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What is Specific about Art/Cultural Projects?

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What is Specific about Art/Cultural Projects?

Ljiljana Deru Simic
NOTA DI LAVORO 71.2003

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KNOW – Knowledge, Technology, Human Capital

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The special issue on *Economic Growth and Innovation in Multicultural Environments (ENGIME)* collects a selection of papers presented at the multidisciplinary workshops organised by the ENGIME Network.

The ENGIME workshops address the complex relationships between economic growth, innovation and diversity, in the attempt to define the conditions (policy, institutional, regulatory) under which European diversities can promote innovation and economic growth.

This batch of papers has been presented at the second ENGIME workshop: *Communication across Cultures in Multicultural Cities*.

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What is Specific about Art/Cultural Projects?

Summary

The present issue focuses on the contribution made by art/cultural initiatives to the development of multiple identity in some of the European cities having in mind the subjectivity of the artists and plurality of the surrounding cultures.

The art/cultural projects (AES- Russia, Europe Art Train – Holland, Life Station – Austria and some others) with intercultural dimension have a special character to offer because: they are dealing with meaning, and enable dialogue between people in different social groups. The examples will be taken from different European countries, which aim to reinterpret the reality of life, to show, answer, and question its contradictions.

The attention will be focused on their **political, educational** and **aesthetic** contribution to the community construction having in mind their desire for new intercultural policy and practices. Every artist crosses borders daily but those who choose to cross cultural borders (language, expression, music, tradition) enter into a fertile, but dangerous field.

Artists do not aim specifically to produce multicultural work but since they are living in specific time, and since art is rooted in real life, the realities of everyday life are transposed into their work.

This paper is fundamentally interested in the role that art projects can play in a modern society and promotes the initiative that links an artistic dimension to a form of interactive social urban situation. All projects are representing 'laboratories' that use public spaces.

It is more than obvious that the social and the economic fields are not separated from the cultural one beside the tendency that is putting them in opposition as artists and the world rather than artists in the world.

In the last two decades, the world of the arts has economised rapidly. Increasingly, artists have turned the economy into a subject of their own work.

Art/cultural projects engage people's creativity, and so lead to problem-solving. They encourage questioning, and the imagination of possible future actions. They offer self-expression, which is an essential characteristic of the active citizen.

Some experiences from the art/cultural field are shifting attention towards the people themselves: their imagination, motivation, demands, fantasies and only then the city is becoming a cultural product, a community construction.

Keywords: Intercultural actions, Policy agenda, Art/cultural projects, Networking aspects

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Recyclart – Belgium

Recyclart is a dynamic, multi-discipline project attempting to get a grip on the problems in the desolate centre of Brussels.

De Valigia – Holland

European train heritage project - De Valigia was exposed in Holland, Italy, Germany, Denmark and Greece collecting around 200 artworks. De Valigia train was travelling through Europe making several stops stages in between, keeping on collecting city's suitcases to represent the European cultural heritage.

AES – Russia

The Moscow based art association AES has change the landscape of the contemporary world by producing a series of imaginary postcards of well-known cities in the world. AES has pushed forward one of the main characteristics of contemporary visual art - ambiguity.

Life stations – Austria

The Installation Life Stations was a topographical installation, which documented various historical and emotional aspects of the living past and present of a particular urban microcosm. It was a collage of life experiences of a particular district of Vienna - the Second District – called 'Leopoldstadt'.

Collective Distribution - alter globalisation arty collectives (United Kingdom, France, Spain, Belgium, Holland, Yugoslavia) during the Brussels Summit 2001.

Although they tackle global political and economic problems, their links and loyalties belong primarily to their local communities 'artist residencies'- it represents the laboratory of exchange between artists of different disciplines and nationalities on one hand, and on the other hand, artists and local population from Brussels showing their desire for new intercultural policy and practices in the cities.

When we understand the city as a field of political and social confrontations only then we can understand actual urban challenges.

