



Creative cities and/or sustainable cities: Discourses and practices



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ABSTRACT

This article examines the intercept of the notions of creative city and sustainability, aiming at conceptual clarifications of debates on combining these topics and related urban policies. Firstly it explores the emergence of creative city's discourses and practices and their significance, then the conditions of sustainability of the urban development, and finally the arts' role in achieving urban creativity and sustainable development. While acknowledging the importance of the environmental-ecological aspect, the focus of this article is on the social and cultural aspects of sustainability in the development of creative cities. The main argument is that different approaches to the issues of creativity and sustainability as well as different strategies for developing the sustainable creative city depend not only on various levels of urban space and agents considered but also on values they share. While claims to scientific objectivity are common, most approaches towards these issues are not merely descriptive but necessarily normative. Therefore, the ideological assumptions and implications of these topics are relevant. The debate is exemplified by Scott's polemical meditation versus Florida on the nature and significance of the creative city, highlighting not only its positive but also its "darker", i.e., non-sustainable dimensions. The article concludes by showing that the creative city concept does not only re-produce the dominant market order (as it is the dominant objective today) but could instead relate to communal identity, social belongingness, and a deeper sense of place as formulated by the broader demands of sustainability.

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Introduction: Concepts of creativity and sustainability and the city

Artistic creation is certainly a very ancient topic of reflection in philosophy as well as an area of public policy intervention (along with preserving and promoting the cultural heritage) since the rise of the strategy of "cultural democratization" in the late 1950s. Yet, as noticed by French sociologist Moulin, following the movements of 1968, this strategy has been contested and complemented in the 1970s by that of "cultural democracy". While cultural democratization is founded on a narrow and hierarchical definition of culture, based on the high arts and solely on creative undertakings of the professional artists, thus presumably limiting the enterprise of democratization, cultural democracy promoted instead an anthropological and relativistic definition of culture which extends the concept of art beyond the "fine arts" and recognizes the equal dignity of all forms of creation by contesting

the privileges of elitist high culture and eventually contrasting "creation" and "creativity" in the cultural field (Moulin, 1997: 90–95). Once the process of creation is no longer considered as an exclusive and rare attribute of the professional artist, creativity is socially acknowledged as a universal quality, an ontological capacity of the human subject.¹ However, the image of artistic creation by an individual with outstanding abilities has not lost its aura. The cardinal values of the artistic competence have been transposed towards other economic sectors, infiltrating these sectors by metaphorical contamination as well as by contiguity, inclusion, and exemplarity (Menger, 2002: 7). The wide spreading of this 'model of artistic creativity' does not only shift our understanding of arts and culture, it also significantly changes ideological, technological and organizational structures of the worlds of production.

¹ This topic was explored in the ESA-ARTS Conference *New Frontiers in Art Sociology: Creativity, Support, Sustainability*, held in 2007 at Leuphana University of Lüneburg, Germany, notably by Reckwitz, "The Creative Subject and Modernity: Towards an Archeology of the Cultural Construction of Creativity". See Reckwitz (2007), and Reckwitz (2012) for further development of this topic. See also Ratiu (2011: 34–35).

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Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005 [1999] have shown that the increasing generalization of the new exigencies of the artistic and intellectual professions – singularity, flexibility, adaptability, creativity, inventiveness, self-expression – as ‘new models of excellence’ is strongly related to “the new spirit of capitalism” (the ideology that justifies people’s commitment to capitalism), isomorphic with a globalized capitalism implementing new technologies and new modes of organization (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005: 8–11, 422–424). It is worth mentioning that Boltanski and Chiapello understand ‘capitalism’ through the logic of dynamic capital accumulation and the organization of wage-earning labor and distinguish both from the ‘market economy’; from the various characterizations of capitalism they retain a minimal formula stressing “an imperative to unlimited accumulation of capital by formally pacific means, competition and employment” (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005: 3–4; Ratiu, 2011: 29). The debates on the issues of creative cities and sustainability would gain in clarity if explored in connection with these new challenges facing both present policy-making and research, that of the cultural globalization and the imperative to creativity. For instance, Florida has noticed the pervasiveness of “the creative ethos” since the rise of what he hailed as the “Creative Age” or “Age of Talent” (Florida, 2002: 21, 2005). Other authors refer more critically to ‘the creative turn’ in the so-called ‘new/creative economy’, which is positioned as the cutting-edge of post-industrial knowledge economy (Pratt, 2009: 12), or alternatively to “the cognitive-cultural capitalism”, a recent particular version of capitalism and urbanization (Scott, 2007: 1466). I will approach these issues not empirically but in the tradition of practical philosophy, i.e., by investigating concepts and assumptions that are prior to empirical research.

Cultural globalization here refers, according to Crane (2002), to the transmission across national borders of various forms of arts and ways of life: it “is no longer conceptualized in terms of the emergence of a homogenized global culture corresponding to McLuhan’s global village. Instead, cultural globalization is recognized as a complex phenomenon consisting of global cultures, originating from many different nations and regions” (Crane, 2002: 1). Basically, cultural globalization challenges the idea of culture seen as a problem to deal with in the single context of the nation state and poses the need of global cultural policy-making, and research centered towards the development of trans-national approaches. There is also a new and increased interest in the spatial insertion of creativity, especially in the urban space, and thus in the interactions between creativity and urbanization. As Scott observes, (creative) cities have emerged as distinctive elements of the contemporary global scene, and “the fortunes of these cities are tied up with an escalating process of globalization in four distinct but interrelated senses”: reinforcement of urban agglomeration, along with an opposing trend toward decentralization; increasing tendencies to adopt varieties of monopolistic/imperfect competition and, as a corollary, to build international networks of creative partnerships (Scott, 2006: 1–2, 12–13). All these transformations imply a shift “from a state to a city-centered perspective on cultural generativity”, hence local, regional, and national cultural policies and approaches to cultural development are likely to increasingly differ with

respect to how they set their respective priorities (Menger, 2010: 1, 8).

