning.'

Reflective practitioner:
Donald Schön's book The Reflective Practitioner is the origin of our use of this term. We use it to stress that "artistic rationality" is not reserved to artists or to members of a "creative class" but may be practiced, under certain circumstances, by any reflective practitioner, i.e. by professionals who are not only narrowly-rational but also allow emotions, intuitions and creativity in their working processes. Donald Schön, a management expert, analyzed in his book how professionals are often not as "rational" (in the narrow sense of the word) as they claim to be.

Resilience:
Resilience refers to a system's capacity to endure, withstand, overcome, or adapt to changes from the "outside" or from the "inside" environments. In other words, resilience points at the ability to survive on the long term by transforming oneself in relationship with one's environments "Resilience is the ability to absorb disturbances, to be changed and then to re-organise and still have the same identity, same basic structure. It includes the ability to learn from the disturbance" (Christina Stadlbauer).

The term is used in ecology, referring to the limits of a system's capacity to be perturbed; once the limits are reached, the system either collapses or finds a new state of equilibrium. In ecology, resilience necessitates the preservation of diversity (i.e. both biodiversity and cultural diversity): "Sustainable systems can only exist as long as diversity is preserved, so that the exogenous shocks of the unexpected may give way to the endogenous responses of resourceful (social or eco-) systems" (Sacha Kagan).

Sustainability:

A keyword, since the Brundtand Commission introduced "sustainable development" (i.e. development that "meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs") in policy discourse. The word has several contradicting definitions, depending especially on whether one wants to stress "limits to [economic and industrial] growth" or one believes in technology's miraculous power to infinitely "substitute" non-renewable natural resources. Sustainability can also be understood from a cultural perspective as the search for alternative sets of values and knowledge of the world founding a "sensibility to patterns that connect" the economic, social, political, cultural & ecological dimensions of reality. Sustainability is then the search for models of civilization that are both resilient and just.

Trans... (transversal, transdisciplinary):

Generally, the transversal is that which runs across different sets or ensembles. In cultural terms, "transversal values are values that cross two or more cultures and are common to them but they are not transformed into universal values. If a cultural transversal is to remain transversal, it must retain its specificity" (Michael Palencia-Roth, "Universalism and transversalism: dialogue and dialogics in a global perspective", in UNESCO, Cultural Diversity and Transversal Values: East–West Dialogue on Spiritual and Secular Dynamics, 2006, p. 38.).

"Transdisciplinarity" refers to a transversal unity of knowledge beyond disciplines (whether scientific, artistic or professional), i.e. not a universal, reductionist or holistic unity but a complex unity, where interconnections are sought but also where differences are not denied (see glossary entry on "complexity"). It represents a further step in addition to interdisciplinary exchange and its mutual inspirations between areas of knowledge and practice. "Artistic rationality", with the above-mentioned practice of "artscience", is aiming to be transdisciplinary.