The artistic/cultural projects brought together through 'Banlieues d'Europe'¹ or 'TransEuropeHalles'² testify that there is a culture, and that there are activities, values, and particularities proper to neighbourhoods. These areas are places of creation and cultural creativity, which should be better known, heard and understood through exchange with artistic action. Their focuses are on the contribution made by cultural initiatives to the social development of cities.

What motivates artist is the desire to put their projects into perspective, to exchange and enrich their working methods and, finally, the good fortune of having an abundant number of activities, the questioning of and identification with current thoughts in the field of art, and the relationship between cultural work and communities which are generally regarded as "excluded".

It would be illusory to try and draw up, at the present moment, an exhaustive list of contacts, productions, international creations and projects, as well as European ideas and co-operation. On the other hand, what is possible to observe is the place taken today in Europe by the questions which concern us.

¹ <http://www.banlieues-europe.com>

² http://www.junction.co.uk/teh//teh_presentation/index.html

In a climate of constant change, it is becoming increasingly accepted that culture plays a vital role in the construction and reinforcement of social stability within a community, whether on the local, national or international scale. Clearly, it is one of the ambitions of the politically inspired interventions on culture from Europe that cultural organisations can become models for new patterns of economic, social and cultural integration between the peoples of Europe.

The question is how "public" do we really want the cultural space to be?

The perceptions of the makers, the suppliers and the users of cultural spaces is to me one of the most important elements of any discussion about cultural spaces.

How a city can become creative

To become a truly creative capital, a city has first of all to invest in its own people's talent by fostering a culture of openness, of cultural expression, of risk-taking. City decision makers will need both to find innovative ways of creating social cohesion, identity and citizen services as well as establishing the conditions for enterprise of all sorts to flourish - whether private, voluntary or public.

This process, as the American author and economist Jeremy Rifkin³ points out, requires organisations to constantly reinvent themselves: The new information and communication technologies have both increased the volume and accelerated the flow of activity at every level of society.

Some of the key requirements⁴ are dealing with:

- *New forms of communication* - different actors in the city must learn to talk to each other in different ways, breaking down barriers between departments and institutions, creating an open system which enables those with different skills and disciplines to talk and listen to each other.

- *New ways of describing things* - the traditional language of geography is very often inadequate as a way of defining aspects of urban experience such as the quality of public and social life, the liveability of a town centre, the cultural vibrancy, the atmosphere of a town and other 'softer' resources cities might have.

- *New ways of monitoring* - new forms of local research and monitoring are needed to define local aspirations, needs, trends and actual and potential problems. But, as well as this, different forms of monitoring need to be put in place in order to allow cities to share and learn from their experience and their successes, or failures.

- *New forms of research and development* - city governments should encourage experimental and pilot projects. Failure should be viewed in a constructive way as part of a learning experience.

positive contribution to local vitality and urban renewal through art/cultural project

Art/cultural projects are not an alternative to regeneration initiatives like environmental improvement. But they are a vital component which, can transform a given situation.

What are the pre-conditions for establishing a creative city, and what can politicians do about it?

³ RIFKIN, J. (1995) *The End of Work: The Decline of the Global Labor Force and the Dawn of the Post-Market Era*, New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons

⁴ LANDRY, C. and BIANCHINI, F. (1995) *The Creative City*, London: Demos

- *Handling capacity*: To handle creative ideas well, and turn them into workable projects, cities need what could be termed “handling capacity”. This is not just a matter of administrative competence.
- *Making the most of creative individuals*: For local authorities this might mean that grants for innovation and pilot projects are made available, deliberately shaped to encourage experiment. For the same reasons it may often be important to introduce outside attitudes and skills, to encourage a more critical, imaginative view of how things are done.
- *New indicators of success*: This means that indicators of cost-effectiveness that go beyond traditional cost-benefit analysis need to be developed.
- *Balancing cosmopolitanism and locality*: Internationally oriented policies are valuable because competition and comparison with other cities provide stimulus. But cities must strike a balance between cosmopolitanism and local roots. If the local identity is eroded too much, a city may lose confidence and sense of direction.
- *From multiculturalism to interculturalism*: Creativity arises more from interculturalism than multiculturalism. Many social and cultural policies have aimed at multiculturalism, which means the strengthening of the separate cultural identities of ethnic minorities. But multiculturalism can be problematic if there is little communication between cultures. Resources should be directed more to intercultural projects which build bridges between the fragments, and produce something new out of the multicultural patchwork of our cities. Ethnic ghettos are unlikely to contribute to solving the wider problems of cities.
- *Developing creative spaces*: Creative people and projects need to be based somewhere. These are likely to be available in urban fringes and in areas where uses are changing, such as former port and industrial zones. Cheap spaces reduce financial risk and therefore encourage experiment.

