# The creative city and urban fragmentation

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APPEL A CANDIDATURES
A la lumière des expériences étrangères, que nous disent
les résultats du programme de recherche Popsu 2 ?

POPSU²

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*abstract:*

In the run of the POPSU project many cities have reported about their ambitions to foster creative industries to support local economy. As a consequence of the wider transformation of society and economy, these policies are seemingly consequent and promising.  "Creativity" as a resource for the post-industrial city seems to be the driving force for local development goals in the global discourse on the future city. Many concepts like the "creative city" and  the "creative quarter" are prevalent in contemporary urban planning. It is however little reflected what kind of assumptions regarding social cohesion are underlying these planning ideas. As a result of POPSU 1, we have to recognize a new form of social inequality that is expressed in fragmentation rather than segregation. The question therefore arises in which the concepts of creativity and urban development interfere with processes of social fragmentation. In this paper, a basic consideration about the relationship between the rise of the "creative city" and the emerging urban fragmentation will be provided. Firstly, the international literature will be reviewed regarding the principal understanding of the implications of creativity as a source for urban development.  In a second step, the subject will be addressed by a more comprehensive elaboration on the concept of "fragmentation" so that an analytical perspective can be worked out. It is assumed that this analysis will lead to a critical call for attention that the concept of "creative city" needs to be contextualized in the social geography of each particular city. It aims at showing the ambivalent impact of giving preference to creativity in the context of furthering social fragmentation. Presumably, the outcome of the analysis will be that the concept of the post-industrial city requires a different social framing than the still lasting system of the welfare city is able to provide. Ideally, the paper points at some measurements that cities can undertake to foster the social embedding of the rising "creative city".

## 1. Introduction

The changes of urban life have been described and analysed under different headings. Since the 1990ties, it seems, that there have been a wide range of discursive offers to name what apparently is not easy to be summarized with one covering all term. In the academic discussion, terms like "global city", "virtual urbanism", "sustainable cities", "informational mode" or "European cities" have found entrance into many conceptual ideas about the way that cities are or should develop. After critical reflection, the attempts to identify the main driving force of urban development it is clear that these attributions to the concept of the "city" only high lightens only one aspect of urban life which so far has not found appropriate attention but which does not explain the whole logic of the new urban dynamics where processes of globalization, virtualization and sustainability or relevant features.

The same can be said about the "creative city" which many cities have turned to for understanding the logic of future urban life and therefore fostering an idea of urban planning to support the improvement of creativity and consequently the quality of urban life. Meanwhile, academic reflection on the concept of the "creative city" as such and the way that it is influencing urban life has progressed substantially. In this paper,  a selective review on the present state of knowledge about the "creative city" from an international perspective will be given. In so doing, the paper intends to inform the French discussion about possible pitfalls of thinking about creativity and the role that urban planning can have in this. It will especially shed light on the impact the focus on creativity in urban planning can have with regard to processes of urban fragmentation.

As worked out by Alain Bourdin (2015), the contemporary mode of urban life has delivered a different social matrix that needs to be viewed with emphasis on the fragility and vulnerability of its citizens. The emergence of a new challenge for the social protection of human beings in their urban environment needs to be linked to a profoundly transforming fabric of security in the wider sense including especially the relationship with economic and state welfare. In this regard, many scholars are proclaiming a long lasting and ongoing transition from a more space

bound triangle between city, economy and state (fordist city) to a more time bound relationship where space no longer binds actors to long term commitment (post-fordist city). This transition is based on a rapid innovation of knowledge and creativity. In an optimistic worldview, both can be used to establish a new relationship to a particular places and cities. In a more dystopic vision, creativity replaces place attachment and creates a kind of embodied space which only exists within a (bubble of) personalized spaces. What is at stake therefore is the question whether a focus on creativity will help to re-establish a sort of social cohesion that counteracts on the effects of post-fordist fragmentation and atomization.