Creativity

Within the context of (cultural) globalization and its impact on urban development and on cities, the so-called imperative to creativity or the “creative ethos” turns out to be another challenge of great significance. Identified by Florida as “the fundamental spirit or character of [today] culture” that is the emerging Creative Age, it is defined as the overall commitment to creativity in its varied dimensions: “the creative ethos pervades everything from our workplace culture to our values and communities, reshaping the way we see ourselves as economic and social actors – our very identities” (Florida, 2002: 21–22). Since the creative turn in the new economy, concepts of creativity – creative economy, creative industries, creative class, and creative city – have become predominant in the debate about economic development and urban regeneration. Creativity is valued more highly than ever and is cultivated more intensely as observed by Florida in his influential but highly debated book *The Rise of the Creative Class* (2002 “Part One: The Creative Age”: 21–82). According to him, “creativity is not the province of a few selected geniuses who can get away with breaking the mold because they possess superhuman talents. It is a capacity inherent to varying degrees in virtually all people” (Florida, 2002: 32). Thus creativity appears as an ontological capacity at least of a new class, the “creative class”, even though it is not completely democratized or socially generalizable. The elitist argument put forward by Florida in several books (Florida, 2002, 2005, 2007; Florida & Tinagli, 2004) is that human creativity, or talent seen as “creative capital”, has become the principal driving force in the economic growth or its “ultimate source”, and that the competitiveness of cities, regions, and nations is increasingly rooted in the capacity to attract, retain and nurture talented individuals, i.e., the creative elite.² Following this line of argument, “creativity – the ability to create meaningful new forms [...] – is now the *decisive* source of competitive advantage”, and artists (along with scientists, engineers, educators, designers, architects, and writers etc.) have a prominent position in this elite of the “super-creative core” (Florida, 2002: 5, and “Counting the Creative Class”: 72–77; 2005: 1, 22, and “The Creative Capital Perspective”: 33–36). Thus, ‘creativity’ surpasses ‘creation’ in the fields of arts and culture as an extended potential capacity of all everyday people (although not actualized in all cases) versus a limited or rare (but actual) capacity of an individual artist.

Other critical points in this distinction are the respective roles of the spaceless individual and the spatially appointed collective within this creative process which is inescapably

² In publications following *The Rise of the Creative Class*, such as *Cities and the creative class* (2005) and *The flight of the creative class: the new global competition for talent* (2007), Florida has tried to defend the creative class concept against those criticizing it as elitist and exclusionary, by stressing the idea that *every human being is creative*, creative capital being thus a virtually limitless resource (Florida, 2005: 3–4, Florida, 2007: 34–35). Yet the disturbing facts that currently its membership is below one-third of the workforce and inequality is actually highest in the creative epicenters of the U.S. economy, also noticed by Florida (2005: 4, 2007: 36), have not found satisfactory answers by him in terms of strategies for more sustainable patterns of development.

social, not just individual. Creativity and the term ‘creative’ (the adjective applied to processes, cf. Pratt, 2009: 12) receive particular distinct meanings within the actual cultural and urban discourses and practices. There are different and competing concepts of creativity in relationship with the city, as basis for policy-making, with respect to the aims underpinning urban policy. Drawing on Pratt (2009), these notions could be summarized as follows: (1) the dominant notion of creativity as a magic bullet that leads to competitiveness (as in policy documents in the UK by DCMS, 1998, 2001, and in Florida, 2002, 2005, 2007); (2) creativity as a “honey pot” to boost consumption and attract investment and visitors (the classic example being Frank Gehry’s Guggenheim Art Museum in Bilbao); (3) creativity as a new cultural resource for problem solving (e.g., Charles Landry, *The creative city: A toolkit for urban innovators*, 2000); (4) creativity as tool and part of cultural industries, concerned with cultural production (e.g. Richard Peterson, *The production of culture* 1976, and Howard S. Becker, *Art worlds* 1982), that challenges the individualist reading of creativity as well as the dominant reading of consumption and culture (Pratt, 2009: 13–14). My interest here is in the intersection of creativity and place (city), aiming notably at clarifying how this concept was intercepted by urban policy studies within the ‘creative city’ debates as well as, practically, by policy in general, and subsequently how artistic creativity and the arts could truly play in the sustainable urban development.

Thus this article is also interested in exploring the issue of sustainability of creative cities that can broaden our understanding of related discourses and practices of urban development.

Sustainability

Sustainability is a far more recent topic than creation and creativity, being mostly related to environmental-ecological and economic concerns over sustainable development. But novel research has demonstrated that the notion of sustainability is also social and cultural, all these aspects being interconnected (Kagan & Kirchberg, 2008; Johnson, 2009: 40). Its complex and normative character has been made clear by approaches and definitions that call attention to apparently paradoxical reconciliations: of normative and “positive” science, economy and ecology, “matter” and culture (i.e., society, technology and environment), intra-generational and intergenerational justices (Kagan, 2008: 15–16). Definitely the environmental-ecological sustainability is an important aspect of the whole picture and a necessary component along with other kinds of sustainability. Yet the focus of this article is on the cultural and social aspects of sustainability of creative cities, with emphasis on social interaction rather than on environment and infrastructure. Some critical questions arise: is sustainability simply a question of calibrating (i.e., controlling) and limiting growth or of economically limitless culture-led urban development based on unbound creativity à la Florida? Is sustainability *versus* or is it *pro* the accumulation of products, novelty and endless change? The option in answering this is important, considering the previously mentioned definition of capitalism as “an imperative to unlimited accumulation of capital” (Boltanski & Chiapello,

2005: 4). What does it mean to be sustainable for a process in the cultural-creative field and urban context? By a simple definition of sustainability, it is ‘able to be maintained’ as well as being not harmful but: supportable, justifiable, defensible, and viable. From a developmentalist view, this means ‘continuing without losing control’, which includes the wish to planify creativity as instrument of economic growth (e.g., Florida). Another related meaning within this viewpoint is that of being ‘able to live and grow in an independent way’: it is sustainable what lasts by itself. This notion is strongly related to creativity and “cultural vibrancy” (the power of attraction over multiple sectors of economy and at various social levels), and to the new economic thinking on endogenous growth and on self-sustaining through creative and innovative impulses (Menger, 2010: 6). The “endogenous” or “new growth theory” (Cortright, 2001; Romer, 1992, 1993) which underpins the claims for creative economy argues that creativity produces a limitless supply of ideas and knowledge that can be shared, used and developed, and suggests that exploitation of ideas in the creative economy is not limited by finite resources (Evans & Foord, 2006: 156–157). The evolutionary-ecological and the cultural views on sustainability instead abandon the wish to control and planify creativity, seeing sustainability as social and looking for complex interdependence rather than only independence. This complex understanding of sustainability implies continuity in transformation, unity in diversity, and harmony in conflicts (Kagan, 2008; Kagan & Verstraete, 2011).

