



VOLUME 10

# Conceptual Thoughts on Establishing a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability

By **Adrienne Goehler**





# **CONCEPTUAL THOUGHTS ON ESTABLISHING A FUND FOR AESTHETICS AND SUSTAINABILITY**



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# **Conceptual Thoughts on Establishing a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability**

**By Adrienne Goehler with Jaana Prüss**

**Edited by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung**

## The Author

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Adrienne Goehler is the originator of the concept for a «Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability» and has used some conceptual thoughts from her book *Verflüssigungen*.



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By Adrienne Goehler with Jaana Prüss

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Photos from the exhibition “Examples to follow! Expeditions in aesthetics and sustainability”

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# PREFACE

The proposal to establish a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability is not new. In 2007, the proposal was written, but not published. Its emergence was closely linked to the search for donors to prepare and finance the exhibition *examples to follow! expeditions in aesthetics and sustainability*. After three years of working tirelessly to promote the link between aesthetics and sustainability, the exhibition finally opened in the fall of 2010 in Berlin. Since then, it has been travelling throughout Germany, Europe, and the world: [www.z-n-e.info](http://www.z-n-e.info)

Since the emergence of the idea for the Fund, several things have changed. In the summer of 2011, a survival art festival was held at Haus der Kulturen der Welt entitled *Über Lebenskunst* ([ueber-lebenskunst.org](http://ueber-lebenskunst.org)). Preparation of the festival and, then, related projects – for instance, a series of lively survival art projects – were made possible due to the largesse of the Bundeskulturstiftung. *SurVIVart – Arts for the Right to a Good Life* by the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung ([www.boell.de/ecology](http://www.boell.de/ecology)) was inspired by this project as were books such as *Wachsen – Über das Geistige in der Nachhaltigkeit* by Hildegard Kurt and *Art and Sustainability* by Sacha Kagan.

The Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung and its many partners invite participants to join us at the conference *radius of art. Creative politicization of the public sphere – Cultural potential forces for social transformation* ([www.radius-of-art.de](http://www.radius-of-art.de)) at the Foundation's headquarters in Berlin on February 8 and 9, 2012.

*Conceptual Thoughts on Establishing a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability* is presented in both English and German to facilitate discussion with an international audience. Such discussion is intended to help build the broad alliances for aesthetics and sustainability that are necessary to identify innovative solutions beyond the existing structures of decision making and funding.

Ten imperatives sum up the challenges that we face in developing a fundamental understanding for the necessity of such a fund<sup>1</sup> and to prepare the field for further development:

- Democratize: continuing crises demonstrate that we cannot leave the world in the hands of experts. We all need to get involved, each and every one of us!
- Think and act: in new contexts with expanded horizons for social transformation and paradigm shifts!
- Liberate: our imagination, on all levels!

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1 For more on this, see the interview with Adrienne Goehler in the catalog *examples to follow! expeditions in aesthetics and sustainability* (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, p. 5–11).

- Spawn: new forms of organization and movement!
- Become fluid: artists should develop into role models as avantgarde and anti-experts of “fluid modernism,” in which there are no longer any certainties; instead, positions should be revisited over and over!
- Listen, observe, publicize: this means making the invisible visible!
- Charge: the concept of sustainability, which has been overused in policy-making and scholarship, needs to be charged with new power. This can only be achieved by proactively linking aesthetics and sustainability!
- Perceive: aesthetics is the sum of all our perceptions for understanding complex systems. It is not an exclusive realm of art, but should be (re)claimed by each and every one of us!
- Combine and link: We need to overcome our rigid modes of thinking – including the silos and hierarchies of thought – in order to combine various fields of action and perspectives. Otherwise, most important and dynamic issues will fall through the cracks of our standard patterns of institutional and intellectual organization and fail to attract the proper support!
- Admit: that alongside the social, the economic, and the ecological, the cultural is the fourth dimension relating to the emergence of cultures of sustainability. Although we recognize this, there have been very few experiments with this dimension that can spawn further actions and practice!

Conclusion: Art is no longer only a means or a medium. It is also a mirror image of our search for paths towards a post-fossil fuel age, towards a new era of human development based on an aesthetic of sustainability.

The Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung would like to thank Adrienne Goehler for her persistence in seeking to realize her ideas and proving their innovative power. This persistence and her eye for the future allowed the concept to emerge.

Jaana Prüss helped with the first version and reviewed the current, updated version. She deserves our thanks.

Thanks also to all those who provided comments on the proposal, which are included in the final pages of this publication.

We hope that the ideas presented here will be disseminated widely across the world and be discussed and developed further. We also hope that the concept can encourage and inspire promising approaches to supporting transdisciplinary art projects that are emerging and, in so doing, contribute to the necessary transformation towards cultures of sustainability.

Berlin, December 2011

Dr. Heike Löschmann  
*Head, International Politics*  
*Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung*

# Introduction

There are several kinds of displacement caused by globalization: the division between the localized poor and the globalized rich (Zygmunt Bauman); the growth of the world population and simultaneous decline of vital resources such as energy and water, and the migration that results from this; the increasing number of both shrinking cities and mega-cities, and the desolate landscape between them (Jean Ziegler); and, of course, the global climate catastrophe. These all pose existential challenges to policymaking, to which the current discussion about a socio-ecological development of sustainability does not do justice. This is especially true considering that the international community has moved so far from the goals it set itself that the German Council for Sustainable Development sees this as a serious security risk. The poor results of the G8 summit of 2007, which fell far behind the UN Millennium goals, only give increasing cause for concern.

The greatest impasse in relation to the calculable and provable failures of governments and other responsible parties concerning sustainable goals are the fears of individuals. While these individuals might have different faces on the different continents and fears of varying intensity, they all circle around hunger, displacement, and lack of protection – and about the feeling of not being needed, intended, or consulted. They ask questions like: How do I, as a subject, even appear in the restructuring of society, with what I know and can do, with what I have learned and experienced, and with what I could provide? Who consults me? The mortification of being seen by policymakers as merely a problem, and not as part of the solution, is palpable. Given all this, it is hardly surprising that issues of sustainability are seen as non-essential or as something unconnected from one's own fate, rather than as a powerful tool for change that can help people put aside their roles as victims. And it is not surprising that the emotions, images, and visions required to reach the great goal of sustainability are lacking: not living here at the expense of those elsewhere, and not living today at the expense of the future.

We live in an era of comprehensive social transition, in an era of the “not anymore and not yet.” There is no longer a hope of “more, better, faster.” There will be no return to the carefree consumption of resources, of supposed unambiguity, and indeed of full employment in high-cost countries. As to what this

should be replaced with so that “humans can remain human” has not yet become the subject of public debate, let alone general action. The present poses the question of an “a-centric existence that has yet to create its centers” (Wolfgang Engler). The American futurologist John Naisbitt has called the present a time between brackets: the past is not yet behind us – the centralized, industrialized, and enclosed old world built on institutions, nationstates, fixed hierarchies, and short-term political-economic solutions. At the same time, we have not yet accepted the future. We are still holding on to the familiar past, out of fear of an unknown future.

This diagnosis of not anymore/not yet is the point of departure for bringing aesthetics into the debate on sustainability. It is based on the claim that artistic strategies are the best approach in radically open contents and for dealing with gaps. Being interstitial means tolerating ambivalence. Artists have more practice at that than others because they specialize in transitions, intermediate certainties, and laboratories.

This conceptual sketch is based on the following assumptions and experiences:

- The resource of the 21st century is creativity (Richard Florida)<sup>1</sup> – it is not a natural resource or a stockpile, but a flow that requires care in order to continuously renew itself and thus be a source of sustainability.
- The potential of art, as well as of the humanities and social sciences, is underutilized when it comes to the need for sustainable action.
- Sustainability is not understood by individuals as a space of possibility because it is *not yet* linked to the sensuality and passion of personal action, but is still mainly seen as an appeal to the superego or the well-filled wallet. This also applies to the majority of artists and others in the creative professions.
- All sustainability is the result of thinking new things and seeing the familiar from a new perspective. Sustainability is continuous renewal.
- Charging the term and the debate around sustainability in aesthetic terms is a great way to protect the term from losing its power to convince.
- The current funding criteria of political programs and foundations in Germany do not incorporate an aesthetic dimension into the intended efficacy of sustainable thinking, ways of life, and economic activity. Here, too, we encounter a paradoxical situation: In Germany of all places, which sees itself as a pioneer in the fight against climate change and has a well-financed research landscape, the cultural dimension of sustainability is excluded. Germany, where more and more foundations are being established, has an immense amount of catching up to do in this field, as shown by international examples.

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1 Richard Florida, *The Rise of the Creative Class and How It is Transforming Work, Leisure, Community, and Everyday Life* (Cambridge, 2002).

■ Sustainability requires a social vision. The multiple links of the existing wealth of knowledge and experience can only truly unfold within a cultural society:<sup>2</sup> comprehensively, over a long term, and if they are open to change and transformation.

Twenty years after the Rio Summit, where 179 states agreed that “sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”,<sup>3</sup> we find ourselves in a paradoxical situation: Although a policy of sustainability is now accepted as indispensable by the media as well as by political parties, there is a kind of immunization against the ideas and sustainability as a conceptual cluster. There is hardly a term, except perhaps for “gender mainstreaming,” that over many years of misuse has become so jaded; present in the speeches of almost all politicians, the term now rarely means anything. Through overly frequent, overly bad usage it has petrified into a term of political correctness and under-complexity, reduced to technical, instrumental ways of solving problems, without integrating the competences of those players who engage the senses. This is seen as a shortcoming not only by the Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft.<sup>4</sup>

If the meaning of the term has recently expanded, it is because it is now also being used at the stock exchange,<sup>5</sup> that is, it now has an impact as an economic category.

Sustainability has remained an abstract term that does not connect to the interactions between different participants, and it has not managed to free itself from the psychological resistance to prohibition, asceticism, and morality. The term does not have any positive connotations, at least not yet.

The sustainability debates and their advocates, the Agenda 21 initiatives, are clearly stuck in a dead end because in spite of their comprehensive, indeed holistic, approach, they are still perceived as being restricted largely to the field of ecology, and they themselves do not understand sustainability as a genuinely cultural challenge. Exemplary for this are the fellowships for students recently announced by the Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt (DBU), which show no openness toward the arts or humanities, but instead focus only on the environment, as well as the guideline on “Study and Research on Sustainability,”<sup>6</sup> which still works with a three-pillar model of sustainability.

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2 Adrienne Goehler, *Verflüssigungen: Wege und Umwege vom Sozialstaat zur Kulturgesellschaft* (Frankfurt am Main, 2006).

3 *Our Common Future*, chapter 2: Towards Sustainable Development, [www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm](http://www.un-documents.net/ocf-02.htm), accessed October 25, 2011.

4 The Kulturpolitische Gesellschaft demands “making sustainability in public awareness recognizable as a cultural challenge and linking sustainability policy and cultural policy more closely with one another”; see [www.kupoge.de/ifk/tutzinger-manifest/kun.htm](http://www.kupoge.de/ifk/tutzinger-manifest/kun.htm), 2001.

5 [www.sustainability-index.com](http://www.sustainability-index.com).