In the following, the paper will thus discuss the relationship between creativity and fragmentation while firstly looking at the general analysis of the postfordist city identifying the main features of the challenges on social coherence. This produces a set of questions deriving from the reconsideration of the fragilised and vulnerabilezed cities of today. It should be clear that this does not mean any kind of evaluation or normative judgement on particular efforts of politics or planning to enable a better urban life for their citizens by applying creativity as a urban development instrument. The objective of the analysis is to demonstrate the need to have a large scale research so to answer the question whereto the concept of creativity is leading.

## 2. Creativitiy in the post-industrial city

Creativity in a general understanding can be understood as one part of a personality. In this sense, the idea of creativity dervies from a basic or even anthropological view on cities which puts the individual qualities as a starting point for a more abstract generalization. Already this intellectual maneuver can call for substantial criticism. Firstly, one might argue that the assumption of creativity as an individual characteristic is not evident and implies already a social evaluation on what to call creative in a person and what not. Secondly, the term can be rejected as it implies in sui generis a positive view on human mankind which does not take into account violence, aggression or other negative aspects of the human creature. One could argue that also aggressive behavior can include creativeness but it is obvious that this is not intended in the

scholarly discourse on creative cities. In other words, creativity is not questioned whether creativity can be understood as an isolated aspect of human behavior.

In review on the discussion on the creative city, the question arises soon why scholars and practitioners are spending so much attention for creativity in the contemporary situation of urban developments.   If creativity is a profound driving force of urban life, than it is rather the attention for it in urban studies that is new than that it is only arriving to be so now. Historically, it is evident that people have always been creative in one or another way to manage their life in cities. When creativity was addressed however than its societal role has been also regarded as irritating urban order. From many accounts on the social function of creative behavior and thinking, its quality has been seen as disturbing the urban structures of routines and inflexible patterns of daily life (Mould, 2015). Ambivalent in its utility, creative actions have so far been assumed as either wishful improvements of social order or as criminal, illegal, irresponsible, disgusting…you name it.

So far, social groups in the modern city which have identified with creative behavior have been undergoing this ambivalent social evaluation and therefore were either praised or exhibited, serving as avant-garde for a more emancipated life or they have been stigmatized and neglected. Creative groups have had a specific position constantly switching between marginalization and innovative role-model. By positioning creative individuals in this precarious state, their outsider status describes also their relation to the mainstream of society which mainly followed other values of life. In the fordist city, the stability of the relationship between capital and work allowed modest rates of profit for enterprises and social mobility for their workers. Cities mirrored this stability with orienting local politics and planning to the fixation of this relationship by long term master plans. Creative individuals (Vivant, 2013) and social groups seek their place in this in the cracks, left-over spaces and temporarily unused areas of the fordist city.

With the turn down of the fordist growth model of urban economy, these abandoned and challenged spaces of the city have increased and for those cities of the "rust belt", they have become the main feature. Detroit and the post-socialist cities of East Europe are the horror scenarios of shrinking cities which have lost their industrial raison d'être. With a state

no longer considered as a pro-active manager of economy, these cities witnessed that the creative groups partly moved from the margin to the center. In some often quoted cases like the Baumwollspinnerei in Leipzig (Colini and Eckardt, 2010), they enabled the return to the global connectedness of urban life (Robinson, 2010). The increased significance of the creative actors in society and urban life has been especially discussed with regard to the emergence of "cultural milieu" where a concentration of people working in one way or another in the sphere of culture and creativity can be found.

A major shift towards both more academic attention and probably significance for the economically transformed city arrived when Richard Florida researched on "The Rise of the Creative Class" (2002). In his work, Florida combined different sociological discourses as economic cluster esearch, human capital theories, studies about the post-industrial society an d post-material values, as well as critical reflections about the formal and rigid urban planning policies (Merkel, 2017). His major hypothesis is that creative people do not go to settle where they can find jobs but at the centers of creativity and in cities they like. Creativity has become the most important resources not only for companies to grow but as well for cities.

