

CREATIVE CITIES, CREATIVE MINDS

STUTTGART MEDIA UNIVERSITY

IN COOPERATION WITH RYERSON UNIVERSITY, TORONTO



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CONTENTS



6 ABOUT US

Intercultural, creative and international – across two countries, 26 students and three professors spent a semester studying the subject of creative cities. Behind these creative minds are the Faculty of Electronic Media at the Stuttgart Media University and the Faculty of Communication & Design at Ryerson University in Toronto.



10 CREATIVE CITIES, CREATIVE MINDS

On the trail of creativity: As part of the project, we asked what makes the cities of Toronto, Montreal, Mannheim and Heidelberg, which have been designated "Creative Cities" by UNESCO, so special and creative. Have they earned their title?

OVERVIEW AND THINGS WE HAVE DONE BEFORE OUR JOURNEY

CREATIVE MINDS	08
THREE WEEKS IN FOUR CITIES	12
UNESCO CREATIVE CITIES NETWORK	14
CREATIVE FIELDS	16
WHAT DOES EACH CITY STAND FOR?	18
WHAT IS CREATIVITY?	20
RECKWITZ AND FLORIDA	22
OUR DEFINED DIMENSIONS	24

THINGS THAT WE ALSO THOUGHT ABOUT

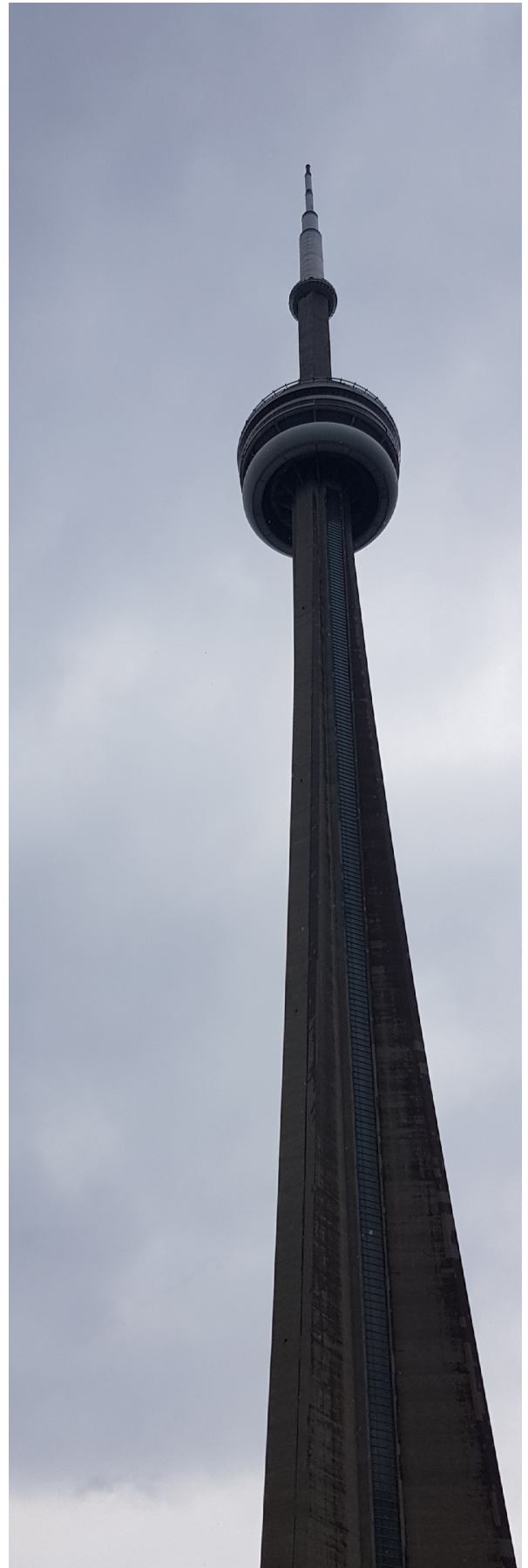
SORRY, NO VACANCY!	101
FUN TIMES IN CANADA	104
OUR JOURNEY IN NUMBERS	105
CULTURE SHOCKS	106
REFLECIÓN: A FEW MONTHS LATER	107

OUR DEFINED DIMENSIONS

Twelve dimensions and numerous facets of creativity were established during our research. The new creativity profile makes it possible to identify a city or a place as creative and to structure it in a targeted way. Learn more about the "HDM Creativity System".