6 [leitfaden-nachhaltigkeit.de/index\\_en.html](http://leitfaden-nachhaltigkeit.de/index_en.html), Berlin, July 26, 2007.

This is also obvious in the priorities of policymakers on the federal level, who set the agenda goals for the next few years for energy and climate protection, transportation, agriculture, global responsibility, and the knowledge society. The cultural dimension is mentioned neither here nor as part of the *UN's Decade of Education for Sustainable Development* nor in the *Lisbon to Leipzig Declaration*<sup>7</sup> of the German EU Council Presidency 2007.

We still have a long way to go before the arts are recognized as a player in the realm of sustainability and intercultural competence as a matter of course (although in the long term, the one is unthinkable without the other). This is the case not least because national and local politicians regard the realization of sustainability goals mainly as an exercise in political correctness for which they lack the money, time, ideas, energy, and assertiveness.

For all three reasons, German experts in the field of sustainability speak of the need to either replace the term *Nachhaltigkeit* entirely or to use the English word “sustainability.” The philosopher Wilhelm Schmid even suggests a whole bouquet of terms: long-term, lasting, persevering, resilient, stable.<sup>8</sup>

The absence of a cultural dimension in the sustainability debate has been widely noted.

■ As early as 1984, the **German Advisory Council on the Environment** pointed out in its report on the environment that sustainable development is not just a process of technological innovation, but that it would also entail *cultural reorientation*, wherein consumer reluctance and a lowering of production should play a role.<sup>9</sup>

■ The **Toblacher Gespräche**, which focused in 1998 on the subject of “Beauty: Living Sustainably,”<sup>10</sup> stressed that “Beauty is a central dimension of sustainability,” “imaginative use of resources, creativity, and beauty can be used without limits and are sustainable,” and they called for “a personal and social aesthetics of proportion, simplicity, serenity.”

■ The 1998 **UNESCO World Culture Conference** on *The Power of Culture* in Stockholm: “One of the chief aims of human development is the social and cultural fulfillment of the individual” and “Sustainable development and the flourishing of culture are interdependent.”

■ As a consequence of this, the 2001 **Tutzinger Manifesto** sought a stronger connection to the arts and called on local, national, and international policymakers “to be more open in future to the social development potential of culture, aesthetics, and art. The success of the centenary sustainability project

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7 *Lisbon to Leipzig Declaration: Promoting a Sustainable and Competitive Europe* (May 8-10, 2007, Leipzig), [www.fona.de/en/10563](http://www.fona.de/en/10563)

8 Wilhelm Schmid (Berlin), “Nachhaltig glücklich? Was Lebenskunst mit Nachhaltigkeit zu tun hat,” [www.lebenskunstphilosophie.de](http://www.lebenskunstphilosophie.de).

9 See SRU (Der Rat von Sachverständigen für Umweltfragen), *Umweltgutachten 1994: Für eine dauerhafte umweltgerechte Entwicklung* (Stuttgart, 1994).

10 Hans Glauber, ed., *Langsamer Weniger Besser Schöner, 15 Jahre Toblacher Gespräche: Bausteine für die Zukunft* (Munich, 2006), 35 ff.

will rely critically on whether and to what extent cultural-aesthetic design skills are actually integrated substantially in the implementation strategies alongside the natural sciences, social, and commercial political concepts.”<sup>11</sup> The manifesto asserts that culture has a cross-sectional dimension that has to be given equal importance in regard to economy, ecology, and the social framework if the Agenda 21 movement is to be successful. In order to make sustainability a life force, “it is critical to integrate participants with the ability to bring ideas, visions, and existential experiences alive in socially recognizable symbols, rituals, and practices.”

- The editors Hildegard Kurt and Bernd Wagner of the publication **Kultur, Kunst, Nachhaltigkeit** call for a four-pillar model that posits sustainable development as a discursive process between ecology, economy, society, and culture, stressing that “sustainability without a cultural reference is unthinkable.”<sup>12</sup>
- The **German Council for Sustainable Development** demanded “Is there a new art of sustainability?” and came to the conclusion that “sustainability requires a new social role for art and culture.”<sup>13</sup> The exhibition *PassageN* was a small attempt to broaden the field through portraits of artists working in all genres who engage with the concept of sustainability in their work. The same applies to the Council’s current call for proposals directed at young people who want to realize their vision of tomorrow’s world artistically.<sup>14</sup>
- As part of the 2006 event series **Sustainable Mozart: Kunst, Kultur und Nachhaltigkeit** (Sustainable Mozart: Art, Culture, and Sustainability), ten **Salzburger Thesen** (Salzburg Theses) were proposed, among them: “The dialog with art can help to understand sustainability as an open project that presupposes the acceptance of difference. By accepting diverging ideas, approaches, and values, it makes a contribution to a plural, democratic social order. Art can condense and question existing things and create things that were previously ‘un-thought, unseen, and unheard.’ Art can thus confront society with alternative possibilities, change individual as well as collective thought and in this way become an important factor of sustainable development.”<sup>15</sup>

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11 *Tutzinger Manifesto* 2001, cf. [www.kupoge.de/ifk/tutzinger-manifest/tuma\\_gb.html](http://www.kupoge.de/ifk/tutzinger-manifest/tuma_gb.html).

12 Hildegard Kurt, Bernd Wagner, eds., *Kultur – Kunst – Nachhaltigkeit. Die Bedeutung von Kultur für das Leitbild Nachhaltige Entwicklung* (Bonn, 2002), 38.

13 [www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/suche/index.html](http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de/suche/index.html).

14 Greeting by Hubert Weinzierl, chairman, Deutschen Bundesstiftung Umwelt member of the Rats für nachhaltige Entwicklung, Sitzung des Nationalkomitees für die UN-Dekade «Bildung für nachhaltige Entwicklung» on May 16, 2006, Deutsche Bundesstiftung Umwelt, Osnabrück.

15 *Salzburger Thesen* (3,4) [www.jungk-bibliothek.at/sm\\_thesen.pdf](http://www.jungk-bibliothek.at/sm_thesen.pdf).

— **Klaus Töpfer** dreamed (in vain) during the run-up to the 2002 Johannesburg summit of “a book in which winners of the Nobel Prize in Literature could present their ideas for a multifaceted world.”<sup>16</sup>

In addition, there are several individual essays and scholarly works (Davide Brocchi, Hildegard Kurt, Sacha Kagan, and others) that do not go beyond stating the need for a cultural dimension to sustainability. What is lacking is action. One important reason for this lack is that no foundation, no political department, no funding program promotes the link between aesthetics and sustainability.

We therefore presume a need and a desire for action on the part of decision-makers, a desire to break out of the definitional prisons as well as from the existing hermetic approaches to funding criteria that sharply divide the various segmented publics.

Our proposal for a **Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability** is an exploratory step of the hitherto neglected dimension of the cultural toward an **aesthetic practice of sustainability** and it is committed to “productive action” (Hannah Arendt). The goal is to find and invent new overlapping strategies that will lead to other – sustainable – models of life and work.

In the following, “aesthetics” means the consciousness of the senses (Rudolf zur Lippe), the participation of all senses in feeling, perceiving, and fashioning the world. Here, the arts have to be understood as agents of aesthetics, and artists increasingly as the procurators of social perceptivity.

“In the field of art we can study the plurality, which by now has become a diversity of ways of life so urgent [...] better than anywhere else. In this sense, art – as an elementary school of plurality – can be a social model.”<sup>17</sup>

In very general terms, culture means an individual will to change that connects with others to test, link, and reject solutions, ways, and views. The point is to preserve, envision, and consciously fashion life, an active engagement of humanity with human nature and the nature around us; a persistent experimental humanization (Norbert Elias).

For humanity and for the world, culture entails seeking sensible answers to the practical questions of our ways of life. This ranges from basic decisions about how to deal with available and yet-to-be-tapped resources on a large scale, all the way to the daily moments of individual life-art.

The **society of culture** means a blueprint that does not just recur to the rather limited group for whom culture is essential, but rather culture as a matrix for creativity, which it understands as a general human ability. Albert Einstein has formulated the dialectic relationship between individual creativity and

16 Klaus Töpfer, *Nachhaltigkeit: Fundament vorsorgender Friedenspolitik*, May 13, 2002, Staatsratsgebäude Berlin, speech at the conference of the German Council for Sustainable Development, *Nachhaltigkeit: Der nächste Schritt. 10 Jahre nach Rio, 100 Tage vor Johannesburg*.

17 Wolfgang Welsch, *Ästhetisches Denken* (Stuttgart, 1990), 165.



social development very concisely and precisely: “Without creative, independently thinking and judging personalities the upward development of society is as unthinkable as the development of the individual personality without the nourishing soil of the community.”

Creativity here should not be seen as something exclusive, precisely not as the prerogative of the “happy few.” This is not about either belonging or never belonging. Decisive is free access to an education and environment that understands creativity as an ability inherent to all that needs to be fostered and developed. At issue here are multidimensional and experimental ways of thinking that can connect various fields of artistic, social, ecologic, and economic creativity. Its potential is already decided in pre-schools and schools. Understood in this way, creativity is the processor for developing toward something socially larger and economically more potent.

The extension of the sustainability debate to include aesthetic practice is more than mere wishful thinking. Artistic questions and approaches have, for a while now, aimed at extending their spaces of social resonance, as demonstrated by the following examples. Central themes are art in public space/the public interest; the relationship between nature and technology; the relationship between art and science, of economics and ecology, of globalization versus regional identity; as well as questions of social participation and the democratization of art through participation. In this way, art becomes a motor enabling new forms of interaction between subjects and social organisms.

“If art can say what things are like in our environment, when many speak to many, then it has done its work” (Jochen Gerz).<sup>18</sup>

As never before, contemporary art is using the political, ecological, and economic crises as well as the visual worlds of the media for its own work. Artists take on the tasks of listening, observing, and publicizing world events that have moved beyond the focus of world attention. “Art takes a stance and simultaneously opens up new perspectives on visual information beyond nationally or locally limited contexts, and it indeed fashions a connection between the local and the global without letting one disappear in the other” (Jan-Erik Lundström).<sup>19</sup>

Increasingly, art is left with or given the responsibility of documenting the state of the world. Except for filmmakers and writers, who still cares about Bosnia? Who except artists raises the issue of shrinking cities and regions? It is artists who, together with homeless people, seek dignified, aesthetic forms of non-sedentariness. Dance is used to bring new impulses to schools and to fight the dramatic consequences of poor nutrition. Dance as a non-linguistic medium can help change the status of migrants in the classroom. It is artists’ works that increasingly aim at including the audience, and they do not stop at the audience’s limits; it is through artistic interventions that participants increasingly manage to connect with pleasure.

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<sup>18</sup> Jochen Gerz in A. Goehler, *Verflüssigungen*, p. 166 ff.

<sup>19</sup> Jan-Erik Lundström, lecture, Photography Festival Berlin (September 2005).

Artistic interventions are especially effective when they go hand in hand with the work of NGOs, such as, for example, with feature films, animated films, or documentaries, to support HIV prevention programs – and that not only in countries with high illiteracy rates.

The establishment of a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability could encourage participatory modes of working and thus make such explorations more broadly accessible.