All these distinct notions of creativity and sustainability intersect with each other and underpin different approaches to the creative cities in relation with sustainability, as well as the debates about their various meanings and practical applications. I will next explore the emergence of creative city’s discourses and practices and their significance from a broad understanding of sustainability, and then the conditions of sustainability of the urban development in creative cities.

Creative cities and sustainability: A cultural-and-social approach

There is a lot of interesting writing on the subject of creative cities tracing the origin of this concept (e.g., O’Connor & Kong, 2009; Pratt, 2008; Scott, 2006; Tay, 2005). A brief overview of its conceptual and policy origin should note that the notion of ‘creative city’ was launched by urban theorists Landry and Bianchini (1995) and next used by Landry (2000), Landry (2006) as “*a toolkit for urban innovators*” toward “*the art of city-making*”. This notion also owes a debt to Jacobs’s classic works on cities (Jacobs, 1961; Jacobs, 1969) that long ago identified the connection between creativity and vibrant city life, and called attention to the role of creativity and diversity as engines for city development. The “creative city” label has globally risen due to the growing intersection of cultural and economic policy and urban planning, policy and governance since larger metropolitan areas became the key drivers of the creative economy (O’Connor & Kong, 2009: 1). While having another intellectual justification and trajectory, Florida’s (2002) prescriptions for successful urban regeneration and growth based on the creative class, as well as his previous research

published later in *Cities and the creative class* (2005) have also played a part in spreading the concept of the creative city, although with strong criticism. For example, Pratt critically examines its supposed role as causal mechanism of urban regeneration and as means by which cities may be made “creative” (Pratt, 2008: 107). Scott criticizes the weight that Florida (2002) as well as Lloyd (2002; developed in Lloyd, 2006) have accorded to the urban presence or absence of artists and bohemians as “a sort of litmus test of local prospects for general creativity”, and the special status accorded to them “as key harbingers and tracking molecules of the ‘creative city’ syndrome” (Scott, 2007: 1471). Nevertheless, he recognizes that there are numerous signs of important shifts in the functions and forms of the city, detectable in economic patterns, in social organization, and in the physical structure. These shifts are manifestations of the cognitive-cultural dimensions of capitalism, which have deepened and widened in the past two-three decades (Scott, 2007: 1472). The notion of a “cognitive-cultural capitalism” refers to this new, particular version of capitalism that can be described by reference to its structures of production, leading sectors, and basic technologies, its labor relation systems, and its market structures (Scott, 2007: 1465). To put it in a nutshell, the productive activity involves digital technology, flexible organization, and dynamics of locational agglomeration. The labor markets are extremely fluid and competitive. But, above all, this new version of capitalism is characterized by labor processes depending more and more on intellectual and affective human assets, and imbued with varieties of meaningful cognitive-cultural content (Scott, 2007: 1466–1467). Yet along with this new economic order have come problems of a divided and unequal citizenry, economic and social inequalities and injustice (Scott, 2007: 1472, 1474–1476). Arguing that historically specific forms of economic and cultural innovation in modern cities are unleashed by the structure of the new economy, Scott (2006: 1–2) proposes to situate the concept of creative cities as a new pattern of urban development within this more encompassing context that articulates economic and social concerns.

I would underline Scott’s suggestion of clarifying and further meditating on the nature and significance of creative cities because in urban and policy studies the creative city designates “an approach to policy and planning that recognizes the urban context and infrastructure within which creative industry innovation and growth take place” (O’Connor & Kong, 2009: 1). Among various characteristics possessed by creative cities one should notice “the existence of a vibrant arts and cultural sector; [and the] capacity to generate employment and output in the service and culture industries” (Sassen, 1995, quoted by Tay, 2005: 220). As Tay recalls, “broadly, ‘creative cities’ is about how local urban spaces can be re-imagined, rejuvenated, and re-purposed within a competitive global framework” (Tay, 2005: 220). Some approaches of creative cities highlight the role of cultural consumption, others that of the cultural production while only few look at their interaction.³ Still beyond their conceptual diversity, creative cities

“do have one commonality: they are instrumental policies which seek to use ‘culture’ or ‘creativity’ to achieve specific ‘non-cultural’ ends” (Pratt, 2008: 108), which are actually mainly economic goals. A common development ambition stands at the core of the creative cities discourses and practices, these being generally seen as a means of meeting development outcomes and urban renewal.

But critiques also emerged regarding the creativity scripts. Some cultural studies look from a critical perspective at the so called “hegemonic process of neoliberal globalization” and its implications for culture and cultural policy. The general argument is that culture is now saturated with a market-oriented mentality that closes out alternative ways of thinking and imagining (McGuigan, 2005). The creative-cities thesis itself is disclosed as embodying “a vision that is market-oriented (creative cities, assets, and actors, always in competition) and individualistic (creative subjects as hedonistic free agents) [...] likewise, art and culture are discursively commodified, as productive assets and positive externalities of creative capitalism” (Peck, 2007: 1–2). The problem-solving virtue of the creative cities strategies is also doubted, Peck stating that they have been crafted to co-exist with urban social problems, not to solve them, while the creative city concept is seen as “the funky side of neoliberal urban-development politics” (Peck, 2007: 2).

