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**Cities and Urban Spaces: Chances for Cultural and Citizenship Education**

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## **“Creative” – “Migrant” – “Divided”? Visions of Cities and Civic Cultures**

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The invitation for this conference starts with the sentence: “Worldwide, the run in the cities keeps going on.” And this statement is both: banal and dramatic! Banal, because this statement would have already applied 50 years ago, dramatic, because – other than 50 years ago – today migration leads to cities which already shelter more than half of the world's population. In 2030 it is predicted that almost two-thirds of it will live in cities!

So regarding the “run on the cities” it is less the process which is remarkable but the time, the dimension and the intensity. In modern history the city always represented the place of modern mass culture and mass migration. However, it always represented a social and spatial order, which gave framing and direction to this social experiment: the idea of an “open” and “civic” society! An idea, the village and the countryside weren't ever able to develop.

This “civilising project” seems threatened if, because of the pressure of this “running”, the city of the future turns into an amorphous space: overpopulated, socially disordered and culturally unshaped.

I want to primarily focus on this “civilising” side of the city, which represents its historical heritage as well as its major future capital. At first, let's take a look at the initial situation of the European city; then some considerations on “city and civic cultures” in 2030 will follow; finally the question: Who owns the city, who “lives” this city?

### ***I. The European City: “heterogeneous” and “culturalized”?***

With this introduction I consciously argued “europeanistically”, because the described type of city and its “civic culture” is primarily limited to rich societies, esp. in Europe. Here cities not only stand for working and surviving but also for living, loving and consuming. “European” urban lifestyle promises “good life”: socially secure, culturally diverse and intellectually active!

This explains the “run”! - The poorer parts of the world show a different situation. Here migration to the city still means rural exodus - the desperate search for physical chances of survival in the new mega-cities of Asia, South America and Africa.

So, we are - still - in a privileged situation! - also, because the European cities can look back on a way longer history. This gives them much experience and a long tradition of urban “growing up”, a specific “knowledge culture”, which helps to recognize the chances and threats of urban development.

Because today, they have to face major issues, too: questions concerning the development of urban economies and employment markets, concerning ecological concepts regarding traffic, energy and climate, concerning social integration and fair life chances, concerning the organisation of urban space and living space politics - and concerning growth and shrinking. The solution of these problems will rather depend on the social and cultural “substance” of the city than on experts and politics. It will depend on urban actors and cultures, on spaces and milieus, on the “human factor” as the most important urban resource and “agency”!

This becomes clear in the historical retrospect when we reread the European urban history of modernity regarding the signs of mobility and migration. Big cities – as we know now – grow by immigration of people, goods and ideas. Historically as well as currently, they are products of movement and encounter – and therefore: places of “the other”, “the strange”! Because it is the variety of what exists and what is coming, its difference and blending, that creates the “energetic potential” of the city: its “cultural heterogeneity”!

Precisely the social and cultural friction produces “creative” and “identitary” energy – and therefore both:

Social identity *in* the city as well as local identity *as* city! The permanent encounters with “the others” form urban everyday life. They permanently afford new arrangements of correlation and delimitation: spatial and social, individual and collective, playful and serious, in self-perception and the perception of the other. This process of permanent “social navigation” through the urban landscape creates a specific “local knowledge”. Hence it forms a repertoire of social style and cultural rituals from it. Thus, local knowledge and its everyday application constitute the “local spirit” of an urban society. And they originate an urban ethos: corporate values and proud images of a “local way of living”! This “local way” is the base of “civic culture”. Since its programme mainly consists of the vague idea of local “common welfare”. So it only comes with a “thin”, weak cohesive power – compared to the “thick”, strong bindings like kinship and religion. Therefore, it depends in a special way on concrete actors and practices and especially on rituals and symbols. Only then “civic culture” as social and mental experience can take effect: as every day visible “practice” of social actions and symbolic attitudes.

Compared to the city of the 19th century with its small elites, social milieus and clubs of our today's cities are bigger, more heterogeneous and therefore became vaster. During the past years they have therefore developed new spatial structures and cultural forms. Such a “civic culture” could emerge from or tie in with them. I want to focus on 4 crucial tendencies:

First, the urban landscapes are “culturalised” dramatically. Architecture and arts, parks and city beaches, music scenes and cafés sustainably shape the reading and usage of urban spaces. It is a “cultural turn” towards open and varied forms of an “urban adventure society” which is likewise borne by locals as well as by tourists, by urban scenes as well as commercial providers. And it causes an increasing aestheticization, gentrification and commercialisation of urban spaces and styles: the city/“my city” as “brand”!