At the same time, art also expresses the fear that artistic strategies that aim toward social participation and self-empowerment could be politically instrumentalized, and artists are concerned that they might be stigmatized as purley social or migration or ecological or political artists. Barbara Steiner, director of Galerie für zeitgenössische Kunst, Leipzig, is one voice among many who articulates such a widespread ambivalence in the art world: “How far do artistic practices themselves offer a perfect foil for outsourcing functions formerly performed by the state, and how far do artists function involuntarily as the executors of questionable economic and social developments?”<sup>20</sup>

The further development of this potential, however, is made difficult, especially in German-speaking countries, through mono-disciplinary funding practices. Environmental foundations fund environmental research, communications, and technology, as well as nature conservation, and – if they deal with culture at all – the preservation of cultural artifacts. The reverse is also true: Hardly ever do cultural foundations mention sustainability as part of their funding criteria. As of yet, there is no foundation that feels responsible for those projects that, by combining art and sustainability, could develop a great efficacy.

Therefore, what is needed is a fund that encourages artistic interventions in the field of sustainability for extended social good: a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability that ideally would be supported by several foundations and whose board and juries would be interdisciplinary. (The Hauptstadtkulturfonds can serve as an example here, both in terms of its structure and the funds it distributes – €10 million annually.)

Connecting in terms of knowledge, experience, and action, creating permeability – that is what we see as important criteria for sustainability.

The **Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability** aims to overcome the ineffective, wasteful side-by-side existence of partial publics by creating a space for possible cooperation between NGOs and artistic approaches.

What special quality of culture do other societal elements lack? One answer could be, using Hannah Arendt’s phrase, “public happiness,”<sup>21</sup> which according to her is the driving force that triggers action. What can culture do that other factors cannot? How can it become a fashioning factor of society, of the challenge

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20 Barbara Steiner in: Philipp Oswalt (ed.), *Schrumpfende Städte* (Ostfildern, 2005), p. 438-441.

21 Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution* (London, 1990), p. 225.

of sustainable thinking and action? How, then, might we imagine a society whose nucleus is culturally determined, whose members see culture as a common denominator, as the origin of sociality and solidarity?

The following list of exemplary projects and initiatives should not be understood as hierarchical; it is merely intended to provide a better overview and to show how exemplary works in the arts can become models of cooperation.

## **Aesthetics and Sustainability in the Realm of Ecology**

Initiated by the British **Arts Council**, the project series Arts and Ecology was begun with the goal of integrating the arts into social and political discussions. The Arts Council encourages the development of arts in the United Kingdom and is well funded with a budget of € 4.5 billion. Supported by the Royal Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce, in 2005 it began a program based on the question of how the arts could contribute to the current social and ecological changes and how artists could approach the issue, with the goal of encouraging and supporting artists to engage with ecological problems. This is based on the notion of ecology as the study of the relations between individuals and their cultural, social, economic, and natural environments.

Due to the various methodological and thematic approaches of environmental activists, scientists, writers, philosophers, and artists, new forms of collaboration are established that are reflected over the long term in policymaking – or at least this is the hope.

Ecology thus becomes a conceptual model that enables various arts and related disciplines to work collaboratively toward a mutual benefit. Beyond the level of direct collaboration with the groups on site, people and organizations throughout the arts, sciences, environmental movements, governments, and media are included.<sup>22</sup>

Two aspects of this platform are notable: Cultural policy becomes an active part of a creative process that realizes contemporary art has an entirely different approach to current issues, in this case, ecological issues. At the same time, cultural policy enables transdisciplinary experimental forms of working, allowing for actors to become directly involved. It is an agent in accessing various fields of action and knowledge.

This approach of including various forms of knowledge in ecological action is also pursued by the world-renowned **Museum of Natural History** in London. Via an Internet program, it has made several thousand fishers co-researchers on the state of bodies of water in England. The fishers know what insects can be found on which bodies of water, because the bait is chosen accordingly. They register every change in distribution. Their reports have provided exact and cost-

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**22** Press release, *Art & Ecology*, April 2005. The first conference on ecological and artistic practice began with a discussion with David King, Chief Scientific Adviser to the Government, Sir Nicholas Serota, director of the Tate Gallery, and the artist Alfredo Jaar; see [www.thersa.org/arts](http://www.thersa.org/arts).

free information about the specific changes in the local water balance: efficient, reliable research that brings together museum and audience, audience and nature, amateur passion and environmental policy.

British artist **Jeremy Deller** focuses on similar alliances with a project that initiated an open competition for bat housing, where he was able to gain input from architects, home owners, artists, and environmental activists as participants.<sup>23</sup>

The treatment of ecological issues, which, in Germany, is generally limited to small, usually underfinanced art projects, is given greater prominence in other countries. Surprisingly the United Arab Emirates is currently dedicating a whole biennial to **Art, Ecology and the Politics of Chance**. Liechtenstein's national museum held the exhibition *Auszeit! Kunst und Nachhaltigkeit* (Time Out! Art and Sustainability), featuring artists of international renown – the exhibition focused on aspects of longevity and deceleration. Ever since 2005, the exhibition *Beyond Green: Towards a Sustainable Art* has been touring the largest institutions and cities of the United States. The exhibition defines collaboration as one of the decisive criteria for sustainability and is committed to the principle of bringing ecological, social, and aesthetic demands into balance by way of sustainable design.

The Vienna exhibition **Nachvollziehungsangebote**, curated by Sophie Goltz and Vera Tollmann, explores the blind spot of sustainability discourse and explores schemes of perception and evaluation as well as dispositions toward action (lifestyles). It poses the question whether an ambivalent thought construct such as sustainable development can be the subject of art.

**Über Lebenskunst**,<sup>24</sup> a project initiated by the Federal Cultural Foundation in cooperation with the Haus der Kulturen der Welt (HKW), gathers cultural, scientific, economic, educational, political, and civic partners to search for alternative lifestyles for the 21st century. *Über Lebenskunst* presented a series of events, performances, and installations in the city of Berlin and a big festival from August 17-21, 2011, at the HKW Berlin, which combined art and daily praxis.

The internationally touring project **examples to follow! expeditions in aesthetics and sustainability**<sup>25</sup> by Adrienne Goehler (curator and initiator) – showing 50 positions from art, design, architecture, and technological inventions from 22 countries – wants to sensitize viewers to the fact that sustainability that understands itself as formative cannot do without the arts and sciences. We need to learn from them how to think in transitions, provisional solutions, models, and projects. The exhibition shows artistic practices that contribute to the conservation of the planet and promote a rethinking of our behavior as consumers. Sustainability requires an expansion of awareness concerning cooperation. To this end, the exhibition has abolished the lines between artistic and techno-

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23 [www.bathouseproject.org](http://www.bathouseproject.org)

24 [www.ueber-lebenskunst.org](http://www.ueber-lebenskunst.org)

25 [www.z-n-e.info](http://www.z-n-e.info)

logical creativity, between practicability and idea. The show is accompanied by workshops with children and young people, panels with representatives from the worlds of art, science, foundations, the business community, and NGOs, as well as a film program. This exhibition exemplifies the need of a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability.



*Peter Clegg and Antony Gormley, Three Made Places, 2005, Courtesy of Cape Farewell, [www.capefarewell.com](http://www.capefarewell.com)*

**Cape Farewell: Art and Climate Change:** With the campaign Cape Farewell, British video artist **David Buckland** initiated a dialog between art and science about the cultural significance of climate change. The shared working basis was a series of expeditions to the Arctic North during which the dramatic impacts of climate change on the fragile ecological balance could not be overlooked. The exhibition *Cape Farewell: Kunst und Klimawandel* at Hamburg's Kampnagel presented works of prominent British artists. The world premiere of *Arctic Symphony* by Max Easley, discussions with writers and scientific consultants on climate policy, live performances, artist talks, and a documentary exhibition accompanied the program. Funding was provided by the British Council, Arts Council England, Greenpeace, and others.

To complement the project, an international open space conference called *Tipping Point* was held in Potsdam with artists and climate experts.

**Sparwasser Berlin: social, mental, environmental,** Workshop and Exhibition: "It is to be hoped that the development of the three types of eco-logical praxis outlined here [social, mental and environmental ecology] will lead to a reframing and a recomposition of the goals of emancipatory struggles. And let

us hope that, in the context of the new ‘deal’, of the relation between capital and human activity, ecologists, feminists, antiracists etc. will make it an immediate major objective to target the modes of projection of subjectivity, that is of knowledge, culture, sensibility and sociability that come under an incorporeal value system at the root of the new productive assemblages.” Félix Guattari<sup>26</sup>

“This is a workshop and exhibition project for cultural practitioners working with modes of self-empowerment and sustainability. With this project, we will gather people who work with an awareness of how the shaping of livelihoods reflects political, economic, and cultural power structures, and who, through engagement in this subject, have developed positions and strategies of criticality within their praxis. The workshop is open to all participants, not only those explicitly invited, to share their experiences within the field.”<sup>27</sup>

## Transforming Materials via Art

Within art, the recycling of materials or second-hand culture is increasingly treated in the context of growing poverty. With this link – reuse, with the aim of reducing the cost of living – we may posit an increasing need for such goods beyond the world of the arts.

**Köbberling Kaltwasser:** For their works, Folke Köbberling and Martin Kaltwasser use leftover materials from construction sites and waste containers as well as items that were thrown away. From the supposedly worthless, the artist duo builds usable objects. Through installations, exhibitions, and interventions on issues such as publicity, control, self-organization, and informal usages, Köbberling and Kaltwasser question conditions of urban living in times of privatization and economization. In various projects, the artists converted cars into bicycles.

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<sup>26</sup> Félix Guattari on social, mental and environmental ecology in *The Three Ecologies*, 1989.

<sup>27</sup> Documentation at [www.socialmentalenvironmental.net](http://www.socialmentalenvironmental.net) and accompanied by an exhibition at Sparwasser: Offensive for Contemporary Art and Communication in Berlin.



*Piet Hein Eek, Design Furniture From Scrap Wood*<sup>28</sup>

<sup>28</sup> [www.pietheineek.nl](http://www.pietheineek.nl).

**A.R.M. (all recycled material)** is a performative project by Barbara Caveng (Berlin) that explores questions concerning private living environments under conditions of increasing poverty.

“**A.R.M.** explores links between public and private existence, especially in terms of aesthetics, as the expression of individual sensory perception and its design implementation.

**A.R.M.** deals with the cycle of the valuation and devaluation of material goods and labor within society and explores a possible link between the two.