Although not reflecting deeply on traditional theories which structure society into classes, Florida consciously speaks of the creative persons as a social class – one third of the population  including - which consists of "super creatives" like scientists, architects, artists and engineers and of "creative professionals" like lawyers, managers, doctors and more general "problem solvers".  Florida believes that these groups are dependent on tolerant, open-minded and culturally diverse cities. These places need to be vibrant and authentic (cp. Eckardt, 2015). Then cities offering this kind of street level urbanism, they will become a magnet for talents and attracting more creative people. Despite shared lifestyle, economic position and moral values, the creative class has not political or other consensus and is merely politically passive. This has to do with the high level of individualization and the lack of solidarity among creative workers.

Florida's work has found an enormous reception that cannot easily been summarized. Criticism however has overwhelmingly been expressed by urban scholars, while in the field of urban planning many of his

assumption have been left untested. Main points of criticism were the weak and contradictious definition of the "creative class" where socially very divers professional groups like artists and lawyers are suggested to have a shared economic position. By putting them together in one category, it is suggested that other social ties are less important or even not existing. The embedding however of these professions certainly requires a closer look on their real relationships to other groups, actors and institutions in society. This is even truer for cities where these groups have to be seen in their interactions, conflicts and negotiations with local institutions and their competition with other economic players and social groups. Reducing the creative groups to its mobile and flexible potentials, the concept of Florida becomes spaceless and does not explain where and how "creativity" finally is socially produced. It does not answer the question how a person can use his creativity and how the creative aspects of a personality are socialized so it will find an appropriate embedding.

Artists and other subcultural groups were facing a redefinition in their relation to mainstream society (Shaw, 2015). However, this relationship cannot be summarized as merely homogenous and stable. Creativity and innovative ideas are not fixed to a person who can lose his or her ability to invent new ideas. Ideas moreover are spread in the wider society who can express themselves from the margins again and can produce new social types like youtubers or sport intellectuals. With an unlimited access to communication, artists hardly are able to monopolize the creative production of ideas and artefacts. Economy and society still are holding up institutions of control, but the knowledge revolution has undermined the classical institutions of the museum, the television or the library in this regard.


## 3. Fragmentation and segregation in the new metropolitan landscape


The repositioning of creative professions in society needs to be contextualized in the more general transformation of society. As already mentioned above, there is no meta-discourse available still that puts all observations about the changed urban conditions into one single

narrative. Nevertheless, there are a few main phenomena that most urban scholars would link to the appearance of a post-fordist urbanism.

Certainly, the decoupled relation between space, capital and work has produced a less profitable life situation for many citizens who have to cope with increasing demands on their flexibility and willingness to accept harder life and work conditions. There is a considerable amount of literature that links this socio-economic transition to the emergence of neo-liberal policies, although the term "neo-liberal" appears to be capturing different national policies, global competition and austerity politics. As a result, cities are depending increasingly for their production of local wealth on their position in the inter-urban competition. As a consequence, the competition for high skilled workers like the creative class is assumed to be crucial (Buettner, 2016). This has a major impact on the internal order of cities which needs to be unified in a way that it can organize internal resources to be attractive for the global market. In political terms, the emergence of "governance" has often been named as a visible outcome of this reorientation in local politics. Political adaptation to interurban competition (Musterd, 2013) requires a high degree of socially controlled space that is not inflicted by any kind of interruption, conflict or violence. In this sense, the inclusive, participatory and networking shift of local politics enables a stronger steering capacity of political decision making as it is enabling a higher degree of outreach, effectiveness and social support (Heur, 2014).