Second, in their own concepts of identity urban actors increasingly refer to “images and symbols” of urban culture. Locals, migrants and tourists use the urban space as screen and stage. They slip into shifting roles: in social as well as ethnic settings, in generational as well as sub-cultural stagings. And with t-shirt prints like “I love Paris”! or “Be Berlin” they want to express their local identification and they want to “upgrade” their personal identity via urban references. For them hip cities are “identity-labs”, too.

Third, new urban “communications” gain higher importance, i.e. organised movements as well as fleeting fusions of actors in the public space who are linked by shared concerns. Actors use these “communities” for “public” presentation and representation. Unlike local clubs, parties or churches and their often lifelong memberships, informal and ambulant forms come to the fore: policy and cultural initiatives, task forces and information networks, migrant committees and NGOs. This is: “community organising”, “agenda setting” and “urban place making” at the same time – and it makes them an important medium of local “civic culture”.

Fourth, new “interventionist” practices develop: gestures of “public” statements and intervention – and forms of “public spacing”! Here, “round tables” and “human chains”, art performances and flash mobs, street parades and “civil crowds” represent different styles of a vivid “intervention culture”. These actions seem to be joyful and harmless, often as “party”. However, they develop dynamically and cancelled without centre and solid hierarchy. And they are always able to intervene in “local affairs”.

I know: Some of this describes *contemporary* “urban cultures”. But I’m sure: It also describes *tomorrow’s* urban cultures since the social and spatial urban landscape is going to be rearranged by this “urban cultural turn”. By doing so it turns into a “civic sphere” of engagement and activity in three respects: as *representation space* for different experiences, as *intervention space* for different art styles and as *bargaining space* for different interests. - So far for the “status quo”!

## II. City-Visions

I am sure that the cities of 2030 will be coined by this flexible and “performative” civic culture, too. Since each European city will have to find its own, specific answers to the future challenges, depending on its historical tradition, its local situation and its social constitution. Moreover it depends on the reflection ability, the willingness to identify and the integrability of the urban society, thus on its “social” and “cultural capital”. And this can only be “realised” by the actions and actors of this local civic culture!

Considerations in the local space are geared to “trans-local” experiences, to inter-cultural perspectives and to global knowledge. Since the old-school institutional urban policy can't handle these new developments the cities themselves will act as independent “actors” in the future: in the form of local actor networks, of urban alliances as well as civic task forces - thus as “agency” itself. This makes them a “collective subject” which no longer delegates the decisions for the future but wants to take that in their own hands: via information and debate in the streets and the internet. This applies to all the big cities, but esp. to the “world cities”. They now operate within their own global network of cities like in a “Champions League”. The control of capital flows and tourist flows, of urban architecture and city branding is directly negotiated with the “global players” in the banking- and corporate headquarters since the cities themselves are “global players” now!

In the inner cities new types of actors and spaces of action develop because the “culturalisation” of the urban spaces will increase within the coming decades. Architecture and arts, media and consumption, festival and party-culture, the public staging of the private life - they (all) inscribe new aesthetic patterns and symbolic practices into the urban spaces. This has serious consequences: i.e. the change of urban life and guiding principles or the digital presentation and organisation of new forms of urban society and sociality.

Thereby, urban space increasingly becomes the arena of a “pluralist” society which negotiates itself, its needs and its conflicts differently and more publicly than in the classical. As a “stage” urban space offers forms of presentation and representation, which have mobilising and integrating effects. And this is of vital importance for actors and groups who can't and don't want to undertake long “marches through the institutions”.

Thus, urban culture is taking it “back to the streets”. It appears in “crowded figures” - it therefore argues to be “popular” and “legitimate” – it seems to cut across “classes” - and it is increasingly “female”. It has a highly emotionalising and collectivising effect because it appears performative and creative: “Civic culture at its best!”

So these are my three interim conclusions:

1st: “Open cities operate and perform themselves as global actors”!

2nd: “Civic cultures succeed in producing creative local actors”.

And 3rd: “Urban spaces become stagings of civic politics in a new way”!

How are we, “the urbans”, going to live in 2030? In our city districts and apartments, in our streets and places, in our wheelchairs or on our skateboards? - Let me give you some impressions:

First of all we want a specific “local quality of life”! The European citizen of 2030 wants to live in an “interesting” district - with commodious apartments and short distances, with good restaurants and gyms, with small shops and places, with theatre and opera in walking distance. He or she considers this city as “his/her” city. And he or she enjoys the urban space as extended “open air” living room: as “personal homescape” and “natural bioscape”.