**A.R.M.** uses the garbage of society and recycles it to create objects of individual design.

**A.R.M.** is a contribution to managing a life without money and aims at developing strategies against downward mobility as a result of poverty and unemployment.”<sup>29</sup>

**Kunst-Stoffe Berlin:** is a center founded by artists and craftsmen for the use of leftover products, rubbish, and throw-outs that can be used as “materials for culture.” Materials that had become valueless for their previous owners are collected. They are accessible in the open workshop that is part of the project for non-profit cultural and educational work.<sup>30</sup>

The artist group **Wochenklausur** takes recycling to the next stage: Upcycling. Faced with the (increasingly disappearing) used furniture depots, they generate an aesthetic surplus through design, transformation, and reuse of used objects for concrete needs: What do the soup kitchen, the homeless shelter, distribution centers for free clothing, or similar neighborhood outreach projects need for their work? Solutions are found together with theater workshops that donate their used stage designs and thus save storage costs. What began as a contribution to the exhibition *Beyond Green* (see above) is now continued through an NGO that was founded under the name Material Exchange and consists of employees of the Smart Museum, the art departments at the University of Chicago, the Illinois Institute of Technology, the Harrington College of Design, and representatives of welfare institutions.<sup>31</sup>

Designers, artists, and craftsmen formed **ReUse-Netzwerk**<sup>32</sup> to design objects for everyday practical use from old furniture and leftover stock from industrial production, and thus to significantly reduce the amount of waste. In so doing, they support sheltered workshops. (In Germany alone, each year around seven million tons of furniture are thrown away; according to estimates of the Institut für Umweltforschung around 95 % winds up in the incinerators or at the dump.) The project is realized with the help of the Deutsche Bundesumweltstiftung.

Art here is not just a designer of sustainability: A classical win-win situation is achieved. In more general terms, a use is generated by art, and the use in turn generates art.

<sup>29</sup> [www.a-r-m.net/arm/d/projekt.htm](http://www.a-r-m.net/arm/d/projekt.htm).

<sup>30</sup> [www.kunst-stoffe-berlin.de](http://www.kunst-stoffe-berlin.de).

<sup>31</sup> [www.material-exchange.org](http://www.material-exchange.org).

<sup>32</sup> [www.reuse-net.de](http://www.reuse-net.de).





*Dan Peterman, Installation view civil defense II as exhibition furniture: navy pants, rice, beans, pallets from recycled plastic, photo: ZNE!*

**Dan Peterman** (Chicago), a world-renowned artist whose works are based on using found pieces and designing recycled materials, tirelessly explores the overlaps between art and ecology, taking account of social and economic aspects. His work explores the cause and impact of flowing values, material transformations, and the attempts to understand our material impact on the world. His fame is so far limited to the international art scene; a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability could spread his work and his approach beyond this context.

With their art, **Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla** (US) intervene in the discussion on the development of tourism and environmental protection on the Caribbean island of Vieques near Puerto Rico. Maneuvers carried out by the US military have led to high cancer rates and soil contaminated with lead, uranium, and cadmium. In their video work *Under Discussion*, a table used as motorboat plays a starring role.

The **Recycling Orchestra** of Internationale Gesamtschule Heidelberg learned from developing countries: Faced with a lack of instruments for a school orchestra, they made their own: garbage cans, drainage pipes, cardboard tubes, junk iron, glasses and bottles, file folders, and computer keyboards. Their musical stories deal with the careful treatment of the world and the environment, wind, and water. A Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability could ensure the spread of this knowledge, which could be handed on by schoolchildren and could contribute to another form of learning and action. It could be a practical critique of the dominant PISA policy.



*Allora and Calzadilla, Under Discussion, 2004-2005, video still, courtesy of the artists*



*Recycling Orchestra, photo by Holly Holleber, initiator and director of the orchestra*

## Aesthetics and Sustainability in Public Space

**Prinzessinnengarten by Nomadisch Grün:** Nomadisch Grün launched Prinzessinnengärten<sup>33</sup> as a pilot project in the summer of 2009 at Moritzplatz in Berlin Kreuzberg, a site which had been a wasteland for over half a century. Along with friends, fans, activists, and neighbors, the group cleared away rubbish, built transportable organic vegetable pots using recycled old boxes, rice bags, and Tetra Paks, and reaped the first fruits of their labor.

**Ton Matton (NL)** conceives of public space as a space of production, and understands it as a platform for mediating social crises aesthetically. *Surviving the Suburb* explores the transformation of the Western notion of the city toward a metropolis with a global character. By appropriating new production spaces, informal economies and a chance for survival for the so-called losers of globalization emerges.<sup>34</sup>

**Shrinking Cities and Regions:** Shrinking cities and regions are not only losers of globalization, but also often the starting points for cultural innovations that are equally based on the potentials as well as the failures of these locations. Whether in music, art, architecture, literature, photography, or film, many new developments in popular or high culture come from these crisis regions, thus making essential contributions to new identities and milieus that can be understood as models for action. In the former East Germany, more than 1.3 million residential units are left empty, and there are also hundreds of empty schools and unused childcare centers. How can these spaces be utilized sensibly? Who can be assigned responsibility for these structures, even if only for a limited time? Could they become learning and production sites for schoolchildren with the help of architects and craftspeople in order to educate themselves and learn how to use regenerated energy? School should be transformed in this direction.

In 2002, the Kulturstiftung des Bundes initiated an international research and exhibition program called **Shrinking Cities**. Local teams of artists, architects, filmmakers, journalists, cultural studies experts, and social scientists explored and documented the shrinking of cities such as Detroit, Manchester/Liverpool, Halle/Leipzig, and Ivanovo. The issues gathered in this traveling exhibition stretched from the abandonment of spaces, their reuse and appropriation, changed practices of life and survival, and new forms of labor, to planning alternatives and subcultural inventions.

The Architekturzentrum Wien presented projects by **Rural Studio** in which architectural training is combined with practical and non-profit work, thus presenting the “life-changing power of architecture.” Rural Studio was founded by two architecture professors in Hale County, Alabama, a region with a poverty rate of almost 40 %. Since the 1990s, students have been building simple single family homes, community centers, churches, and sport centers for and with the

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33 [prinzessinnengarten.net](http://prinzessinnengarten.net).

34 [www.mattonoffice.org](http://www.mattonoffice.org).



*Temporary gardens: Prinzessinnengarten by Nomadisch Grün, photo: Marco Claussen, Nomadisch Grün*

underprivileged residents, using donated, reusable materials like railroad ties, bricks, building timber, tires, bales of hay, bottles, and corrugated cardboard. To date, 20 buildings have been erected in this way. “Using their own imagination and efforts, the students are able to create a different reality: architecturally, socially, politically, ecologically, and aesthetically. That is the mission of Rural Studio.”<sup>35</sup>

<sup>35</sup> Samuel Mockbee, see [www.ruralstudios.com](http://www.ruralstudios.com) and the press release of Architekturzentrum Wien, March 5, 2003. The philosophy of Rural Studies is: “1. To give students of the School of Architecture the opportunity to learn the critical skills of planning, designing, and building in a concrete, practical, and socially responsible manner. 2. To form leadership qualities in students by instilling the social ethics of professionalism, volunteerism, individual responsibility, and community service. 3. To help communities, through partnerships with the state and local welfare agencies, provide suitable and dignified housing. 4. To develop materials, methods, and technologies that will house the rural poor in dignity and mitigate the effects of poverty upon rural living condition.”



In the framework of Shrinking Cities, the **Xpona group** in Leipzig began the interactive Internet project *Exchange in Post Nation*, which explores the non-monetary exchange of abilities and knowledge as well as ideas about appropriating existing spaces, structures, and stations: in a word, it offers self-help and networks the participants with existing bartering systems. Here, artistic practices are combined with social movements.

**SEAS:** The many cultural events in a Europe of 27 cannot avoid the fact that the citizens of the individual countries know very little of one another. Complex, multifaceted, multilingual, site-specific cultural projects are a way of creating a new European consciousness, providing insights into parallel and dissimilar realities in Europe, and increasing the intercultural competences and sensibility of artists and audiences alike. The SEAS project explores parallels and differences in Europe's port cities in the post-industrial age. How does public space change when the work that once defined a location's identity has disappeared in the process of post-industrialization? Since 2003, over 60 artists and participants from more than 13 European countries – in combination with local experts of urban development and the environmental sciences – have explored this question using the languages of theater, dance, music, design, video art, web art,

photography, and literature. SEAS<sup>36</sup> tackles the issue of the privatization of the urban landscape. The artistic projects develop counter-strategies, in which they include residents, politicians, and local government workers to sensitize them to the shortsightedness of goals that are merely economically motivated. Unlike the respective policies of the individual cities, which delegate the design of developments on site to project developers that are structurally identical – Gdansk, for example, sold its entire harbor to a private development corporation for just € 1 – the artists force public debates about the future of the cities in question. We could even say that an international group of artists replaced paralyzed local policymakers. The synergy effects of the project, though, were insufficiently funded – no environmental foundation ever felt responsible.

**Intercultural Gardens:** The story goes that Bosnian refugee women provided the initial inspiration for an intercultural garden in Göttingen. In response to what they most missed about their homeland, many answered “My garden.” Naturally, intercultural gardens for refugees and migrants from different ethnic-cultural backgrounds mean more than just nutrition, occupational therapy, and creativity: They become a metaphor for the possibility of being able to take root. Through simple shared activities, the exchange of knowledge, the handing down of traditional planting methods and recipes, the participants form practical bonds in creative action. It seems that it is this very dialectic of rediscovery and relocating one’s own cultural repertoire in relation to the other triggers learning about self-appropriation and appropriation of the world.

The gardens themselves are examples of reclaiming public space by way of its re-cultivation, by producing food, and, with some luck, several jobs and creating a productive use of time since there is an excess of unemployment and – in the case of refugees – no work permits. The combination of all these factors makes intercultural gardens privileged locations for the creation of intercultural or transcultural knowledge and the lived approach toward an aesthetic of sustainability.

In the meantime, more than 80 such gardens have emerged in Germany, and the concept can be transferred with minimal effort and costs to every village, every neighborhood, and every city. All that is needed is the collaboration with government officials in various areas: social and integration policy, urban planning, and the planning of open spaces in a process involving the people.

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36 SEAS, Chris Torch, see [www.intercult.se](http://www.intercult.se).



*LURI.watersystems, Spree 2011 (3 D visualisation by Sven Flechtenhar @ Luri)*

**Spree 2011:** 7 % of Berlin's surface area consists of water, but there are no places to swim in the city center – leisure activity usually ends at the shoreline. The project Spree 2011 set the goal of making the Spree a river fit for swimming again. It uses a new technology – unique in the world and applicable elsewhere – against the most important polluter of the Spree: untreated mixed water. Until now, through sewer overflow it was washed into the Spree after strong rainfall, but in this project, it would be captured in containers located beneath public pontoons in the water.

The development of a prototype was delayed for years as it was unclear what administrative unit was responsible. This is hard to understand in light of the many advantages: the creation of jobs, an exportable technology, a reduction in traffic by creating urban leisure areas, reclaiming the river, and the improvement of life quality. The prototype will be finished in spring 2012.

## **Aesthetics and Sustainability in the Realm of Science and Research**

Elite universities, top research, Bologna process, and tuition fees frame current debates about the reform of both academic and artistic higher education, rather than questions about the conditions of research and science in a period of global transformation and the resulting changes for the foundations of our way of life and living conditions. Sustainability has not been named a criterion of excellence – not yet, at least. Still, institutions of higher education are not encouraged to be

laboratories, future workshops, and cultural sites for the development of sustainability on all levels, nor to understand themselves as social actors, as multipliers, predestined to be “potential pioneers of sustainability” (Davide Briocchi).<sup>37</sup> How could students contribute to making institutions of higher education places that promote the future viability of society, lifestyles, and – not least – our ways of thinking?