These processes of social inclusion via networks and participation are obscuring the fact that social inequalities and exclusion are not compensated this way and that a changed political agenda has been set up where social cohesion is no longer regarded as an objective of economic policies but which has become a competing claim (Purcell, 2007). This translates to a less attentive political reaction on the growing social inequalities in the western world (Roser and Curaresma, 2016). Increasing differences in income however are not the only dimension of a changed social landscape. The picture of a growing disparity between rich and poor appears to be inadequately covering the complexity of the social disrupture that occurs from the super-individualization that can be regarded as ongoing. Mainly loosening or weakening ties with the communities, the destruction of social and cultural capital and the exposure to risks of all sorts are intertwined with the position of the social

field. In contrast, income poverty can be assumed to allow the learning of (common) coping mechanism over time, if a person has the chance to return favors, recognition or remaining cultural capital. In a hypermobilized and detached urban life world, this non-monetary exchanges are powerless.

The changed social landscape is co-produced by a new spatial order in which the city has become a different function and social segregation is not bound to neighborhoods. In the modern city, the neighborhood was a place for mutual socialization, conflict negotiation and accommodation. This all has been set into its societal function by the time binding of its inhabitants and the unavoidable direct interactions in local situations. In the globalized urban form, the regionalization has overcome the limiting borders of the city and its neighborhoods. City flight and re-arrangement of locales according to social sameness and shared lifestyle have reduced the potentials of cities to develop as a field of conflict learning.

Social segregation in the challenged urban landscape requires an understanding of cities not as places of polarization in the first place where the rich and the poor are concentrated. Rather, the decoupling of individuals from joined processes of space appropriation and sharing are the characteristic forces of social isolation and fragmentation. These processes make individuals more vulnerable and disoriented. Anomy however has not equal impact on all individuals in the same way. Thresholds of personal competences and thus all forms of capital are decisive with regard to the ability for setting up new forms of community. Even with successful rearrangements of social ties, the basis of these ties remains ambivalent and fragile. Increasing personal engagement remains often situation or event based. Knowledge and creativity as social competences appear to be the basic components for a self-management that copes with the constantly changing requirements for self-representation. Social fatigue and burn-out, medicalized dependences and risk seeking behavior can be found where the creative capital is missing.

Key factor for the creation of these competences are forums of recognition. In the contemporary urban landscape, the existing institutions of education, family, and neighborhood and the professional arenas are less capable to offer the needed socio-emotional recognition (Eckardt, 2013). Instead, recognition is offered by fugitive and superficial

medializations. The virtualization of life creates an easy to achieve feeling of being accepted "as you are" and allows to define the personal identity without the work of interaction without questioning and disturbing actors or agencies. This is mainly achieved by emotionalized and visual compositions of personalized sets of signs and narratives (Hawley, 2016). Creativity in this context means more combination of existing signs than the cross-over to the unknown. Confusingly, the question of identity has become crucial for the detached, atomized and fragile individual in the new urban landscape, although the chances to build up a framework for creating an authentic identity are increased by social fragmentation. The effect of this identity search leads to defensive acts against strange and frightening intrusions into the gated bubble of self-reference. In effect, the urge for identity counterproductively increases the further social isolation when binding and not bridging intellectual competences are set into force.

## 4.    "Creative City" and the urban fragmentation

The concept of the "creative city" has been profoundly criticized by not contextualizing into the social landscape described above. The neglect of the social role of the creative class with regard to processes of social segregation and gentrification are the main points of the critical review the concept have found (Wilson and Keil, 2008). Especially, the interference of artist as "pioneers" of gentrification and thereby as avant-garde for the revalorizing of poor working class neighborhoods for a later take-over by the middle class is totally left out. In many theoretical explanations of gentrification, the role of artists in gentrification is regarded as highly critical (Grodach, Foster and Murdoch 2016; Harris 2012; Shkuda 2016). It is nevertheless also critical whether these gentrification studies are adequately linking the subject of creativity to the new urban landscape. Gentrification is taking place in an local set of institutions, actors and agencies with relationships to non-local and global networks. The picture of creative people invading a vacant left over space from a de-industrialized neighborhood dismisses the complexity of frames that prepares the ground for gentrification including legalization, heritage politics, real estate actors, middle class actors and

planning agencies. The theory of gentrification calling this process "pioneering" both mystifies and personalizes a urban conflict which ascribes one group of actors positive characteristics which than are also proclaimed to be essential for the urban welfare in times of interurban competition.