Also Scott, along with highlighting the positive tendencies that are set in motion as a result of the emergence of creative cities, pinpoints some of “the darker dimensions” – both actual and potential – of their developmental dialectic, such as social isolation, fragmentation and inequality – social, economic, and cultural (Scott, 2006: 2, 2007: 1478). As argued by Tay, the success of the creative city “will largely depend on how it deals with long-standing development questions, such as economic and social sustainability, gentrification and local displacement, exclusion practices and local identities” (Tay, 2005: 225). Therefore sustainability is a central issue and a central evaluating criterion when discussing the nature and significance of creative cities.

Cultural and social sustainability in creative cities: Levels and agents

Again, there are different approaches to the issue of sustainability in the creative cities, as well as diverse strategies for building the sustainable creative city by using artists’ creativity and the arts. My claim is that they firstly depend on various levels of urban space and agents considered: cultural district/city, small cities/metropolis, and individual artists/artistic institutions.

A study by Galligan (2008) on the evolution of “arts and cultural districts” as policy tools for municipalities with respect to community planning and redevelopment has convincingly shown that the shift in nature and focus of cultural districts along two waves as well as the changing relationship of municipalities to the artists and the arts have determined changes in approaching the issue of *cultural sustainability*. In brief, the cultural districts have shifted their focus from institutional anchors to individual creativity as organizing principles as they move from first- to second-wave cultural district models, i.e., from large

³ Among the approaches that look precisely at that interaction are, for instance, Pierluigi Sacco in Italy (e.g., Sacco & et al., 2009) and especially Sasaki in Japan (e.g., Sasaki, 2010).

cultural compounds and major arts institutions-focused districts to artist-centric districts. Meanwhile, the municipal arts support have evolved from a traditional “patronage model” – focused on the aesthetic, educational, or societal value of investing in the arts – to the “economic development model”, mainly interested in the economic benefit derived from the arts (Galligan, 2008: 134–136). Within the framework of the second-wave cultural districts that emphasizes creativity and the human dimension, as argued by Simon Roodhouse in *Cultural Quarters: Principles and Practices* (2006), the discussion concerning cultural sustainability has moved further than the old paradigm of justifying public and private support for the arts as a public good. The new standpoint is that “individual people, not bureaucratic infrastructure around them, create and sustain cultures, and that risk taking rather than maintaining the status quo should be of the highest priority in order to create vibrant communities” (Roodhouse, 2006, quoted by Galligan, 2008: 138). Furthermore, as Galligan argues, as the nature of both work and what we understand as the arts evolves in the 21st century, the emergence of a virtual third wave of cultural districts – that are not dictated by physical space but operating within the virtual global network – could change once more the perspective on cultural sustainability: “If cultural districts become less about physical space and urban renewal and more about economic development and intellectual renewal, cultural districts have the potential to become enterprise zones for artists in communities across the globe. As such, the arts and artists will have a more secure place in a global economy” (Galligan, 2008: 139). Today, the relationships between the arts and cities have also entered a third stage, the “small business development model”, in which “cities are vying for individual artists and small business to move to their cultural districts to spur economic growth and urban renewal and vitality” (Galligan, 2008: 137). It is worth mentioning that according to her, this evolution from the first to the second to the third model of support for the arts has not been a serial process but rather one that uses all three models in tandem. This has provided cities with a “multidimensional concept of artists and the art” that “includes the arts as small business while still recognizing the important role played by traditional not-for-profit arts organizations” (Galligan, 2008: 137, 139–140). In spite of some tensions one might notice between cultural compounds and individual creativity, and economic development and intellectual renewal, these shifts in nature and focus of cultural districts – including the arts, nonprofit and for-profit, think of as creative industries – could be seen as shifts to a stronger cultural sustainability as long as the development of local economies works in tandem with the development of arts institutions, creativity, and vibrant communities within and around them.

At the same level, Sacco et al. (2009) have developed a holistic approach to culture-led local development processes, based on the idea of the “system-wide cultural district”. This notion is a synthesis of planned and self-organized components, which seeks to harmonize various aspects and models: the “creativity-based attraction” model (Florida, 2002), the “competition-based urban renovation” model (Porter, 1989), and the “capability-based” model (Sen, 1999). Along with the social and economic as-

pects of such processes, this new model of cultural district specifically considers the cultural aspect, seeing cultural innovation and production – in interaction with technological innovation – as playing a crucial integrating role (Sacco et al., 2009: 48–49). Particularly, such approach and notion are considered able to grasp the *culturalization* of the productive process by linking urban regeneration of places with entrepreneurship and creative production. This theory is seen by the authors as not just another analytical tool but as a *policy framework* to implement cultural planning at local level, “without losing control over other possible influences and effects”. In a nutshell, it gathers twelve strategic lines of action in four macro-dimensions: the *quality* – of cultural supply, local governance, and knowledge production; the *development* – of local entrepreneurship, and local talent; the *attraction* – of external firms, and external talent; and the *social* – which includes management of social criticalities, capacity building, education of the local community, and local community development. Each driver interacts differently with assets in local area, *material* – natural and physical capital – and *immaterial* – human, information, social, and symbolic capital (Sacco et al., 2009: 59–60). In terms of sustainability of the whole system, or “cultural democracy”, the conclusion is that “such a clustering can readily facilitate access to culture for local communities and stimulate the incorporation of value-added symbolic capital, such as cultural capital, into the economic system” (Sacco et al., 2009: 61). These holistic approach and policy would be indeed able to create new synergy by linking all these aspects, dimensions, drivers and assets. Yet some tensions might arise if considering arts and technology alike as tools of urban economic growth and/or disregarding the differentiation between (artistic) creativity and (technological) innovation. (I will address these issues in the last part of the article.)