## Sustainability Poses Different Tasks for University Teaching and Research

We need institutions of higher education that have a passion to expand their own space into the socially relevant, which means claiming effectiveness. Institutions of higher education need to adapt their structures to creative research, which – according to the philosopher and theorist of science Jürgen Mittelstraß – “moves ever more clearly out of the cores of disciplines and subjects” toward the margins. They need to let the lines between the disciplines “become ever more ‘fluid,’” and the humanities must see their disciplinary competence in the service of “transdisciplinary cultural understanding.”<sup>38</sup>

Günther Bachmann, managing director of the German Council for Sustainable Development, warns: “To make progress in the realm of sustainability policy, we need to overcome the mutual suspicion between science and politics. All too often, the basic pattern still remains: Where research is (still) being done, no action needs to be taken. Research cannot allow itself to be influenced by politics.”<sup>39</sup>

We need institutions of higher education that dare to venture creatively into the vacuum of thought and action, generated by policymaking that only eyes elections, in order to face the dynamics of the “big questions.” We need institutions of higher education that seek – as part of the enlargement of their horizon of action – not just a collaboration with the arts, but also with social movements, NGOs, agenda initiatives, etc. There are several encouraging examples of universities that think out of the box.

**Internationale Frauenuniversität für Technik und Kultur (ifu):** The foundation for *Rethinking University*, a program held in summer 2000 for 100 days at the EXPO in Hannover, was the recognition that socially relevant and transformative global problems can no longer be treated and adequately solved within limited disciplines. Classical binaries of objective/subjective, scientific/non-scientific,

37 See Davide Brocchi, [www.cultura21.org/journal/2007/Bestandaufnahme\\_Hochschulinitiativen\\_Sustainability\\_C21.pdf](http://www.cultura21.org/journal/2007/Bestandaufnahme_Hochschulinitiativen_Sustainability_C21.pdf) and Katina Kuhn/Marco Rieckmann (ed.), *Wi(e)der die Armut? Positionen zu den Millenniumszielen der Vereinten Nationen* (Frankfurt/Main, 2006), 16; see also the concept of the Regional Center of Expertise, United Nations University.

38 Jürgen Mittelstraß, «Thesenpapier für die Jahrestagung der philosophischen Vereinigung», Berlin, September 2005.

39 Günther Bachmann, «Erfahrungen aus der Sustainabilitypolitik und Ansprüche an die Forschung», [www.sustainabilitysrat.de/service/download/beitraege/2006/Vortrag\\_Bachmann\\_S%C3%96F\\_07-06-06.pdf](http://www.sustainabilitysrat.de/service/download/beitraege/2006/Vortrag_Bachmann_S%C3%96F_07-06-06.pdf).



East/West, South/North, prevent multidisciplinary approaches. The transcultural, gender-oriented, and interdisciplinary orientation of the Internationale Frauenuniversität (ifu) was based on different forms of knowledge – artistic, scientific, traditional – brought into an exciting and mutually inspiring relationship. From the very beginning teaching methods were developed internationally, conceived rigorously and interculturally and across the disciplines, and, instead of being divided into standard departments or faculties, combined into project fields of worldwide social relevance and political explosiveness: work, water, body, migration, city, and information. The ifu established shared forms of teaching and learning of art and science in each of these six fields of exploration – and it made the astonishing discovery that artistic ways of working in cases of conflict between high technologies of water treatment and the inclusion of traditional and ritual knowledge on water use formed the bridge between African, Asian, and European participants.

The fact that the ifu was a German initiative could and should have had great importance for the German education debate. But the power and momentum of this successful experiment were not used toward the founding of an international consortium, i.e. this model did not become a project of the Federal Ministry of Research.

Ever since 2004, **Universität Lüneburg** has been developing a model for “sustainable development of an institution of higher learning” and has established a program for sustainability located in the department of Environmental Communication. The goal is to establish an interdisciplinary culture of work and research through a participative process. Since 2011, and beginning with a conference on the subjects of creativity, cultural funding, and sustainability, the university has been expanding its explorations into the fields of aesthetics and sustainability.<sup>40</sup> The participation of 250 international experts illustrates the interest in these links. A Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability could support such model study programs by way of individual projects, or with the help of other foundations (Stifterverband, Bertelsmann Stiftung, Bucerius, etc.), which could create foundation-funded professorships for aesthetics and sustainability.

**Healing Houses, England:** Healing Houses, as its name and concept suggest, is dedicated to new approaches for designing and organizing health systems. The project was prompted by the **Performing Art Labs Foundation (PAL)**, whose approach is to bring together artists and scientists from areas such as film, media, technology, and architecture, the fine and performing arts, as well as academic research and teaching in laboratories. The method of the laboratory is holistic. The individual is the focus of attention not just as an object of his/her illness, but also as a subject who perceives and reacts through his or her senses – seeing, hearing, feeling, sensing, tasting, smelling. The object of study is the role of perception, of sensation during the process of illness and healing. The collaboration of various disciplines with different points of access to the various fields

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<sup>40</sup> [www.uni-lueneburg.de/studienprogramm/seiten/3\\_sustuni.htm](http://www.uni-lueneburg.de/studienprogramm/seiten/3_sustuni.htm).

of knowledge, action, and constraints allows for solutions that acknowledge the patients' complexities.

To date, PAL has built over 90 of these laboratories, bringing together over 3,000 writers, artists, scientists, teachers, and engineers. For the project Healing Houses, PAL joined with the National Endowment for Science, Technology, and the Arts (NESTA). As a state institution, NESTA supports what in Germany is still not considered as relevant by political decision-makers: an improvement in the climate of creativity in order for it to function as a catalyst, thereby "helping the UK fulfill its potential."<sup>41</sup>

**Artists in Labs:** There are rare initiatives by art foundations that bring together artists and scientists in shared laboratories for learning, research, and innovation processes, and that explore the methodic commonalities and differences between art and science using concrete case studies. **Artists in Labs (AIL)** in Switzerland, or **Artists in Labs** in Saxony-Anhalt, fund fellowships for twelve and two artists respectively in scientific laboratories. "Beyond the usual borders between art and science, Kunststiftung Sachsen-Anhalt seeks to open a space for thought and action that makes it equally possible for artists and scientists to search for shared or contrary interests and to mutually inspire one another. In the best of cases, the look from the outside on the other form of knowledge and cognition can open new levels of perception and creativity."<sup>42</sup>

The search for interpretations of nature, material, and human desires as well as the interest in understanding, discovering, creating, and developing sustainable new ideas are the goals of the Swiss program.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> [www.nesta.org.uk](http://www.nesta.org.uk).

<sup>42</sup> [www.kunststiftung-sachsen-anhalt.de](http://www.kunststiftung-sachsen-anhalt.de).

<sup>43</sup> [www.artistsinlabs.ch](http://www.artistsinlabs.ch).

**Erste Feldstudie im Umfeld von Schweizer Atomanlagen  
Gösgen und Leibstadt 1988**

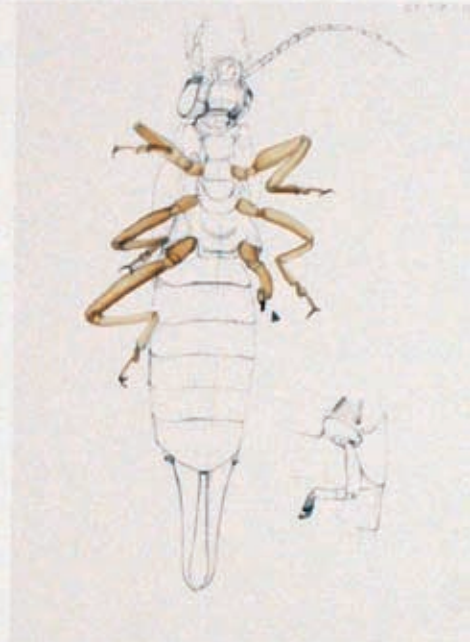
**Field Study in the Environs of Swiss Nuclear Power Plant  
Gösgen and Leibstadt 1988**

1988 sammelte die Künstlerin Wanzen rund um die Schweizer Atomkraftwerke Gösgen und Leibstadt im Kanton Aargau. An den verschiedenen Standorten sammelte sie damals unterschiedlich viele Wanzen und andere Insekten. Sie war erschüttert über die vielen geschädigten Individuen und entschied sich diese Arbeit fortzusetzen.

In 1988, the artist collected true bugs and other insects around the Swiss nuclear power plants Gösgen and Leibstadt in the canton of Aargau. She did not at that time collect the same number of insects at the different research points. Nonetheless, she was horrified by the heavy deformation she found and decided to go on with this research.



Die Flügel dieser Weichwanze aus Rohr sind ungleich lang.  
The wings of this soft bug from Rohr are asymmetrical.



Das linke Hinterbein (rechte Seite) ist geschädigt.  
The left hind leg (right side) is misshapen.



Kopf einer Weichwanze aus Schönenwerd. Aus dem Auge wächst eine Zyste und die Facetten sind unregelmäßig und zum Teil zu groß.

Head of a soft bug from Schönenwerd. A growth out of the left eye and disturbance of the facets are visible.



Cerci von zwei Ohrwürmern aus Gösgen, der Linke des linken Ohrwurms ist deformiert.

Cerci of two earwigs from Gösgen, the left cerci of the left earwig is deformed.



Skorpionfliege aus Reuental. Beide Flügel auf der rechten Seite sind deformiert. Das Abdomen ist mit verschobenen Segmenten aufgeblasen.

Scorpionfly from Reuental. Both wings on the right side are deformed and the abdomen looks blown up and deformed.



Gartenwanze aus Küssaberg Deutschland. Die Blase mit dem schwarzen Auswuchs verändert die Form des Halsschildes.

Garden bug from Küssaberg, Germany. The cyst with the black outgrowth changes the shape of the pronotum.

*Cornelia Hesse-Honegger, Heteroptera – Images of a Mutant World, presentation view, photo: ZNE!*

**Cornelia Hesse-Honegger:** As a scientific illustrator and knowledge artist, Cornelia Hesse Honegger<sup>44</sup> worked for the Zoological Institute of Zurich University for 25 years. Her images of insects are exhibited internationally at museums and galleries. In the border zone between art and science, they are testimonies of a beautiful, yet endangered environment. Since the nuclear accident at Chernobyl in 1986, Cornelia Hesse-Honegger has studied and drawn morphologically damaged insects from the surroundings of nuclear plants. Her studies also illustrate the contamination of nature through radioactive fallout in true bugs (*Heteroptera*) and plants in the surroundings of Swiss nuclear power plants and international nuclear plants.



*Jae Rhim Lee, Infinity Burial Project, installation view, photo: ZNE!*

**Jae Rhim Lee:** The *Infinity Burial Project*<sup>45</sup> is a proposal for an alternative burial system that challenges cultural attitudes of death denial and environmental degradation inherent in contemporary funeral practices. The project features the Infinity Mushroom, a future hybrid mushroom that will 1) decompose bodies, 2) remediate the industrial toxins in bodies, and 3) deliver nutrients to plant roots. The Infinity Mushroom will be incorporated into a series of Burial Suits. The first prototype of the Infinity Burial Suit is a body suit embroidered with thread infused with mushroom spores. The completed Burial System will convert corpses into useable biomethane gas and clean compost. A Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability could establish fellowships in these areas of research.