OUR RESEARCH BASED ON OUR TWELVE DIMENSIONS:

- 26 CREATIVE INDUSTRIES
- 32 ESTABLISHMENT OF AN ART SCENE
- 38 CONSUMER CULTURE
- 44 POPULARIZATION OF HIGH PROFILE CULTURE
- 50 AESTHETICIZATION OF DISTRICTS
- 56 SOLITAIRE ARCHITECTURE
- 62 DEMOGRAPHY: AGE STRUCTURE
- 68 DEMOGRAPHY: DIVERSITY
- 74 THIRD PLACES
- 80 RECREATION AREAS
- 86 UNIQUENESS
- 92 MEDIA REPRESENTATION
- 98 SUMMARY





SORRY, NO VACANCY!

PAULA LONGIN, TOBIAS SCHÄFER

Cities are the most important breeding ground for initiatives that significantly promote and foster creativity, social cohesion and intercultural dialogue.

In cities, culture and creativity are lived and implemented on a daily basis. Every year, educational, economic and lifestyle opportunities lure more people away from the countryside and into the big metropolitan areas. According to UN prognoses, the global share of the urban population is expected to rise to over 60% by 2030. This is a trend that comes with a few issues.

The lack of space in major cities might be the biggest challenge. Affordable housing is increasingly difficult to find and so are accessible workspaces for artists. We talked to creatives in Toronto, Montreal and Mannheim about the situation in their city, about how they deal with it and what cities can do to help. In the context of city development, one of the biggest buzzwords is the term gentrification. It describes a very common phenomenon

in cities: Students, artists or creatives settle down in an unpopular neighborhood. Over time, they exercise a positive influence on the district, making it a greener, safer, more colorful place to live.

That attracts investors and financial upper-class. As a result, rents increase, people are pushed out of their homes. Students and artists themselves might have started the gentrification cycle. But they are not unphased by those developments. A lot of times, those groups cannot stay in the neighborhoods they developed, either.

SHORT TERM STAY, BIG-TIME COMMITMENT

As Toronto is thriving to become a megacity like London or New York City, the rapid growth has left a mark on the town. With rents increasing to a sheer ridiculous level, many artists face the problem of not being able to find affordable workspaces in the city. We met up with Oliver Pauk, an aspiring artist and co-director of the Akin Collective, in his Toronto office.



It was in 2008 when Oliver Pauk (picture above) decided to take personal charge of finding a solution to this problem. A problem which had been a burden on him and many of his fellows for quite some time: the lack of studio spaces in Toronto. Together with Michael Vickers, he co-founded the Akin Collective, a business that rents out shared workspaces to artists in need of such.

Pauk offers us a closer look into one of Akin's studios: It's a big loft that has been furnished frugally and divided into many separate workspaces. The artists are living out their talents on the white walls, making the room seem somewhat chaotic, but full of joie de vivre and creativity. "Today, Akin is providing affordable shared studio spaces for around 350 artists," Pauk tells us. Most of those spaces are abandoned factories, ready to be torn down and replaced by bigger, more modern buildings. Akin gets in contact with the owner rents the space and then distributes it on to their applicants.

Usually, those buildings are only vacant for a limited amount of time, which means that artists have to change surroundings regularly. Approached upon the subject of gentrification, Pauk emphasizes the positive impact artists have on their neighborhoods:

"By hosting open studio sessions and engaging in conversations with

the local population, the artists play an important role in the community building process". In Pauk's view, artists make art tangible for other people and that they create awareness for the importance of art and culture amongst the local population.

HERE TO STAY



About 550 km north-east bound, Mélanie Courtois (picture above) is committed to a similar cause. We met Courtois in her office, located in the Le Plateau-Mont-Royal district – a young, student-friendly neighborhood known for its many charming townhouses. Courtois originally immigrated to Montreal from Nantes, France, about eight years ago. Back then, she had intended to just take one year off and travel the country. But she ended up staying. Today, she is a Project Development Manager for the non-profit organization Ateliers Créatifs in Montreal. Ateliers Créatifs also feels obliged to help creating spaces for artists. Unlike Akin, they aim to provide long term space for artists to make them a part of their neighborhood and get fully integrated. "We want to enable artists to stay in their neighborhood for 20 to 50 years," Courtois explains. To Ateliers Créatifs, that is a "statement" and an "active choice".