Similarly, the issue of sustainable creative cities and the urban policy agenda and culture-led development or regeneration strategies have a particular taste/sense if relating to small cities rather than to large cities or global metropolis. Florida’s theory of creativity and urban policy focused on the global competition to attract external creative resources in metropolitan centers has completely overlooked small cities. One might argue that art districts (and other neighborhoods) can be considered “small cities” within big cities, as Gans (1982) has already pointed out in *The Urban Villagers* (1982 [1962]). Yet, while some problems and solutions are indeed common to all of these types of cities, one should also acknowledge their specificities and thus the distinctiveness of strategies. I briefly sketch out some differences drawing mainly on previous research offering a series of vibrant case studies on “*art and culture in the modern metropolis*”, in *Century city* (2001) edited by Iwona Blazwick, and on a too often ignored “*urban experience beyond the metropolis*”, in *Small cities* (2006) edited by Bell and Jayne. As mentioned by Blazwick (2001), by contrast with the stability of small city life, the metropolis offers a ceaseless encounter with the new. Along with the oppositions between stability and mobility, there is another between the traditional/familiar and the sense of the loss of identity and past, in many ways in accordance with the figure of the modern artists: “Within the metropolis, assumptions of a shared history, language and culture

may not apply [...]. It is a paradox of the metropolis that its scale and heterogeneity can generate an experience both of unbearable invisibility and liberating anonymity; and of the possibility of unbounded creativity” (Blazwick, 2001: 8–9). Florida’s idea that creativity is a virtually universal and limitless resource was central to the power of the culture/creativity-led transformation notion and in seducing small cities to use this strategy (Evans & Foord, 2006: 155). But there is an obvious contrast between the respective possibilities of metropolis or big cities and of small cities to globally compete for attracting and retaining external creative talents as well as to develop local talents/artists (as culture is commonly associated with big-city life). The transfer or adaptation of big-city policies and ideas in small-city contexts might generate significant social problems and challenges, such as accommodating to new migration patterns, integrating “newcomers”, preserving a viable downtown, animating local history, and resisting the forces of purely commercial gentrification (Bell & Jayne, 2006: 12). Analyzing strategies of external- versus indigenous-driven creativity in small urban centers, many case studies have pointed up the prominence of the indigenous-driven creativity, despite their intermingling. Evans and Foord (2006), all acknowledging that “cultural renaissance thrives on stimulation from beyond local borders”, conclude that “for all cities, small and large, a sustainable cultural renaissance is more likely to emerge from within city communities where a variety of cultural amenities, activities and providers respond to and challenge local contexts” (Evans & Foord, 2006: 166). A previous case study by Bailey et al. (2004), which looked for alternative drivers of regeneration in the social and economic fields, has suggested that “successful culture-led regeneration is not about a trickle-down effect at all, but rather represents a counter-balance to broader processes of cultural globalization”. It was argued that “only an in-depth understanding of geographical and historical specificities will help us understand the way in which cultural regeneration potentially strengthens existing sources of identity rather than imposing new ones” (Bailey et al., 2004: 47–65). Waitt (2006) also argues that “it is conventional economic policy thinking that masks creativity that is always present in people living in small cities”, by enclosing it in frames imposed from elsewhere (metropolitan centers), and thus failing to take into consideration “the geographical practices that underpin everyday lives of the people living in small cities”; therefore, creativity agenda and policy should be re-conceptualized in the context of everyday place-making activities (Waitt, 2006: 171, 181–182). A more appropriate and successful approach to urban revitalization for smaller cities⁴ would be then to value the ideas of conviviality and human scale, and orienting toward linking local planning to community functions and identity, promoting the multiple faces and facts of the city, generating a strong sense of place, and taking advantage of scale to promote community involvement (Bell & Jayne, 2006: 11–12, 15).

Another claim of this article is that the sustainable creative city practice it is not a simple technical issue of city

planning but an ideological one, depending on values that various agents implicitly share. For example, the value attached to the advent of creative cities in the context of the new economy, to strong social ties versus weak social ties, and to social aspects of creativity versus its mere economic instrumentality. In this respect, ideas and ideology matter as well as the institutions. I employ these terms in the sense given by economic historian and Nobel laureate North (1990) in his theory of institutional change: ideology is “the shared framework of mental models that group of individuals possess that provide both an interpretation of the environment and a prescription as to how that environment should be structured”, whereas institutions are “the rules of the game of a society and consist of formal and informal constraints constructed to order interpersonal relationships” (North, 1990: 3; Denzau & North, 1994: 3–4). This theory of institutional change – based on the “imperfect or procedural rationality postulate” (implying uncertainty, complexity, and incomplete information) versus the “instrumental rationality postulate” of neo-classical theory –, opens up a new view of the role of ideology and institutions in creating the necessary conditions for the performance of economies and polities. These classes of shared mental models reflect the cumulative learning of societies and guide choices of individuals, structure human interactions and, in continuous interactions with organizations, shape the path-dependent evolution of political-economic systems and societies. North also argues that their ability to change over time to respond to successive new situations is the critical factor shaping socio-economic development: “The overall institutional structure plays a key role to the degree that the society and the economy will encourage the trials, experiments and innovations that we can characterize as adaptively efficient” (North, 1990: 80–81, 1994: 1–4, 16–19.) What he has demonstrated for this realm/process, it is likely to be true for the sustainable development of creative cities. While claims to scientific objectivity are common when addressing the issue of sustainable creative cities, most approaches are not merely descriptive but necessarily normative. Therefore, the ideological assumptions and implications of these topics are relevant. The debate on the nature and significance of creative cities is next exemplified by Scott’s theory of urban creativity and creative cities versus Florida, where the implementation of the elementary principles of sustainability – social equity and justice, and participatory democracy – as conditions of viable creative cities is contrasted to the global competition to attract, retain and nurture talented individuals – “the creative class” – in creative cities, expected to dissolve or surpass the classical division between the productive bourgeoisie and the unproductive bohemian, and give rise to new highly-mobile and adapted creative subjects.

Conditions of sustainability of the urban development

How could a creative city be viable or sustainable? Outlining the urban and social developmental conditions and dynamics, that make a creative sustainable city, is an important step in solving this crucial question.