<sup>44</sup> [www.wissenskunst.ch](http://www.wissenskunst.ch).

<sup>45</sup> [infinityburialproject.com/](http://infinityburialproject.com/).

## Aesthetics and Sustainability in the Dialog of Cultures

“Globalization needs intercultural competence in the dialog between the cultures,” as the Tutzinger Manifesto and the conference *Give Europe a Soul* pronounced in 2004. “For a promising role of Europeans in the world, it seems to us essential that we make culture a foundation of their politics. Europe’s contribution to the dialog of cultures and religions consists in building bridges to other cultures, especially the Islamic world. The foreign policy of Europe is also far from doing its best when its work is not based on Europe’s cultural strengths.”<sup>46</sup>

We need a foreign policy that goes beyond greetings, prize ceremonies, and budget debates to declare that culture is the third column alongside political and economic relations. We need a foreign policy that takes concrete political action to prove that it has recognized the value of the arts and sciences. Such action needs to be peace-securing, sustainable, and up to date and it has to make full use of its specific possibilities to prevent and stop violent forms of conflict and to engage with fundamentalisms.

For this, surprisingly, a good example is an initiative of the former German Minister of Defense, Peter Struck. Sensitized by reports on the minimal awareness of German soldiers in Kosovo in general and their inability to deal with women who had experienced violence and were traumatized, he asked the bestseller author **Siba Shakib** to instruct Bundeswehr troops in Afghanistan. The filmmaker and writer of the book *Nach Afghanistan kam Gott nur zum Weinen* accompanied soldiers, officers, and commanders on site in their conversations and patrols for an extended period. In the barracks, Shakib told of the traditions and morality, the culture and history of Afghanistan, the relationship between the genders, and the religions and taboos. She was thus following Resolution 1325, unanimously ratified by the UN Security Council in 2000, that calls for a greater participation of women on all levels in avoiding, mastering, and ending conflicts on an institutional level.

Germany’s foreign and defense policy needs to ensure a comprehensive awareness of problems in all these fields of conflict that manifest themselves on all levels: between ethnic groups, between genders, between religions, between clans. People informed about the country and the language need to be consulted: cultural specialists and religion experts who speak the language(s), psychologists, urban planners, engineers, doctors, and special experts like Siba Shakib, who, with their professional expertise, can teach about the situation on site. This could be called a fluidization or sustainability.

The **Talent Campus at the Berlinale** not only promotes filmic talents from around the world with a five-day festival, but also places importance on establishing regional networks beyond Western standards to build up contacts and cooperation with NGOs and film professionals from all areas. In Africa, cinema has an outstanding social importance for the formation of identity and is neces-

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46 [www.berlinerkonferenz.eu/299.0.html](http://www.berlinerkonferenz.eu/299.0.html).

sary for sensitization to vitally important subjects like education, health, and natural resources. What is necessary here is comparatively minimal support for a long-term establishment of networks, which cannot be achieved with the standard funding criteria of foundations and ministries.

**West-Eastern Divan Orchestra:** “We need to listen to each other’s stories,” says **Daniel Barenboim**, Argentinean-Israeli pianist, conductor, and citizen of the world. That is the briefest way to describe the many years of dialog he shared with **Edward Said**, the Palestinian writer and scholar who died in 2003. Their dialog was a continuous conversation about the mutual impacts arts, society, politics, and friendship have on one another. In 1999, as a visible and audible expression of their ideas, they created the workshop West-Eastern Divan Orchestra. Since then, each summer the orchestra has brought together Israeli and Arab youth – beyond political and religious barriers – to rehearse, for concerts, and for conversations. In areas, where politics creates speechlessness, individuals can be moved by shared artistic endeavor.

**Exchange of Taboos:** Finding shared commonalities in one another is something that is also pursued by Jochen Gerz’s project *Tausch der Tabus* in Duisburg. He invited representatives from eight religions to answer the question “Can you represent the object of your search?” Catholics, Mormons, Protestants, Freemasons, Jews, Muslims, atheists, and Buddhists participated. Their answers are permanently placed on glass plates, without indication of authorship, outside locations of worship of one of the other beliefs. “The unfamiliar answer at the site of our own belief challenges the reader to locate the Other within themselves.”<sup>47</sup>

**ADOPTED**<sup>48</sup> is a project to find sponsoring families from Africa, Asia, and South America for Europeans in need since 1997. By reversing usual perceptions, Gudrun F. Widlok responded to the numerous organizations that promote sponsorships for African children. The focus is on the riches the countries of the South have to give rather than their poverty. What began as a concept of challenging traditional notions became real through the huge response from visitors. All ADOPTED contacts were established by the artist herself at no cost and without bureaucratic go-betweens.

**Tsunami in the Indian Ocean:** Recall the New Year’s speech of 2005, in which German Chancellor Gerhard Schröder not only sketched out how the German federal government was going to respond to the tsunami disaster in South Asia, but directly requested the help of the German federal states, cities, municipalities, villages, and individuals. The success of his call could be quickly seen: Only a few days later the initiative “Germany helps,” had collected € 25 million. The result is all the more impressive considering that the fear-driven Hartz-IV debate on reforming unemployment insurance had just reached its first climax. Does this experience not indicate that people, when personally addressed, are ready to make greater sacrifices? Could the disenchantment with politic(ian)s not better

<sup>47</sup> [www.duisburger-akzente.de/archiv\\_2006/de/veranstaltung.php](http://www.duisburger-akzente.de/archiv_2006/de/veranstaltung.php).

<sup>48</sup> [www.adopted.de](http://www.adopted.de)

be described as annoyance about not being asked? In the case of the tsunami disaster, the idea of participation was contagious; people heard loud and clear that they were needed – and they reacted accordingly.

But what did the government do with all that empathy and readiness? Have we heard of any further political initiatives in the spirit of sustainability and of using our capacities? Was anything more than money ever desired? Are we aware of the calls of aid organizations or the German job centers to enact on a broader basis what the Universität Göttingen has initiated in an exemplary way – namely, sending academics, technicians, and other practitioners to the region to work together on the most important areas of knowledge and action? Is it not time that the job centers link up with aid organizations and NGOs – not only for catastrophes – as quickly as possible to send meaningful assistance? It is clear that there are many unemployed academics who would immediately use their ability and knowledge to meet such existential challenges – and thus receive further training at the same time. In addition to a moment of solidarity, it would also give this country the optimism that something is being done with all the scientific, scholarly, and imaginative knowledge available, and in this way unemployment could be reduced. This collaboration would be truly sustainable because it would activate unused social and economically relevant potentials.

## **Needs to Engage With New Forms of Labor Learning From Art: Self-Mandate Instead of Compulsion**

We live in an interim period: On the one hand, there are large-scale political solutions that react monothematically and rather helplessly to the continuous loss of classical wage labor, on the other there is a significant increase in jobs in the creative realm, in the third sector, in NGOs. This means there is an economic and social basis to a society that wants something more, something different than the management of scarcity.

At issue is not just the creation of new jobs, at issue are sustainability, meaningfulness, and individual participation in change, plural life forms that, as a whole, move society and lead to a plural economy (Rudolf zur Lippe). To achieve the fluidization of cultural, social, and economic factors, a climate is needed that makes it possible to experiment and grants enough time so that things can develop. Other organizational models of work are also required. It is the perspective of a society that strives to generate its own conditions.

**go create™ resistance:** Under the shadow of the Iraq War and the large-scale globalization processes and the changing political climate – globally and locally – Matthias von Hartz, director and curator at the Hamburg Schauspielhaus between 2002 and 2005, created a forum for artists, academics, and political activists. They were invited to develop strategies of resistance in reaction to the question: What do people do with their time in a globalized world without labor, future, utopia, and the chance of resistance? The discussion series led to the founding of the **Bundesagentur für Zeit** (Federal Agency for Time).

It is such new alliances – from a Network for Urban Research and Action (INURA) through to the chief economist of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) to local bartering rings – that, in exchange with art, generate social relevance. These formats are no longer entirely ephemeral: go create™ resistance was funded by the Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung und the Kulturstiftung des Bundes and was held in Germany's largest subsidized theater. All the same, this form of permeability is far from self-evident, let alone sustainable.

In the framework of the exhibition *Shrinking Cities: Interventions*, the artist group **WochenKlausur** developed a model for people to self-design one-euro jobs. Together with unemployment activists, neighborhood management associations, and the alumni association of the Universität Leipzig, recipients of ALG II (minimal unemployment support) were invited to develop their own ideas for one-euro jobs. The projects realized: a pool offering technical assistance to senior citizens in using new technologies; a group that organizes readings, art workshops, and exhibitions in culturally barren neighborhoods; and a café for small, non-profit events. After an application by WochenKlausur and tough negotiations with the Leipzig job center, these first four pilot projects were financed and the possibility for similar follow-up projects was guaranteed. In so doing, ALG II recipients were enabled to use their qualifications and their personal, professional interests of development. In the wake of the booming art and knowledge market, increasing numbers of artists and graduates are living in increasingly precarious circumstances. According to the Künstlersozialkasse (Germany's social insurance system for artists), in 2006, the average annual income of artists declined from € 11,000 to € 9,800, and 400,000 graduates are forced to take one-euro jobs. The urgent question is how the job centers can be brought to change the paradigm of their policy from authoritarian allocation to productive self-design of those who are qualified.

It should be possible to apply with a social, ecological, health, or neighborhood project. To decide on such applications should not be the task of an overtaxed official but of an interdisciplinary jury. This could be the most lasting form of sustainability, for it would account for the radically changing life and work activities of people as well as for cuts in public funding for individual initiatives.



## Sustainable Learning

*I hear and I forget.  
I see and I remember.  
I do and I understand.*

*Confucius*

Sustainability needs new forms of learning. Aesthetic education means sensitive, perceptive, creative education, which, in the words of Hannah Arendt, culminates in creative action. This enables children and young people to do what will be demanded of them in the future: generate a creative approach to a loss of traditional structures that includes finding and inventing new life and work activities. We claim that neither experts nor schools currently meet that demand.

The way most public schools today operate allows neither space for aesthetics nor for sustainability. At the moment, the standard German school targets primarily the frontal lobe of the brain in 45-minute slots and is poor in terms of engaging the senses – bodiless and decontextualized. The grades given by PISA experts for German schools could not be any worse, but those responsible react to the alarm signals with a policy of more of the (bad) same.

As we know, aesthetic education is overshadowed by the PISA criteria that focus on cognitive abilities and are directed at “learning comprehension.” The neurobiologist Wolf Singer not only observes great deficits in the realm of the creative disciplines of dance, music, design, drawing, but also in the conveyance of mimics and gestures. These means of expression, he explains, are of invaluable importance “in dialog, in decoding what moves others.”

To liberate these blocked energies, Rudolf zur Lippe argues, schools need to be radically changed, otherwise the work with and by artists remains merely additive or compensatory. Aesthetic education targets competence and the penetration of fields of knowledge and practice – sensory consciousness.