Examples

Recyclart⁵

The urban pilot project RECYCLART is situated in the historical centre of Brussels. Between the station Brussels Central and the new station Brussels Midi, recently redesigned for Thalys, TGV, lies the small, old Brussels Chapelle station. Every hour 15 trains travel along this line. The busy line cuts the city in two. The station stands inconspicuously in the middle of this ‘transport hurricane’ and is hardly ever used, except by children travelling to and from the countless schools in the area, particularly the famous Catholic school right next to the railway line.

The entire project was inspired during the winter of 1995/96 by the debate over unauthorised graffiti sprayers active at and around the station, and the need for new illumination for the subway. Like in so many subways running under railways in Europe, there is multi-coloured, wildly sprayed huge graffiti compositions on every free space here. Huge wooden boards displaying sprayed pictures have been hung on the walls, covering the old, spontaneously sprayed graffiti. The old graffiti has been left at the subway’s entrances. Murals have been placed over the old billboards in two of the road underpasses. Pictures painted by children hang on the inside of one of the bridges, whilst professional sprayers have been working on each other. Modern street lamps of simple design have been installed to illuminate the pictures by night, and also to render the subway brighter for by-passers. It is quite apparent that although the recent works are not protected by a special layer, no new graffiti has appeared on any of the bridges so far.

⁵ <http://www.recyclart.be/en/index.html>

Visitors will also notice that an effort is being made here to direct spontaneous street art into well-ordered channels in public areas.

RECYCLART is a dynamic, multi-discipline project attempting to get a grip on the problems in the desolate centre of Brussels. The special feature of the project is the co-ordination between the various parties and interest groups involved: the Belgian railway company, the City of Brussels, the inhabitants and young people living in the area, the architects and artists involved, the welfare authorities, etc. In addition, an organisation is being set up for unemployed people to work with the management of the cultural centre to convert the station. In the past, the Chapelle Station and the vaults in the rooms beneath the railway tracks were used by the Belgian railway company for storage and to house archives.

RECYCLART is currently establishing an office as an organisational centre in the functional rooms of the station. Various exhibitions and films are being shown and festivals, concerts and other activities staged whilst conversion work is still in progress. These activities aim to link up with the "Brussels - Cultural Capital" project, which was held in the year 2000. All aspects of the "city" topic are being illuminated, thus receiving support from within the city centre. By organising live graffiti activities as well as parties and concerts with musicians in the district, the inhabitants are being involved in the cultural centre whilst it is still in the process of establishing itself. The interior design and furnishing of the 'café' are being taken care of by young city designers as well as by a workshop (located behind the station) for recycling furniture run by unemployed young people. The workshop products are for sale in the second-hand shop next door. One of the rooms beneath the arches below the tracks, is now showing an exhibition containing various sculptures made of scrap metal. In the meantime, RECYCLART has also been commissioned to convert an open space (an unofficial waste dump) owned by the finance authorities into an urban "total work of art".

De Valigia /Europartrain⁶

The Europartrain is a mobile, dynamic, contemporary art 'museum', with a constantly changing character, which is meant to travel for two years through about 10 European countries. The Europartrain is a contemporary multimedia project, which is crossing borders on an international, national, organisational and personal level. At the moment the train is made of seven railway wagons from different countries; Denmark, the Netherlands, Yugoslavia, Greece, Hungary and Austria.