Florida’s theory of the creative class and cities (2002, 2005) suggests that a significant positive correlation exists

⁴ This kind of approach is appropriate as well for neighborhood-level communities in big cities as shown, for instance, by Kagan and Hahn (2011) in the case of the city of Hamburg.

between the incidence of creative class in different cities and the local economic growth, emphasizing the importance of the immaterial economic dimensions of the urban space – the creativity associated with the human capital – since the decline of physical constraints on cities and communities in recent decades (Florida, 2005: 1). In the sequel *The Flight of the Creative Class* (2007) he also argues that the key to economic growth and competitiveness revolves around one key factor: the migration of talent on a global scale, one of the greatest in human history. Despite acknowledging the tension between social justice and the mounting economic inequality, growing class divide and uneven development generated by “the Creative Economy left to its own devices”, he purports a winner-and-loser scenario: “In today’s global economy, the places that attract and retain talent will win, and those that do not will lose” (Florida, 2007: xiv–xvi). Consequently, the prescriptions for municipal authorities are mainly oriented toward the deployment of packages of selected amenities as a way of attracting elite workers, the creative class, into given urban areas. Florida’s strategy for building the creative city/community and accelerating the dynamism of the local economy revolves around a simple formula – “the three T’s of economic development: Technology, Talent, and Tolerance”. It basically stipulates, along with the development of amenities that are valued by the creative class, to ensure a prevailing atmosphere of tolerance, openness and diversity that will incite the migration of other members of the creative class, and to further upgrade the urban fabric and thus to enhance the prestige and attractiveness of the city as a whole (Florida, 2002: 249–266, 283–313; 2005: 5–7, 37–42; see also Scott, 2006: 11, 2007: 1465, 1477). Thus “quality of place”, measured by various indicators of so-called urban amenities and lifestyle, would be a main ingredient of viable creative cities. But Florida lacks to mention sustainability qualities – such as sociability, solidarity, and democratic participation – by which cities or urban communities could cope with the problems that he himself (2005: 171–172) calls “negative externalities” of the global creative economy, among which the mounting stress and anxiety, and political and social polarization.

An alternative way of approaching these issues is offered by Scott’s theory of urban creativity and creative cities forged on the basis of the more encompassing idea of “cognitive-cultural capitalism” and exposed in articles such as “Creative Cities: Contemporary Issues and Policy Questions” (2006), “Capitalism and Urbanization in a New Key: The Cognitive-Cultural Dimension” (2007), and “Cultural Economy and the Creative Field of the City” (2010). From this standpoint that articulates economic and social concerns, Scott is criticizing Florida’s concept of “creative class” and his idea of an ontological capacity for “creativity” as echo(s) of the normative discourse of management and of the penetration of the cognitive-cultural forms of production and work (Scott, 2007: 1473–1474, 1476). According to him, the idea of the creative city provides at best a rather one-sided view of actual trends and latent possibilities in urban development patterns. The other side, “the darker dimensions” of the urban development process that engenders high levels of creativity and innovation, is due to the considerable inequalities and injustice and numerous

social tensions that may be exacerbated by the advent of creative city (Scott, 2006: 12, 15). Among the serious social problems detected by Scott are a divided and unequal citizenry, the intensification of the social separation and isolation that constantly work against the formation of a wider sense of community, and the intensification of the possessive individualism characteristic of so much of modern urban life at the expense of communal values (Scott, 2007: 1472).

Likewise, Florida’s strategy for building the creative city is criticized by Scott who pays attention instead to the local social and physical fabric, notably the cognitive-cultural production system as such and its dynamics: “The mere presence of ‘creative people’ is certainly not enough to sustain urban creativity over longer periods of time. Creativity needs to be mobilized and channeled for it to emerge in practical forms of learning and innovation” (Scott, 2006: 11). According to him, the primary development engine is not the migration of particular types of workers, but the complex apparatus of the urban production system (Scott, 2007: 1477). Thus he insists on the notion of “a creative-field effect” or the set of interrelationships that stimulate and channel individual expression of creativity (Scott, 2006: 8, Scott, 2010), and on the path-dependent growth trajectories to which cities are subjected – the path-dependent logic of production, agglomeration, and regional specialization. A preliminary sense of sustainability arises, as maintaining of urban development and creativity over longer periods of time at the same level.

Scott’s theory also draws attention to the relationships established between creativity, policy and social justice within the city. Achieving urban creativity is mainly about shaping viable urban communities. Scott therefore opposes to the developmental dialectic of the contemporary cities – with its “dark side”, i.e., non-sustainable dimensions – an alternative approach toward a sustainable creative city. The core of this approach is the attempt to rebuild sociability, solidarity and democratic participation by “the full incorporation of all social strata into the active life of the city, not just for its own sake but also as a means of giving free rein to the creative powers of the citizenry at large” (Scott, 2006: 15, 2007: 1465). Thus he unlocks the full understanding of sustainability – including the social aspect – which Florida lacks.

Drawing on this standpoint, the conditions for broader sustainability of a creative city, both small and large, could be summarized as follows: (1) promoting its distinctive place-specific characteristics: particular traditions, conventions and skills, as well as specific qualitative attributes of local products, including their place of origin, which help to infuse them with an “exclusive aura”, authentication of substantive and symbolic qualities (Scott, 2006: 9–10; Santagata, 2002); (2) the interdependent duality and emerging equilibrium between the production system and the urban cultural environment: “Any viable developmental program focused on building a creative city must deal – at a minimum – with setting up a local production system, training [...] a relevant labor force, appropriate programming of urban space, and ensuring that all the different elements involved works more or less in harmony with one another” (Scott, 2006: 10–11); (3) the implementation of the

elementary principles of social equity, justice and participatory democracy, and the search for meaningful forms of solidarity, sociability, and mutual aid in everyday work and life (Scott, 2007: 1478); (4) a wider concern for conviviality and camaraderie – which need to be distinguished from the mechanical conception of “diversity” – in the urban community as a whole (Scott, 2006: 15); (5) the endogenous nature of the urban development: “Creativity is not something that can be simply imported into the city on the backs of peripatetic computer hackers, skateboarders, gays, and assorted with bohemians but must be organically developed through the complex interweaving of relations of production, work, and social life in the specific urban contexts” (Scott, 2006: 15). By emphasizing this complex interweaving and the strong communal ties and forms of affectivity and trust as conditions for sustainable urban existence (whose apparent corrosion was deplored by Sennett, 1998, and Putnam, 2000), Scott et al. are strongly contrasting Florida’s theory of “creative capital” that approaches urban community only as social structure able or unable to generate economic prosperity, and a supportive context in attracting and retaining migratory talents preferring weak ties to strong ones and desiring “quasi-anonymity” and experiential lifestyles (Florida, 2002: “From Social Capital to Creative Capital”: 267–282; 2005: 30–34).