Today, in high schools in Germany, 24 % of physical education classes are cancelled: This affects primarily those attending *Hauptschule* – the lowest tier of the three-tiered German secondary school system. Today, in primary schools, half (!) of those teaching have no training in sport. Today, in this age group, motor skills and a positive attitude toward sports are withering.<sup>49</sup> Today in the *Gymnasium* (top tier), 34 % of the music classes are cancelled; in *Hauptschule* and *Realschule* (middle tier) 63 %; in special education programs, 98 %. Today only 18 % of the elementary school teachers are trained in music. Today, at the same

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49 Wolf-Dieter Brettschneider, quoted in *Berliner Zeitung*, July 6, 2005. The study of Deutscher Sportbund on school sport, published in summer 2005, concludes that not only the amount of physical education, but also its quality needs to be increased. Physical education ignores all modern sports and “runs the danger of becoming a museum for traditional sports.”

time, 90,000 pupils are on the waiting lists of public music schools.<sup>50</sup> Today we know that 50 % of current music teachers will be retired by 2015. And today we have many musicians, who, if employed at all, often earn very poorly. Today, art teaching is lacking at comparable levels, or is provided in a poor fashion.

Today the artists in all disciplines are noticing that new audiences do not grow automatically. Today the literature festivals, the theaters, and museums are seeing the curiosity and energy with which pupils are eager to express themselves. Artists should be able to apply with projects and their practical knowledge across all curricula and years and without substitute teacher training, without the usual admission procedures. They should simply be paid for the project work they supply and work in cooperation with one of the school insiders.

The “Society of Culture” relies on the creativity that each child has before winding up in a training that weakens this very ability in the name of filling him/her with knowledge without application.

Thus, the school needs to bring in “third parties” – artists and other experts of sensual expression and life activity – as well as thinking in terms of projects. Knowledge is not only visible in grades, but also needs experience, experimentation, and passion. With their Education Project, Simon Rattle and the Berlin Philharmonic together with choreographer Royston Maldoom have shown, what amazing results can come about with passion instead of didacticism: the transformative ability of hundreds of children. *Rhythm Is It*, the film that came out of this project, has become extremely popular and shown sustained impact in follow-up projects. Its holistic impact – both individually and for the whole class – has already been described above.

Learning successes are not just crowned by way of grades, but culminate in public presentations and applause. This helps children develop their sensual perceptions and encourages them to act confidently on their own.

In light of the fact that we have a dramatic increase in youth diabetes and alarming numbers of children are not able to walk backwards or stand on one leg, we have to consider alliances with health insurance companies, who have a primary interest in the agility of schoolchildren.

**Über Lebenskunst.Schule:**<sup>51</sup> Young people are the architects of the future. To help them design a future worth living in, Über Lebenskunst has launched an educational program that aims to strengthen their skills and creativity. The program Über Lebenskunst.Schule, developed in cooperation with the Institut Futur at the Freie Universität Berlin, is the first to gather artistic strategies based on the concept of Education for Sustainable Development (ESD). Eighteen selected artists and cultural professionals from all over Germany will complete a ten-module teacher qualification course that will prepare them for their project work with schoolchildren. In cooperation with the partner schools, they will

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<sup>50</sup> Press release, Verband Deutscher Musikschulen, March 25, 2004.

<sup>51</sup> [www.ueber-lebenskunst.org/schule](http://www.ueber-lebenskunst.org/schule)

develop cultural and sustainability projects that were already introduced at the festival *Über Lebenskunst* in August 2011.

## **Sustainability Must Be Built on a Foundation of the Senses**

How wonderful it would be if all-day teaching would not take place in the same boring room as in the morning, but rather, if schoolchildren, in collaboration with architects and other “third parties” could build the necessary spaces using socially extant knowledge (for example, the recyclability of prefab housing, use of empty spaces and ruins). What if they could create their own energy (solar collectors using two-liter plastic bottles,<sup>52</sup> self-made wind energy<sup>53</sup>)? And what if what they learned in their physics classes could be experienced in practically through creative actions?

In addition to all these conceivable participants – that is, professionals from the realms of art, sports, and science from outside the school who are needed for this collective effort – people from youth, social, cultural, and health administrations are essential. All their knowledge, questions, and financial possibilities at present compartmentalized in countless budgetary items have to be joined in order to transform the school system. Fluidizations are required in order to have a sustainable impact.

## **Aesthetic Sustainability Aims to Create Linkages**

All of these initiatives borne by enthusiasm suffer from the fact that no single political department feels responsible. In politics, thinking takes place according to departments and realms of authority; there is no overarching responsibility that can be seen. Hubert Weinzierl knows this all too well: “Sustainability education today does not go beyond a few good projects. Good individual approaches are not made visible. They are far from becoming an educational standard. The eco-social knowledge and abilities of schoolchildren and trainees, but also of teachers, is not supported or demanded.”<sup>54</sup>

The Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability could become a motor for development and an open space of opportunity for including experts; experimental models could influence an educational policy that needs to be changed radically.

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52 In Brazil, a Vienna solar expert is installing solar collectors made of two-liter plastic bottles.

53 “Die Erneuerbaren” and “Wilder Wind” in schools: the school project “Wilder Wind (Wild Wind)” was expanded in cooperation with the Österreichischer Biomasse-Verband and Austria Solar. The workshop entitled “Die Erneuerbaren (The Renewables)” lasts three to four hours and is offered primarily to fourth graders; see [www.igwindkraft.at/kinder/index.php](http://www.igwindkraft.at/kinder/index.php).

54 Hubert Weinzierl, *Gute Fragen: Bildungspolitik und Sustainability*, May 2003, [www.sustainabilitysrat.de/service/download/pdf/Beitrag\\_Weinzierl\\_Gute\\_Fragen\\_05-03.pdf](http://www.sustainabilitysrat.de/service/download/pdf/Beitrag_Weinzierl_Gute_Fragen_05-03.pdf)

Two formats developed by artists can be expanded under the motto of sustainability:

The project **Schwarzmarkt für Nützliches Wissen und Nicht-Wissen** (Black Market for Useful Knowledge and Non-Knowledge), developed by Hannah Hurtzig, a curator for performance art, is conceived as research about learning and unlearning, in which narrative formats of knowledge transfer are tried out and presented. The installation imitates familiar sites of learning, like the archive and the reading room, combined with situations of communication familiar from consulting and service dialogs. Characteristic is the one-on-one situation: All visitors have an expert available to them for 30 minutes.

Similar to the idea of an archive or a collection of knowledge, **Wörterbuch des Krieges** (Dictionary of War) also operates as a collaborative platform for creating concepts. At the center of this project conceived by Multitude e.V. are key concepts that have, until now, been neglected or need to be created, invented, assembled. For finding and presenting these terms, formats such as excursions, conferences, blogs, interviews, films, photography, and essays are used. The definition of the concept is not left just to the so-called experts, writers, philosophers, or artists, but is understood as a collaborative process.



Heterotopia everywhere,  
(original: *Utopia*,  
Klaus Heid; editing:  
Morgengrün)

## Sustainability Requires a Social Vision: The Society of Culture

The “Society of Culture” that defines itself as operating on the basis of sustainability cannot do without the arts and sciences: thinking in transitions, provisions, models, and projects can be learned from them. In order to broaden its social possibilities, it needs a counterpart in politics that shares these sustainability goals. It is possible that we will soon see that working in projects is the form of existence appropriate for the current day and age, as it can be combined with

other life activities. The collective challenge consists in inventing other forms of continuities, other mixtures of continuity and variation in labor.

We may speak of a **space of opportunity for aesthetics and sustainability**:

- when the resource of creativity is no longer understood as a product, but as a source that is available in everybody, so that they are not kept from developing it;
- when the independent transformations in society are truly attributed a power of their own;
- when they could be entrusted with bringing to the midst of society what they have long effected on the margins;
- when questions of sustainability are finally linked to aesthetics.

Were this the case, the issue would no longer be a call to the good, the reasonable, the renunciative in humans, but rather to their active and creative abilities. Were this the case, we would be at the beginning of a process that values people comprehensively, individually, socially, economically, and socially – not by divorcing self-realization as a leisure-time activity, but making it socially relevant and effective in various forms of economic activity.

If the imploding welfare state, which seeks to foist off its unfinished tasks on society, would give society the tools and room for creativity, then we would be at the start of a cultural society in which the social could finally be actually shaped. Only when this is the case, can we speak of sustainability in a comprehensive sense.

## Summary

- Aesthetic sustainability targets the creation of linkages.
- Sustainability needs to be built on a foundation of the senses.
- Sustainability needs new forms of learning.
- Sustainability has to deal with new forms of labor.
- Sustainability poses new tasks for university teaching and research.
- Sustainability needs to combine knowledge, experience, and action.
- Sustainability means generating permeability.

This concept is meant as a step toward exploring the previously neglected dimension of the cultural in order to develop an **aesthetic practice of sustainability** as indicated by the term “productive action” (Hannah Arendt).

Thus, we need a fund – the Aesthetics and Sustainability Fund – that encourages artistic interventions in the realm of sustainability for expanded social use. Ideally, it would be borne by several foundations and would have interdisciplinary commissions/juries.

The goal is to overcome the ineffective, resource-wasting coexistence of partial publics and segment funding, to create a space of possibility for initiatives of collaborations between NGOs and artistic approaches. This would encourage

participatory modes of working and, thus, make the resulting explorations accessible to a broader public.

Projects could be encouraged that contribute to a different form of learning and action, and to a practical critique of the dominant PISA policy.

Model study programs could be supported, or, in combination with other foundations (e.g., Stifterverband, Bertelsmann Stiftung, ZEIT-Stiftung Ebelin und Gerd Bucerius, Stiftung Mercator, and others), temporary foundation professorships for aesthetics and sustainability could be funded.

The Fund could also award fellowships in this specific field of research.

# APPENDIX

*The following considerations are based on the award criteria applied by the Hauptstadtkulturfonds.*

## **Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability**

The Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability will be used to support individual artistic projects, subject-based projects, and events as well as fellowships that have a national and international presence, are especially innovative, and are based on sustainability by exemplarily pointing beyond themselves. By promoting current cultural and artistic projects, the Fund is intended to contribute to initiating, taking up, and reinforcing a dialog on aesthetics and sustainability that is transregional and international in impact.

### **Funding Criteria**

Small and large projects will be funded: innovative approaches that contribute to the debate on sustainability and aesthetics and develop it further. Concepts from all artistic disciplines will be considered as well as transdisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and subject-based projects. Decisive for the selection is quality in thematic and artistic terms.

Applicants can include natural and juristic persons from Germany and elsewhere, and regional, national, and international cooperation partnerships are possible and desired. The realization of the project is to take place in cooperation with an institution/organization.

Within the Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability, a concrete project on the basis of an artistic idea can also be funded. If development is promising, the funding of a subsequent project in this “workshop program” is also possible.

### **Excluded Projects**

Institutional funding over several years is excluded if an organization is not willing to warrant contractually that the project will be continued (for example, a foundation professorship). For projects from the South, it will be necessary to consider exceptions to this so through that minimal funding for ongoing infrastructural costs such projects can be enabled.

Financing will not be provided to ongoing projects or events, or those directly following one another. As a rule, institutions and individuals can only be funded every three years.

In case of a subsequent commercial use of the project, the funding should ideally be returned to the Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability.

## Administration of the Fund

The Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability will have an office and a curator. The administration of the projects is not to take up more than 10% of the Fund's yields.