The launch of the train was in 1997 in Thessaloniki, Greece, the Cultural capital of Europe 1997. Every host (railway company) who is receiving the Europartrain, is automatically connecting a new wagon to the train. The train measures now over 150 meter, which is about 400 square meter of exhibition space, always insight in the centre of the cities, on the train stations. The train forms a perfect symbol of the ongoing development in Europe. It is used as a cultural embassy which are finding ways to explain the European mind and vision out of its countries specific perspectives.

The Europartrain aims to:

- Expand standards of possibilities in the contemporary art field. The continuity of the train's journey, proves that everything is possible.
- Combine different art disciplines.
- Establish international artistic and cultural networks.
- Initiate artistic and cultural exchanges, between artists from different European countries.
- Stimulate the cultural dialogue between inhabitants of European countries by bringing contemporary art to a broad public.
- The exhibition of the train includes side-line projects such as podium discussions, music and

⁶ <http://www.blindpainters.org/OldSite/europartrain.html>

theatre performances and educational programmes. In every visited town a container is moved from the train to a central location.

- Local artists are invited to exhibit their work in this 'look-in-container'.

Cultural policy meaning

The borders of Europe are in motion. People are questioning more and more the meaning of art and what role it is actually playing in the society. The museums must try harder, to connect up with society and the public. It is a bringing a large caravan of artworks and performances (mobile museum). Borders of what is the exhibition and what isn't, falls away. Up to now, the train was collecting cultural luggage in form of suitcases.

Public and publicity

As the exhibition is being held at the train stations, it is very accessible and aims for a broad public. A visit is free of charge. There are as well special educational programmes for school classes organised. One of the aims of the Europartrain is, to physically connect the different regions of Europe through this international exhibition and stimulate the cultural dialogue.

De Valigia was exposed in Holland, Italy, Germany, Denmark and Greece collecting around 200 artworks.

Since the Greek stage De Valigia train was travelling through Europe on its way to Stockholm – European Cultural Capital 98, making several stops stages in between, keeping on collecting suitcases to represent the European cultural heritage.

As far as this project took place in different countries, it had also different budgets based on local/national situation. One thing is estimation but another thing was the costs they made through their development. Because every country has its own cost structure, response-timing, and arising delays, the exact costs are to a certain degree unknown.

The main costs for the Europartrain are: - the use and displacement of the railway carriages; - the artists laboratories in every country; - the manpower involved in the management, the preparation, the logistics and the promotion of the projects and the production of the catalogue and the presentation materials.

It was estimated at few million Euros. Support was given by national railway companies but also projects receives finances of various national and international institutions and sponsors. These are estimated to cover 30% of the total budget.

AES⁷ - Islamic project⁸

The Moscow based art association AES has change the landscape of the contemporary world by producing a series of imaginary postcards of well-known cities in the world (in the future?). they took some city images and gone wild with computer. They did not make any of photos but used and abused. AES has pushed forward one of the main characteristics of contemporary visual art: ambiguity. Their project – counter – image of the 'prejudiced cliché' is viewed and interpreted in different contexts as: anti-Islamic, pro-Islamic, cynical, bleak, funny, depressing, vulgar, clever. They said that life is not politically correct so, why should art be!!!

The Islamic project opens up a debate on the condition of globalisation ('global supermarket' as the members of the group put it) and prejudices, racism, phobias, desires. This is the reason why this AES project aims to become a traumatic sight. They are dealing with phobias from both West and East which are uncovered. The way images are manipulated defines the trend of political correctness that arise from the vary "values confusion" (which is ever present in

⁷ <http://aes.zhurnal.ru/isframe.html>

⁸ based on S. HUNGTINTON book 'Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order'

Eastern Europe). This kind of artistic strategy is a way to address social, economic and psychological traumas in Eastern Europe.

Belgrade is project that was presented in August 1998 finds a most suitable ground for discussing Islam-phobias in Europe. In the 19th century for example, Belgrade had around a hundred mosques, now only one of them remains. Therefore, virtual interventions of this kind use historical imagery that is already present and creates a disturbing confusion among spectators who are used to be more/less prejudiced.

Life stations⁹

A topographical&acoustic installation which took place in Vienna at the Remise 1995.