As to counteract on this one-sided labeling which cannot only be found in the self-accounts of these "pioneers" but also in a wide range of academic writing on gentrification, one could also valorize the creativity of those groups who call for a right to the city and fight gentrification (Wright, 2013). In essence, however, the legitimizing function of the labelling of the incoming individuals as "pioneers" is obvious. Efforts to describe this group with regard to their social status or other measurable criteria are missing to understand the point even more. As already the studies about the Lower East End in New York (Ocejao, 2011) and the South End in Boston (Tissot, 2015) have shown clearly, there is not much about to be said about the creativity of these gentrifying groups and there is more to learn about social power, networks of influences, racism and social hierarchies.

In conclusion, the so called "creative class" – in which way constructed anyway – needs to be critically reviewed with regard to their action in a web of institutions, networks and social fields (Comunian, 2011). When creativity is however regarded as a social phenomenon which is not bound by a specific social group or professionals, than a wider range of conceptual questions arrives at the forefront of urban studies. Creativity as a personal competence or "capital" underlies processes of production, valorization, exchange and return. This means, that creative workers undergo the same logics of capitalist exchange and are therefore faced with precarious life conditions which are no less serious than of manufacturing workers (Loaker, 2014).

As a product of social interaction, creativity would be describable like any other kind of human activity that is beyond its ontological basis always intertwined with interactions of different kinds. It is claimed however that the nature of the social production of creativity characterizes profoundly the urban functioning and therefore the term "cognitive-cultural capitalism" (Scott, 2014) has been suggested to replace the problematized term of the "creative city" and "postfordism". The renaming implies that the focus is shifted to the production of human

capital and the social restratification. Based on the observation that the transition to a cognitive cultural logic of capitalism produces a social bifurcation between those which Florida has submitted to the "creative class". Overvalorization of the top level of human capital which is comprising advanced technological sills, analytical prowess and socio-cultural knowhow is contrasted with an increasing low income service sector which is more related to informality and marginalization. For cities in particular this duality of the new dominant labor force has most relevant outcomes with regard to the revalorization of urban land. This is mainly of importance in the inner cities where the redevelopment of the area leads to a process of "aestheticizised land-use intensification" (Scott, 2014: 372). This can mean gentrification by anesthetization or the reuse of all kinds of urban functions for the purpose of a symbolic transaction in the transnational finance flows. The lines of segregation in the cognitive-culture city are becoming visible in forms of land reused for global exchange and those which are (not yet) transformed into aesthetiized and revalued spaces, but they are also invisible in the new formation of the creative workforce which is creating more jobs at the bottom and a high degree of social insecurity.

How the focus on creativity in the context of a cultural logic of capitalism works out on cities can be studied in many cases. National paths of development are considerable still as they provide a more or less supportive framework of legal, economic, social and a wider societal backingfor this kind of transformation. It has been argued however that the Europeanization of cities and states converge this kind of creativity approach of urban transformation (Bodirsky, 2012). Specially thecase of Berlin has underpinned in many ways that the above outlined logic of creativity and urban fragmentation calls for a more general claim on the paradoxical effects of the "creative city", that is that creative upgrading leeds to more contested areas (Hesse, 2012). Taking creativity in its less instrumental reading but rather as a procedural and societal phenomenon, one could also observe that Berlin offers insights into a "real" creative city where new forms of economic exchange are deriving, experimented with and put into place (Louekari, 2006). This spills over to a different approach to politics and a consciously opposing of the exclusive and fragmenting effects of the creative capitalism and its origins in the urban splintering (Novy, 2013).