Roles of artists and the arts in achieving urban creativity and sustainable development

What could then be a true sustainable role of artists and the arts in creative city practices and sustainable urban development? Looking at the interactions between the arts and other worlds of production, one could notice that since the 1980s the norms of work have changed following an internalization of the historical values of the avant-garde, the key values associated with creativity: autonomy, flexibility, non-hierarchical environment, inventiveness, risk taking, and so on (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005; Zukin, 2001: 263; Menger, 2010: 6). Daniel Bell in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (1976) had already observed that modern culture has taken the initiative in promoting change, having a dissolving power over capitalism’s transcendental (protestant) ethic because of its axial principles of self-expression and hedonism (Bell, 1976: 13, 21–22). He persisted in seeing work and life, or economy and culture, as separate spheres with distinct value systems, and thus in criticizing the bohemian(ism) because of its principles and consequences. On the contrary, Florida (who is quoting Bell’s critique) admits the possibility of synthesis between the hedonist ethic and the protestant ethic, between bohemian and bourgeois, or of actually moving beyond these old categories that no longer apply at all. For him, the nowadays “creative people” – with creative values, working in creative workplaces, and living essentially creative lifestyles – certainly are not Baudelaire; still “they represent a new mainstream setting the norms and pace for much of society” (Florida, 2002: 196–197, 211). Yet these lifestyles, because of their characteristics such as flexibility and hyper-mobility are unsustainable (Kirchberg, 2008). Boltanski and Chiapello have called attention to the costs, in terms of material and psychological security, associated

with these lifestyles adjusted to the recent development of “network capitalism”, driven by “connexionist logic” and organized around short-lived projects: the increasing anxiety, instability, insecurity, and precariousness (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005: 16–18, 466–468; see also Ratiu, 2011: 43–44).

In Florida’s view on urban creativity, the rising of the creative economy is not only drawing the spheres of innovation, business/entrepreneurship and culture into one another, in intimate combinations, but is also blending the varied forms of creativity – technological, economic, artistic and cultural –, which according to him are deeply inter-related: “Not only do they share a common thought process, they reinforce each other through cross-fertilization and mutual stimulation” (Florida, 2002: 33, 201). Without neglecting the similarities between the creative talents or activities, scientific, entrepreneurial, and artistic, I would add that there still are some specific differences which should be considered. Firstly, while scientific creativity is commonly an ability to accelerate an accumulation of knowledge within a given conceptual order or paradigm (as “normal science” in Kuhn’s (1962) theory, which certainly does not exclude rare moments of “revolutions”), artistic creativity typically is a “rules-breaking process” against a given practice or order (Cliche et al., 2002: 28–29). This view of the specificity of artistic creativity, which intrinsically involves critique, is essential to thinking the role of the artists and the manner in which they have/can play in social change (Ratiu, 2011: 46–47) and in sustainable urban development. Artistic creativity plays by its very nature as a rules-breaking process, disrupting existing patterns of thought and life, questioning and challenging existing practices and norms, including the ‘rules of the game’ of the current society. Thus artists can contribute to opening up new possibilities either for the quality of emotional life, sustainable creative lifestyle, or for the other worlds of production. Yet artistic creativity-and-critique is distinct from the so-called “creative destruction”, Schumpeter’s argument about the disruption inherent in economic progress. This illustrates the incessant technological-entrepreneurial innovation and the evolutionary character of the capitalist process (Schumpeter, 2003: 81–86). One might argue that such process of innovation is a double-edge sword with unsustainable effects: instability, insecurity, and crisis.⁵ Boltanski and Chiapello in the Postscript (“Sociology *contra* fatalism”) of their analysis of the “new spirit of capitalism” have argued that the themes of “artistic critique” – such as the demands of liberation, autonomy, and authenticity – are essential and still topical, because it is on this basis that “we have most chance of mounting effective resistance to the establishment of a world where anything can find itself transformed into a commodity product”, and “where people would constantly be put to the test, subjected to an exigency of incessant change and deprived by this kind of organized insecurity of what ensures the permanency of their self”. They conclude that a revived artistic critique can accomplish

⁵ E.g., as Harvey has contended in *The Condition of Postmodernity: an Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (2005 [1989]): “The effect of continuous innovation [...] is to devalue, if not destroy, past investments and labor skills. Creative destruction is embedded within the circulation of capital itself. Innovation exacerbates instability, insecurity, and in the end, becomes the prime force pushing capitalism into periodic paroxysms of crisis” (Harvey, 2005 [1989]: 105–106).

this task only if undoing the link that has hitherto associated liberation with *mobility*, which has led to insecurity and precariousness (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005: 535–536).⁶ Based on this differentiation of (artistic) creativity and (technological) innovation, another elementary principle of cultural sustainability could then be added here: the playfulness of trying out something new with overwhelming economic objectives.