It was a collage of life experience of a particular district of Vienna – the Second District – called ‘Leopoldstadt’. It is a district with a very high proportion of foreigners (Jews, Turks, Ex-Yugoslavs, Russians...) In the context of problematic current trends like the rise of religious fundamentalism, racism and xenophobia, continuing high levels of unemployment, the emergence of an ‘underclass’ of poorly adjust foreign workforce in large European cities... made it necessary to carry out politically oriented art projects like life Stations.

This project consisted of ten interviews with people (from Austria, India, Bosnia, Turkey, Lithuania, Ukraine, Egypt) who are presently living in Vienna’s second District or have lived there before. They tell stories (oral history method) of these particular living quarters from the perspective of their different national and cultural backgrounds and allowed the audience to enter the inner circle of their personal memories. Visitors heard different sounds played on a multi-channel system, which are a collage of everyday sounds recorded from the Second District..One complete tour:114 minutes). The acoustic project thus proves to be visual on another level. The human voice is amazing complex to exhibit which gives emotional map of district. Especially now, project Life stations can be seen in a general European context.

Can a project like this one provoke decision makers?

Project Evaluation: The artistic approach of the project was a success. The acoustic medium was in the fore. Both the spatial concept and the soundscape were designed by artists. The Remise space as a well-known venue for innovative, cultural events served as background and backdrop of this memory walk. The reaction of the audience was very positive. The decision of focusing exclusively on the acoustic medium proved to be right. Audience reactions showed that the concentration on listening to voices, telling their stories activated all kinds of personal visualisations, associations and individual fantasies.

While listening the visitors could communicate through transparent Plexiglas windows.

They were not hidden in booths, equipped with headphones, and locked into their own world. There were no photos, texts - the acoustic medium was the centre of this installation and was able to create fantasy and the audience's own ideas.

Life Stations has been planned and designed for a specific site. It took place in the Remise in Vienna's Second District. The Remise is a former tramway depot and has been used for cultural events since 1991. This project was supported by the City of Vienna, in particular through its Cultural and Urban Planning Departments, and by the Federal Ministry of Science, Research and the Arts.

Sounds of the Facade¹⁰ - site-specific installation - Urbanaria

The project was her ‘breathing house’ project. The project was staged at June 1995. Loudspeakers were fixed to the facade of the Cankarjeva Street in Ljubljana, and on every hour they filled the street with the sound of voices and other noises; in other words, the facade

⁹ <http://www.t0.or.at/~erotter/rotter2.htm>

¹⁰ <http://www.ljudmila.org/scca/urbanaria/toceng.htm>

was speaking or vibrating, in a way which totally stood out from its 'natural' city surroundings. The facade - like a vibrating membrane - emitted either sounds which represented part of a certain 'interior' of architectural city space, or sounds which came from a different, non-urban environment.

This project falls into two major categories: the first is territories and the second is projects within a cycle of panoramic walls. The territories are artificial walls, or parts of reconstructed city facades, These facades or walls - some of which are two metres high, with various lengths, and sometimes half a metre wide - represent territories, which, until now, have been coded or marked with letters from A to I.

The strategy which can be detected in all of these projects is, firstly, that space, as a former geographical topos, has in these recurring rituals of sampling, turned into a boundless, living and pulsating *mis-en-scène* of history. Secondly, the procedures of the sensibilisation of formal structures pose compelling questions about the way in which space positions us into fiction, and how we ourselves can create fictional space within the artistic space. With this joint representation of the 'forbidden' genres of architecture, literature and performance

This mapping of space with the arrangement of territories, opens stimulating questions for those who seek so-called alternative visual spaces which nowadays, we are never excluded from the space, and that is precisely why our gaze can never be anything but partial.

Collective distribution¹¹

As information lost a capacity of exchange to the benefit of communication discourse showed an enormous absence of any dialogue. Communication as the production and exchange of meaning in semiotics can be seen in three parts of their work (images of communication – illustration):

- the sign itself
- the systems into which the signs are ordered
- the culture (or cultures) within which these codes and signs operate

Signs and sign systems are purely human constructs and can only be understood within this context. They don't interpret signs and sign systems. They create them! They construct sign systems as ways of 'making sense' of the world around us.