## 5. Conclusion

A lot of enthusiasm has faded but still the concept of the "creative city" is on the agenda of many political and planning discourses. It has become – partly painfully as the case of Turin (Vanolo, 2015) suggests – that the branding of a city as being creative or cultural does rather not fulfill expectations of profound economic and social transformation. As many cities now are evaluating their put into practice approaches, the reflection on the reality of the creative city can become more substantial and precise. In doing so, many of the myths surrounding the possibilities of a politically initiated turn to a culture led regeneration are melting as ice under the sun (Geenhuizen, 2012). As especially the financial crisis has shown, a high degree of dependency of the socio-economic-political situatedednss of the creative economy can be contasted (Pratt, 2013.). Acknowledgement of an unequal starting point of the interurban competition for creative industries and persons has also led to a more balanced evaluation of the achievable scope for turning to the creative as motor of urban development (Anttiroiko, 2014).

From a conceptual point of view, still two basic approaches can be identified: the space oriented and the holistic.

Regarding the first, there is a more practical review and understanding of the creative city that works is conceptualized by planning limitations which leads to a translation of the concept by a more place motivated approach. This has often been the case when the creative city is regarded as a quarter or a milieu that can be already found or that should be invented by planning and city politics. Most of the literature that uses the term "creative city" leads to this kind of narrow but practical approach. International (Eckardt, 2011) and French (Liefooghe, 2015b) research has worked out the different aspects. Nantes as to mention one of the POPSU cities can be mentioned as one example which has been regarded early as being innovative with view on the necessity to react on the changing frameworks of society and politics (Franois, 2006).

For holistic approaches, the city of Lille thereby can be seen as paradigmatic representing an orientation which is self-described as following a holistic vision. The transformation to a culture led metropolis

has found wide attention in the urban scholarly publications (Eltges, 2007) and has provoked questions about the steering capacities that cities, national and European planning instruments can have. Despite its exemplary significance, the all-encompassing approach – even if it has being to ambitious and it has not been realized in the proclaimed way – must be regarded as a concept that addresses not the particular challenges which has described in chapter 4. Still, the idea of the "creative city" is thought from a point of view that puts planning and political arrangement in the first place. It serves as a orientation for an intended metropolisation but it does not reconceptualize the city from the starting point of creativity. The later would require to allow creativity also to act out its disturbing and chaotic energies, its senselessness and counteractions – which an open end. Instead of synergizing and thereby absorbing human potentials, the city would liberate contrasting creative acts and give space for conflicts.

The policies documented in the POPSU reports are suggesting that creativity is not merely regarded as a place-directed and place-bound concept but attempts to address the transformed metropolitan life in general and in divers field of action. Lille and Nantes are only here mentioned exemples as representing two different paths that European cities are taking to adapt to the the cultural economy of late capitalism (Bontje, 2014).

As the run of the argument in this paper is making it likely, the analysis of the examples of "creative cities" in France (cp. Liefooghe, C. 2015a) and in the context of the POPSU 2 programme would require a more reflective approach with regard to the urban features it needs to look at. In the contemporary evaluation of the creative city politics, it has become clear that more context-sensitive policies are emphasized (Oliveira, 2014). Mostly, the shift from a pure economic to a more societal perspective is argued for which includes not only a wider view on culture and cultural policies but to a critical view on governance in general (Anheier and Isar, 2012). Beyond the rather meaningless account of the importance of politics, the contextualizing of creativity and creative city politics requires a profound analysis of power relations (Sotarauta, 2016). There is a lot of evidence to still believe that creativity and culture have moved to the center of the transformed metropolitan life. If this remains true than the creative city develops and requires at the same

time a reflexive urban order in which politics are not left out by processes of anesthetization, virtualization and creativity (Boren, 2013). Creativity would thus be generated partly against its controlled instrumentalisation of exploiting processes, partly reactivating emancipatory requests intrinsic to the border crossing of thought and emotion.

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