However, they can only do so because the market still allows them to buy properties. In many metropolitan areas around the world, providing long term solutions has become impossible.

"...when artists are in danger, the community is in danger."

Back in 2011, when Courtois moved to Montreal, it used to be fairly cheap. "That has helped the city to become a Creative City because it attracted upcoming artists," Courtois explains. But ever since then the Frenchwoman has seen a lot of changes. "Right now, Montreal is still nothing compared to Toronto" Courtois says "but people are really afraid of the situation becoming similar to the one over there". In her opinion, the city needs to be careful. "Because when artists are in danger," she tells us, "the community is in danger".

CHANGING PUBLIC RECEPTION

In Germany, too, urban change cannot be overlooked. Especially in the "Jungbusch" district of Mannheim, which is often cited as a prime example for gentrification, change is ubiquitous. The district used to be regarded as a "cheap siding," but today it attracts creative people, students and young entrepreneurs. As a result, rents have become more and more expensive.

We met a man who has witnessed the changes in the art scene up close: Gagey Mrozeck is a guitarist, songwriter and music producer. He has been an integral part of the Mannheim music scene since the late 1960s. The born Mannheimer welcomes us in his studio in the middle of the city, behind an old, inconspicuous façade and a large, heavy wooden door. Mrozeck's studio hides in one of the oldest preserved houses in the city, where he produces music and coaches aspiring musicians – here he has created space for creativity. The former co-producer and band member of the well-known German singer Herbert Grönemeyer is



Gagey Mrozeck teaches young creatives his passion: Music.



View into an Akin studio: Creatives often make a simple studio space their own.

also engaged as a lecturer on pop-production and band projects at the Mannheim University Of Popular Music And Music Business. "With the foundation of the Pop Academy in 2003 and the music park, students and young artists were drawn to the city and the district Jungbusch. The neighborhood became hip," Mrozeck says. Due to the growing interest in the quarter, investors became aware of the financial potential. Many houses were bought up and the residents, mainly immigrants and people with low income, had to leave their homes. Today, many of the buildings are unoccupied, waiting for their new purpose. After all, Mrozeck explains that the Pop Academy changed the public reception of the districts but more importantly the reception of the profession of being an "artist".

DIFFERENT CITIES, DIFFERENT APPROACHES

Whether it is a short-term stay or a long-term one, there is no denying artists have some kind of influence on the neighborhood they move in. There are good and bad side effects. Many benefit from the work done by organizations like Akin and Ateliers Créatifs or institutions like the University Of Popular Music And Music Business. These initiatives and institutions enable artists to take part in a creative exchange among different branches and professions. They not only play a big role in catering for creative workers' needs, but they also affect the public reception of a district. Turning shut down buildings in shady neighborhoods into colorful and open workspaces for artists has a great value to the community and it raises awareness for the importance of art and culture amongst the locals.

Both in Toronto and Montreal, municipal governments are aware of

the problems the omnipresent lack of space causes for artists. According to Oliver Pauk and Mélanie Courtois, there are lots of things that cities could do to help. For example, adjusting taxes for investors. Or zoning the city. "Zone neighborhoods as 'commercial', not as 'mixed,'" Courtois proposes. "Because in mixed zones, investors only build condos since they can make more money off them," she explains. Pauk tells us that many artists are still on Akin's waiting list. "Therefore, we have to keep growing," he says. The kind of help he wishes for from the city is not monetary but rather advisory. "They can support organizations like ours by creating a forum and connecting artists with property owners or giving these organizations advice about how to improve their businesses," he goes on.

The city of Mannheim chose a different approach by establishing educational institutions from scratch and thus making room for young artists in one specific district. The initiative left a great impression. An impression that is only marred by the negative effects the popularity of these institutions has on the economic and cultural underclass in that particular neighborhood. These people cannot harness the new opportunities of the district yet they have to deal with increasing rents and greedy investors. Unfortunately, it seems as if a solution that is socially compatible for everyone has yet to be found.



View into an Akin studio: Most of the studios are shared spaces.