The place where it happened: Halles de Schaerbeek¹² is an atypical cultural centre with an international dimension. Old covered market.

In 70's a group of visionary creative people understood already that such a big space could be an excellent 'stage' for open and multidisciplinary events. Many of the same buildings all around the Europe did find a meaning to create TEH (Trans Europe Halles) as a network of such places and programme actions. Many art workshops specially made for local artists and alternative, marginal cultural expressions started to become structured during the past 20 years.

First of all, the main question concerns the capacity of a cultural institution or group of artists to find its place and to be engaged in society. Also, not so many artists have as clear idea of political position to take about what is going on around them. H de S became a place of meetings and exchange of aesthetic visions and critics about nowadays society.

Rivalry between Flemish and French speaking communities is pictured on unexisted co-operation. Last municipal elections (oct.2000) showed an enormous growth of the extreme right party 'Vlaams Blok' in big Flemish cities (Gent, Antwerp) were they scored 20-33% of the votes.

¹¹ <http://lists.indymedia.org/mailman/public/imc-uk-process/2001-December/000054.html>

¹² Fabienne AUCANT, 'Out of Control', EU Diploma in cultural project management, 2000, Brussels

Some of the sponsors for this project were: French speaking community of Belgium, Fondation Roi Baudouin, EU funds, banks, Brussels Region, and many national/international cultural centers.

Besides this, Brussels is really a multicultural city, the European capital where 30 different nationalities live together, 1/3 of its inhabitants are coming from another cultures. What about with artistic creation in such an environment?

An overview of the strategy they used: artist residencies- it represents the laboratory of exchange between artists of different disciplines and nationalities on one hand, and artists and local population from Brussels. The aim was the creation of an artistic brigade or 'missionaries' such as in an army logic, to invite them to take a part in the street or any other Brussels open space where they can show their work in subversive actions, performance or debate.. This looks very much like 'theatre verite' in Europe where the present is asked by art (un festival qui interroge le présent)_critical analysis.

Renegotiation of multicultural discourses on the arts shows a new model of cross-cultural collaboration at work during « workshopping solutions ». Its the landing of interculturalism in private relationships with proactive engagement far away from official discourses.

What do these collectives (Cactus Network (London), Eimigrative Art (Brussels), Sandy K./Bildwechsel (Berlin), El Fantasma de Heredia (Buenos Aires), Guilty (London), Headmade (Warschau), John Jordan (London), Brian Holmes for Ne Pas Plier (Ivry), Nexus (Athens), SKART Group (Belgrade), Tract'eur (Paris), and some more groups Eurodusnie - Holland, Prêt-a-Révolter- Spain, NoBorder Network, Reclaim the street- United Kingdom, achieve on local and on global level ?¹³

Theoretical background

An area of theoretical inquiry in which ideas **about cultural appropriation and symbolic resistance** examines how subculture participants in this case artistic collectives, resist ideological interpellation by inscribing cultural artefacts with deviant and potentially opposition meanings.

An important contribution to the diagnosis of the effects of globalisation on cultural practices is Arjun Appadurai's¹⁴, formulation of global culture as a set of various '**-scapes**', constituted of multidirectional flows of people.

The great value of Appadurai's concept of '**-scapes**' lies in its ability to illustrate how contemporary economic and cultural flows cut across the increasingly borders of nation-states. Appadurai's often optimistic perspective on globalisation suggests that the transnational flows of these '**-scapes**' create new imaginative possibilities for the peoples of the world, new ways of imagining different ways of life which can be a crucial component of new modes of social practice.

Possible conclusion

We start from the position that it is timely to review and reflect the role and function of art /cultural projects in the city in a changing Europe. European history has mostly been a history of cities, of big cities 'on the move', always mobile, always in danger, but always capable of taking care of themselves.