This involves the expansion of the private life to the public sphere as well as the use of the “green city”: colourful planted places and parks, ecologically cultivated, historically restored - and therefore suited year-round for dandering, dining and partying – “open air” whenever possible!

This also involves the feeling of personal security and social acceptance in the own neighbourhood, which should at the same time offer diversion: “cultural diversity” and “otherness” around the corner.

And it involves tolerance: concerning identity and outfit everything has to be possible: from “ethno-dressing” to “unisex”, from “disguise” to “denudation”. Laissez-faire is regarded as taste, too: Hamburgers are just as popular as organic products, religious and dietary eating conceptions are equally considered - on separate tables when required. Despite the persisting “easy-jet-set” it's become almost impossible to identify who is tourist and who is local. Since the locals have already become tourists in their own city, too: often on the road, searching for “exotic” as well as “familiar” things.

Despite all the domestic culture and despite new media and Internet we are still often “outside”. On the one hand because work places and working conditions change rapidly and working time becomes more flexible - but not shorter. On the other hand because we now have new responsibilities, too: the parent-teacher conference at school, the barbeque, the senior's rock concert in the park, the public viewing, the district council concerning urban planting or the monthly reality-meeting of our facebook-group - called “net-corner-society”...

### **III. Which city? Whose city?**

Let me stop the future-clip here. You obviously noticed that it was meant ironically, too. It described a less exciting urban “middle-class-idyll” the way it already exists today. Other than some agitated “think tanks” I don't believe that the “basics” of our lifestyles will dramatically change during the next 20 years. Houses as “power plants”, cars with electrical drive, voice-controlled bathrooms or new Internet services won't really “revolutionize” our lives.

Although - and this is the third and last part of my paper - urban everyday culture experiences numerous modifications and transformations. Cultural patterns and lifestyles will change faster, strongly affected by trans-national trends and intercultural influences. And they will gain wider distribution via global media networks, tourist cultures and music scenes.

Moreover the tension between individual requirements and collective concerns will also grow since the spatial, social and cultural “agglomeration” of the city increases. This makes the scope for “urban individualists” shrink even more. Because the existential needs for social embedment and cultural integration into the urban environment can be satisfied only in this way: via new attitudes and forms of “social compassion”, of “local engagement” and “civil solidarity”!

Considering the city socially and culturally, the urban everyday routine in 2030 will be increasingly conflictuous. It will be straining under the proceeding commodification and commercialisation of urban space and accommodation structures. And therefore it will be affected by severe social polarisation and various cultural differentiations.

This makes it exceptionally difficult to respond to the *key* question concerning the urban future: Who will be living where in the city - 20 years from now? Who will “own” this city - in social and cultural terms?

So far, scholars have developed only few substantial perspectives. But there are 3 actual discourses and scenarios touching these questions: the debates on “creative classes”, on “migrant city” and on “divided city”. And I finally want to comment on these scenarios in a very short.

First: Following Richard Florida's analysis of the future of the American cities the term “creative classes” has been discussed lately. Florida's “creatives” primarily involve people of the cultural industry and of the knowledge-based industries - currently one-third of the urban population. Due to their education and qualification they are mobile enough to choose their working places in regard to the “living quality”. Here they prefer - in short - cities of architectural and historical substance, of ethnical and cultural diversity and of social tolerance and cosmopolitanism – loving the three “T”: technology, talent, tolerance!

The cities, which do not fit these criteria are the losers. Since only the “creative classes” numerically and economically provide the necessary “critical mass” of income, consume, taxes and local engagement, which guarantees the long-term urban development. In an article title Florida once described the image of the loser like this: “Why cities without gays and rock bands are losing the economic development race.”

However, his prognosis is only partly confirmed in 2030. The way urban economy and urban society developed has since been far too complicated. And the different groups of “creatives” are way too heterogeneous for his simple formula to work out.

On the one hand, the results show that in the urban space esp. the education-friendly and partly “creative” middle-classes engage in economic, social and cultural projects. They are indeed geared to the “common welfare” - but also to their own. Since their engagement to promote “intelligent” industries and architectures not only improves the local “eco-balance” but also facilitates their “outdoor lifestyles”: their day-dream of the “green city” with its avenue trees, its street-corner-parks, its roof-decks and city beaches. This now second generation of the “creatives” wants both: they want to live in the centre of the cities close to culture as well as close to nature: lounge and lakeside, loft and lime-trees! “Creatives” love „eco-metropolises“!