## Selection and Award Process

Award decisions will be made by a joint committee of trustees from those foundations that contribute to the Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability. The curator of the Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability prepares the decisions for the joint committee. The curator is also a voting member, evaluates the submitted project, and makes suggestions to the joint committee. For artistic evaluation, she/he will be supported by an independent, interdisciplinary jury consisting of established experts in the realms of sustainability and art. The Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability can also actively stipulate subjects, overarching projects, and emphases.

## Form of Application

Applications must include a statement about the kind and extent of the project, a time plan, and, if necessary, information about the applicant's previous work.

## Application Deadlines

It should be possible to submit applications twice a year.



## Comments

*Christa Müller, Stiftungsgemeinschaft Anstiftung & Ertomis, Germany*

At the intersection between aesthetics and sustainability, there is an increasing amount of civil society and artistic projects too that increasingly focus on nature, that are discovering do-it-yourself as a new free space for community and autonomy; that no longer want to be told what to do, neither when it comes to urban planning nor the construction of things needed every day. In so doing, these actors combine political, ecological, ethical, and artistic-aesthetic needs that can be understood as resistance to a dominant neo-liberalism. A Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability would be just the right thing to support such approaches!

*Reinhard Loske, Ex-Senator for the Environment, Bremen, Germany*

The sustainability debate often suffers from being too abstract or getting bogged down by mere empiricism, by innumerable reduction goals and indicators of efficiency. However, at issue here are not just numbers, it is about an attitude towards life where ethics and aesthetics play a role equally important to politics and technology.

*Dr. Günther Bachmann, General Secretary, Rat für Nachhaltige Entwicklung Deutschland (German Council for Sustainable Development)*

From the point of view of the Council for Sustainable Development, we are pleased that Adrienne Goehler would like to undertake something to counter the overuse of the term “sustainability.” We have often seen how flippantly the term can be used without defining its content precisely or abiding by its meaning.

We welcome linking culture and the individual desire to change with aspects of sustainability. It is in our interest that humanity engage with shaping their lives, both in the global realm of resource protection as well as in each individual household in the form of a sustainable shopping basket.

Artists can contribute to interdisciplinary sustainability and carry the subject into broader social and thematic arenas. Their function of making the notion of sustainability vivid and graspable is also something that we support.

A fund to support cultural and artistic projects on sustainability is important to advance the debate on sustainability.

*Jakub Szczesny, Centrala Designers Task Force, Warsaw, [www.centrala.net.pl](http://www.centrala.net.pl)*

According to the statements made by the organizers of the European Congress of Culture held in September 2010 in Wrocław, interdisciplinary practice is becoming increasingly popular among artists. One reason for this is that the new media, and the internet in particular, offer access to territories of knowledge that were previously unreachable for outsiders. The only trouble is the lack of interest or trust on the part of scientific communities, which leads to obstructions not

only when it comes to potential partnerships, but most of all in basic information sharing.

In my experience, having often been the only architect working in an interdisciplinary team with mostly engineers, information and worldviews coming from beyond the domains of architecture and research are not just mind-opening and enriching, but absolutely necessary.

The obstructions mentioned above are caused by:

First, a certain segregation of interests and therefore of milieus that can be observed among these different groups, although probably to a much lesser degree that was true in the past;

Second, an incompatibility in terms of communication resulting from the different meta-languages and the different sets of intra-professional references used by these groups;

Third, stereotypes about “crazy artists” and “nerdy scientists.”

Surprisingly, besides the collaborations that are based on private relationships, collaboration is often fostered by external factors: shared community interests such as issues related to ecology, politics, and the economy or, even more surprisingly, the adventure/gamble of sharing a mind game or an experiment. In my case, adventure is the main motivation in seeking help from scientists and engineers. Adventure, risk-tasking, and the love to experiment are vehicles of change, whatever the place and social context.

I strongly believe that positive changes are possible through limited actions, but real adventure requires consistent, long term cooperation between daring people from different fields acting on the same platform.

Will it ever be possible to build such a platform? I hope so!

*Prof. Jan R. Krause, Head of Corporate Communication and Eternit Akademie, Eternit AG, Berlin/Heidelberg, Germany*

Establishing a fund for aesthetics and sustainability is a project that is intelligent and worth supporting. As a company rooted in tradition and the leading manufacturer of environmentally friendly construction products in Germany, we know that economic success and social development over the long term are only possible with an intact environment. This notion of the environment goes far beyond purely ecological aspects. At issue is the balance between economic, ecological, and socio-cultural factors. This is why we have been engaged in social projects for years, promoting artistic initiatives and, with Eternit Akademie, have founded our own educational institution. The best ideas in the sense of true sustainability take place in interdisciplinary dialog. A fund that promotes interdisciplinary approaches in art, architecture, and science, and that can contribute to the debate on sustainability and aesthetics, would sustainably enrich the German cultural landscape.

*Dr. Gerd Rosenkranz, Deutsche Umwelthilfe e. V. (DUH), Germany*

Why do we need a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability? Because the discourse of sustainability as we know it is not going anywhere. As long as the sustainability debate is limited to experts, it often serves as a distraction from necessary changes (sustainable growth) or becomes part of an omnipresent power-strategic discourse on preservation and change (as currently the case in energy policy: “new coal power plants for the security of the electricity supply.”) Ultimately there is a serious question of who gains and who loses on the path to a sustainability that deserves the name – one that is about human survival on Planet Earth.

Yet as soon as the sustainability debate is freed from the straightjacket of expert disciplines, voluntaristic categories dominate. At issue then are lifestyles, sufficiency, the good life, and similarly vague categories. Let us assume that this is not a diversion: In the environmental debate, a discussion about lifestyles often sets in when the alternative are painful changes in legal conditions that may, for their part, represent a necessary requirement for the change of lifestyles; once other lifestyles are seriously proposed, the issue soon shifts to renunciation and asceticism.

Here, a deeper, transdisciplinary thinking about the role of humanity on earth, that is, on culture and the arts as its outstanding modes of expression, can help. To me, the idea of a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability is part of this. Does not sustainability for nine billion people on the planet in 2050 truly presume a fundamentally changed idea of how to deal with the limits set by nature? What we need is a culture that, on the one hand, first enables changed lifestyles and, on the other hand, can be its result? A chicken and egg problem, but hopefully one that is not impossible to solve.

In more concrete terms: The chances for survival of the planet as we know it and the people that dwell on it will rise dramatically, if the growing global middle classes with their current technological possibilities take on a lifestyle that is less materially expansive. Would a life in affluence that can do with a quarter or a tenth of today's use of material not automatically result in a more aesthetic lifestyle? The movement of a runner, a bicyclist passing by is more aesthetic than the driver sitting in a leather seat, behind the wheel of a SUV that weighs several tons, and that, with a slight movement of the foot, is turned into a potentially lethal weapon.

At any event, on first glance it seems worth linking aesthetics and sustainability. But up until now, this has been achieved by almost nobody, the environmental movement even less than art. This is not only, because there is no specific fund for this – or is there? As of 2013, the German Federal Government's Energy and Climate Fund, financed by the yields from auctioning emission permits, will receive over three billion euros every year. To found a Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability, a tiny crumb of this cake would suffice.

*Dr. Sonja Beeck, visiting professor, Universität Kassel, Stadtentwicklung und Stadtmanagement im Internationalen Kontext / head, Prae-IBA-Teams Berlin 2020, project leader, IBA Stadtumbau 2010, Germany*

Art without science is blind; science without art is empty. Aesthetics without sustainability is empty; sustainability without aesthetics is blind. To make sustainability, over the long run, a part of our lives, an appropriate language is required, an aesthetic. What could be better than to intensely care for this sustainable language of aesthetics?

Aesthetics is not some kind of appendix of technical innovations that are now slowly deigning to articulate themselves somewhat. The aesthetic appearance of things of life is the sustainable importance that they have for our everyday lives. What could be better than to intensely care for these points of contact?

Culture, education, science, regardless of which side we come from, science without art remains mute and art without science has no substance. Both are part of sustainability. It makes no difference whether we are working on technical innovations or in urban contexts. The principle remains the same.

*Johannes Heimrath, The Club of Budapest International  
www.clubofbudapest.org*

This proposal is an essential attempt to make art fulfill its essentially social propose! From my point of view, further areas should be included that usually remain excluded from the debate about a peaceful culture of sustainability: security, nuclear technology, missile technology, securing intelligent, that is, future-proof decisions with the greatest possible participation. This appears in the paper but should be worked out more clearly. Two examples:

How could the “society of culture” (A. Goehler) guarantee its internal security in a life-promoting fashion? In other words, is a life-promoting, culturally creative police force imaginable, one that protects nature’s and humanity’s rights against violence from forces that do not promote life? How could such a force be formed? A “post-collapse society” (J. Heimrath) will hardly consist of nothing but enthusiastic friends of humanity and nature, people who like do nothing better than reduce their ecological footprint to under one by refusing to consume.

How can we insure that, soon there will be sufficient “green” engineers and even more enthusiastic miners that by way of life-promoting technology will be able to dismantle nuclear power plants and dispose of radioactive waste or, with the means then still available keep the most important research and communication satellites working (something, for which sizable amounts of mineral ores are needed) that we would still need in a post-collapse society of culture in order to fulfill our duty as guardians of the biospheres for a world of over seven billion people?

Until now, these questions are usually treated by means of art in either a cultural-creative context expounding their horrifying aspects, or in a modernist-materialist context as heroic, delusional science-fiction. Yet, these questions have to be at the focus of our attention.

*HMJokinen, visual artist, curator, Afrika-Hamburg, [www.afrika-hamburg.de](http://www.afrika-hamburg.de)*

As you mention in your proposal, projects for cultures of sustainability are based on a dialog between religions and the fields of peacemaking, ethnicity, gender, and support provided during natural disasters. Nevertheless, I would like to propose another essential issue: postcolonial perspectives and art. Africa is our neighbor, and Pan-Africanism is a central issue in the liberation movements in the African countries and in the European diaspora. It is therefore possible to build networks between continents. Moreover, the built public space of our European cities is full of signs of colonialism, both old and new. We can learn how to read and interpret them and how to critically reflect our ambivalent European role and identity in the world during the last 500 years.

However, as artists and activists have discovered, European governments are not interested in postcolonial politics, but rather in lobbying on behalf of transnational companies that loot resources and pollute natural and visual environments on the other continents.

Without postcolonial cultures of remembrance of early globalization, without reflection and the abolition of neocolonial structures, no sustainability can ever be achieved. We need participatory artwork in urban spaces. We need networks between diasporas, majority societies, and art projects involving African, Asian, American, and European artists.

Art and postcolonial projects have already taken place between the colonial metropolis Hamburg and Tanzania and Ghana.







We live in an era of transition, in an era of “not anymore” and “not yet.” There will be no return to the carefree consumption of resources, and supposed unambiguousness. But what happens next and where? Does art offer a solution?

Artists seem to be best prepared for open contents because they specialize in transitions, intermediate certainties, and laboratories.

They could be pioneers on the way to a cultural society in which the existing wealth of knowledge and experience can truly unfold.

Adrienne Goehler has been thinking how a “Fund for Aesthetics and Sustainability” encourage transdisciplinary art projects that are emerging the necessary transformation towards a culture of sustainability.

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