¹³ Ljiljana DERU SIMIC, 'Carnaval contre le capital', SIETAR Congress, 2002, Wien

¹⁴ Arjun APPADURAI, *Modernity at Large* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996)

There are some who argue that the European city has distinctive characteristics - of history and heritage, of design and built form, of politics, governance and democracy, of economic function, of social structure and association.

Others note the variety of urban experience throughout Europe and the nature of difference between cities within and across national boundaries.

The philosophy of the art/cultural actions is that such fragmentation of ideas and action is intellectually unjustifiable and practically counterproductive.

Such narrowness of thinking can be countered by cross national research and policy exchange.

To be part of a community implies a kind of belonging that is more wished for than actually achieved, a feeling of connectness that is more dreamed of than materially attained. And it is this wishing and wanting that makes community something that matters to almost all of us. Community has become to be a keyword of contemporary life, not because we all live in one but because most of us do not: it is lack of it that makes it valued, it is the loss of it that makes it desired, it is envisioning of it that makes it real. The intriguing thing about community is the way the same term brings people together and almost always, tears them apart.

Whether we understand art as a matter of individual creation or as a matter of cultural conventions, in neither case is the artist or the author the one who determines what is or what is not art. Knowledge about art is changing, different periods and cultures have different definitions of art.

The limit is not only a metaphor of something else. As the meaning, the limit is also not a 'relationship between' but a 'relationship towards', therefore, the limit is there, to where we can go. It is the point at which we hit upon importance of art/cultural project in urban environment.

How do we see the importance of art and artistic projects for the construction of the Europe? Isn't the European Community in danger of being driven purely by economic forces without any cultural vision?

There is not a single problem concerning the European spirit that has not been also expressed in its artistic manifestation.

It is extremely difficult to generalise about the evolution of urban cultural policies in Western Europe, because of the diverse comparative research, the great diversity of the definitions of 'culture' adopted by policy-makers, and other important variations in different national contexts- for instance.

The use of cultural policy for urban and regional economic development, however, gave rise to policy dilemmas such as:

- those between cultural provision in the city centre and in disadvantaged, peripheral neighbourhoods,
- between consumption – oriented strategies and support for local cultural production and innovation, and
- between investment in buildings and expenditure on events and activities.

It is important to clarify that cultural planning is not intended as 'the planning of culture' – an impossible, undesirable and dangerous undertaking – but rather as a cultural approach to urban planning and policy.

Three issues deserve special consideration in the process of re-orientation of urban cultural policies brought about by the adoption of a cultural planning perspective:

- *the development of 'open minded' public spaces* for social interaction in cities, and of 'permeable borders' between different neighbourhoods;

Social interaction can be based on the simple but powerful fact that different social groups inhabit the same territory. Cultural activities can play a key role in transforming this territory into a shared public space, and in counteracting trends towards conducting our public life within increasingly homogeneous social circles.

- the importance of encouraging multiculturalism and intercultural exchange;

Urban cultural policies have traditionally aimed at multiculturalism, which generally means the strengthening of the distinctive cultural identities of different ethnic communities, by enabling them to have their own cultural voices. This is valuable objectives, but multiculturalism does not necessarily encourage communication between cultures.

- the need to evaluate and give recognition to the potential of participatory cultural projects within sustainable urban development strategies.

Urban cultural policies which encourage people to be makers, rather than simply consumers, of art and culture can have a significant role to play in the development of three key components of human capital (knowledge, skills and motivation) as well as of social and organisational capital.

In a syndicated article, (Washington Post, The Independent, El Pais, 1st week of July 2001), Jeremy Rifkin¹⁵ unveils the world's most elusive secret: that culture is a 'new actor in the global stage'. He also discovers that a "new generation of cultural activists is taking its cause to the world scene: they come from civil society organisations with vigorous roots in the cultural domain. Although they tackle global political and economic problems, their links and loyalties belong primarily to their local communities'.

Urban problems are very complex, they have a longer history than any "project" and do not simply disappear on completion of the concluding report.

¹⁵ Jeremy RIFKIN, president of the Foundation on Economic Trends, Washington, DC, Brussels, EU Commission, March, 2002

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