On the other hand, their mobility turned out to be their biggest handicap since it makes them rather unreliable “residents” and “civics”. Who often moves doesn’t “sustainably” integrate into the local society and culture. A significant part of the “creatives” doesn’t live as “local players” but as “global surfers”. Therefore the stable core of the cities didn’t become “creative”! It rather stayed “middle-class” – and “underclass”!

Second: In 2030, more and more young migrants have come to be part of the urban “middle-classes”, too. Most of them were born in the city. Some immigrated, visited the necessary language courses and completed the required schoolings. Now they have secure positions in the local economy and in the urban society – esp. as employees, small entrepreneurs, freelancers and actors in cultural industries. And this breaks the “generative chain” which had affected their parents. When they immigrated 30, 40 years ago there was a lack of personal effort for education and of public support. Therefore many of them have been dependent on social transfer payments since.

However, the feared “migrant city” which is characterized by “ethnic difference” and “cultural wars” didn’t come true either. Especially the predicted “muslimisation” of the cities didn’t take place. Here 2 factors played a decisive role: At the same time as the integration of Muslim inhabitants into the urban labour market and social milieus proceeded the number of conservative or even fundamentalist Muslim communities decreased. Religious denomination and symbols, i.e. headscarf, burquah or kippah, generally lost their identity meaning and social brisance.

Furthermore the phenomenon of “ethnic entrepreneurship” developed in an interesting way. In relation to the expansion of the urban tourism new demands for handcraft and the service sector the number and spectrum of “migrant” pubs and shops, of galleries and handicrafts, of medical and care services broadened tremendously. They orientate their service and offers to the market in the mixed city neighbourhoods. So their development and logistics are directly integrated into the local business and living environment. This causes an intensive social and cultural connection to the local milieu, which also affects their business policy: jobs and business relationships are structured by social commitment and close ties. This generates an entrepreneurial “social ethos” which feels bound by “local patriotism” to the urban milieu. Following Max Weber one could imagine it as a kind of “Protestant Ethic”, if most actors weren’t Muslims, indeed!

These 2 developments resulted in a local civic culture, which cannot distinguish between “local” and “other” anymore. Until a few years ago urban middle classes, that felt threatened, had led the discourses against alleged genetic and cultural “otherness”. Due to the described developments the “thorn” was taken off of these biologicistic and racist discourses.

Third: this is another reason why we won’t face a “divided city” in 2030. It was worried that due to the social and cultural disintegration of migrants and the lower classes the city might be separated spatially and socially. However, spatial disparities aggravated. The development and upgrading of “inner city districts” keeps progressing. Including the most familiar manifestations of “gentrification”: on the one hand the “immigration” of high-income singles, families and business, on the other hand the “displacement” of educationally-deprived and low-income groups as well as of small business owners, cultural initiatives and artists. This often went to the expense of the cultural diversity and the urban attractiveness of the city centres.

At the same time a dramatic “shrinking” of the cities and depletion of the city districts is taking place. The reasons are of economic and demographic origin - but mobility and lifestyles have to be held responsible, too. In any case the consequence is “social desolation” of entire urban landscapes - only in individual cases there is chance for an “urban relaunch”.

Both developments involve great disparities in the cities and between cities and regions. This can't be compensated by national or European aid programmes anymore. Therefore new concepts of urban competence and profile building developed: several districts or cities focus on knowledge and education concepts in order to make the location more attractive for young families and academics. Others canvass seniors by offering specific infrastructures and cultural programmes adjusted to their needs.

Finally, some cities and city districts focus on urban tourism, partly on "easy-jet-set" and party, partly on upscale cultural and historical tourism of the "senior creatives"!

Regarding the 3 scenarios the forecasts seem too weak! Since they ignore or underestimate new cultural forms and social resources of a "post-modern" urban society, new urban networks of "civil self-help" and of "local communication" can and will develop in the urban spaces and societies - from necessity as well as for practical reasons. This indeed is my optimistic view to the cities' future!

Insofar this perspective already implies my basic conclusion:

The "European city" will survive even after 2030! However, just as "social and cultural city" which is guided and secured by a renewed "civic culture". And this "civic culture" represents the urban "local ethos" by creating new forms of participation, integration and identification: This is the real "creative city": a city of "civic self-empowerment"! Alternatively our cities would decompose: either into an island landscape of "gated communities": bleak elite residences. Or they vanish into the desolation of the fallen middle-class "suburbs" and of the "banlieus" of the resigned lower classes. Holding off these alternatives should be worth some "civic" efforts!