Another assumption of Florida's theory of creativity is that the values, beliefs and attitudes that are closely associated with global talent attraction are shared by all creative cities and communities. Supposedly these "creative communities" are defined by impermanent relationships, loose ties, and quasi-anonymous lives, and shared values such as individuality, meritocracy, diversity and openness (Florida, 2002: "The Creative Community": 15, and "Creative Class Values: 77–80). But Florida's theory posits an instrumental view on artists as dispensable tools of urban economic growth and regeneration: he considers this "creative capital" a highly mobile factor, like technology; both are "not fixed stocks, but transient *flows*", "flowing into and out of places" (2005: 7). Yet this flow or mobility could be a forced one: the increasing wealth for a city and property development also mean increasing gentrification that trigger an *out-migration* of artists or bohemians (Florida, 2005: 24–25). Thus the creative class/capital theory implicitly endorses the gentrification of urban centers and its social consequences (O'Connor & Kong, 2009: 3), and overlooks the human and symbolic dimensions of places or creative cities. One might argue instead that the success or rather viability of an urban space can be measured by examining not only its *activity* – economic as well as cultural and social – and *form* – the relationship between buildings and space –, but also its *meaning* – the sense of place, both historical and cultural (Roodhouse, 2006). As mentioned by Galligan, Roodhouse has given new meaning to the very nature of cultural districts by emphasizing their human dimensions. Thus, in his analysis, a cultural district is viable as long as it nurtures and sustains those within and around it and should be organized with this goal in mind (Galligan, 2008: 138). Likewise, a creative city is viable and sustainable as long as it is about shaping viable urban places and communities. From this standpoint, the question is whether individual creative artists are only dispensable tools of urban regeneration or whether they could play a key role in fostering a wider and sustainable sense of place and of community.

The cultural strategies of urban regeneration and redevelopment have identified some roles that artists played in fostering cultural consumption (in the 1970s and 1980s) as well as within and around cultural production and the symbolic economy (in the 1990s): "Visual artists play a key productive role in creating and processing images for the urban economy" (Zukin, 2001: 260). More recently, the urban culturalist perspective (Borer, 2006), the cognitive-cultural perspective (Scott, 2006; Scott,

2007), and the new paradigm of the urban sustainable development (Kagan, 2008; Kagan & Verstraete, 2011; Kirchberg, 2008), hold the notion that individual and collective expressions of creativity – including the artistic ones – could be channeled to address not only urban renewal but also environmentally sustainable economic regeneration, social justice and community building. Thus the arts and artistic creativity could play a significant role in both material and immaterial processes: constructing social identity and contributing to social belonging; creating city image and urban identity; creating culturally meaningful places: place-based myths, narratives, and collective memories; contributing to participative processes from the ground; and improving the quality of emotional life and promoting changes towards sustainable lifestyles.

A question then could emerge if this is just another 'sustainable' form of instrumentalization of arts and culture. The issue of cultural instrumentality, i.e., regarding the arts as a means to an end rather than an end in itself, has been extensively addressed by many authors. A detailed discussion of this topic is beyond this article's scope, but it is addressed – in form of a case study of cultural policy in a post-communist country – in Ratiu (2009). Here I only draw attention on connections between 'instrumental cultural policies' and managerial or some cultural discourses, which were disclosed by Belfiore (2004) and Brighton (2006), Brighton (2007). As Belfiore has observed, the emphasis placed on the role of the cultural sector in place-marketing and local economic development is an example of the increasing tendency to justify public spending on the arts on the basis of instrumental notions of the arts and culture. This instrumental emphasis in cultural policy is closely linked to the changes in the style of public administration that have given rise to the New Public Management as well as to certain developments in postmodern cultural theory: notably, the concept of cultural relativism that "undermined – at the theoretical level – the possibility to justify any longer cultural policy decisions grounded on uncontroversial principles of 'excellence', 'quality' and 'artistic value'" (Belfiore, 2004: 183–185, 189). Against the damaging effects that such developments may ultimately have on the arts themselves, Belfiore concludes that "an altogether healthier exercise for the arts sector would probably have been the attempt to elaborate a definition of what makes the arts *intrinsically* valuable to society" (Belfiore, 2004: 200). Brighton (2006) has also argued against politicization of the arts, yet without denying their political importance, as they can offer experience, values and ideas other than those possible in political discourse. A further article by Brighton, entitled "Should art change the world?" (2007), detects in the reading of this question as "should art improve society" a symptom of the managerial discourse and its utilitarian rationality that fails to acknowledge the "multiple ecologies of reason" and "different ideas of the good life". A certain role is nonetheless recognized to art: this is praised as an "antibody" to utilitarian rationality "because it changes the world in ways other than those prescribed by the managerial state" (Brighton, 2007). These accounts are valuable in re-thinking any attempt to value art solely on its instrumental values and so called measurable criteria or rituals of verification. Indeed, the notion of an urban development

⁶ The target of this warning is the "culture of uncertainty" and creativity that was promoted by that trend of artistic critique having at its core the opposition between *stability* and *mobility*. This opposition emerges in Baudelaire's work and spreads out particularly through Surrealism and, more recently, through movements that stem from it, such as Situationism (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005: 38; Boltanski, 2008: 56. See also Ratiu, 2011: 38–40).

based on cultural sustainability would be improved by considering art not as another instrument (such as technology) and envisaging its role without subjecting it to a calculation in terms of outcomes, efficiency, and control. Instead, one can make a stand for its intrinsic value and autonomy from any political constrain.

Conclusion

The creative city practice in urban development it is not a simple technical issue of city planning but an ideological one, depending on values and characteristics that justify the conceptual concern over the sustainable nature and significance of creative cities. It also depends on various levels of urban space and agents considered: cultural district/city, small cities/metropolis, and individual artists/artistic institutions. Some problems and solutions are indeed common to all of them. Yet there are arguments based on evidence from various urban policy analyses and case studies that support the call to consider specific cultural and structural conditions as well when approaching – theoretically and practically – the culture-led sustainable urban development. The corresponding sustainability concept stands for a broader understanding and a more critical discourse and practice of urban development. Thus the creative city concept and practice does not only re-produce the dominant and un-sustainable market order but it does and can relate to communal identity, social belongingness, and a deeper sense of place as formulated by the broader demands of sustainability. From this standpoint, a viable and sustainable creative city, i.e., a sustainable urban environment and development is about shaping viable urban places and communities, not about entertainment, profit and property development. The arts and artists could freely and autonomously play a key role in this respect as well as in achieving urban creativity, by questioning existing norms and practices and opening up new possibilities for the quality of emotional life and sustainable lifestyles.

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