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“Scientific Environment”

Седьмая встреча весенней сессии
Seventh meeting within the spring session

Artists, Art Communities and Creative Initiatives in the Urban Spaces of Russia and Europe

14 мая 2013, вторник, Факультет социологии СПбГУ, ауд. 229
May 14 2013, Tuesday, Faculty of Sociology, St. Petersburg State University, room 229
18.00

Sacha Kagan (Leuphana University Luneburg)
Creative Cities and the Challenge of Sustainability

Considering, in a first step, how mainstream creative city approaches (after e.g. Richard Florida) foster social, environmental and cultural unsustainability in the contemporary urban context, alternative conceptions and practices for creative cities will be discussed, in a second step, combining a theoretical reflection based on critical urban sociology (with a focus on Henri Lefebvre) and on a cultural approach to sustainability studies (as pursued by Sacha Kagan over the past few years), with a comparative analytical feedback based on a few recent empirical case studies (in an upcoming joint publication):

- in Germany: different members of the “Not In Our Name” coalition in Hamburg (since 2009); the “2-3 Streets” project in the Ruhr region (as part of the European Capital of Culture ‘RUHR.2010’);
- in Switzerland: the “60x60” project in Geneva (since 2010);
- in Portugal: some of the activities organized in Guimaraes as European Capital of Culture (in 2012).

In which relationships do different artistic initiatives and projects stand to the potential emergence of sustainable cities? Do they or could they play actually transformative roles? Do such art-focused initiatives lack specific qualities (related to the search process of sustainability) found in some other urban initiatives which are not focused on art? Which potential recommendations for creative sustainable cities may emerge from this research?

Nikita Basov and Anisya Khokhlova (St. Petersburg State University, Faculty of sociology)

Communication Practices of Knowledge Generation: Comparing Creative Communities in St. Petersburg

Today urban space appears to be the principal arena of communication between various actors and their groupings. As such, it becomes the locus of intensive knowledge creation where clashes and intersections of different knowledge fields take place. With the growing competition of cities for recognition and symbolic benefits and the development of creative industries as the foundation of urban economy, artists become one of the major knowledge-generating urban space powers that creates artworks as both knowledge objects influencing opinions and discourses and communication mediums between artists and their publics.

This paper is focused on four creative communities of visual artists located in St. Petersburg who join their efforts in common artistic styles and promotional methods. The communities are different in scale, structure, ideological orientation, professional background and artistic style. They differently act in the urban space provoking response from their colleagues and broader audiences and sometimes successfully involving them in the development, reproduction and promotion of meanings. Using comparative case study strategy we analyze such knowledge-generating communication of the communities and highlight the key characteristics shaping the unique sets of their knowledge creation practices such as emotionality, reflexivity, inclusivity, participatory character, embeddedness in the urban space, dependence on community leaders and focus on the values and norms constituting the institutions of art world.

Anna Zhelnina (Higher School of Economics at St. Petersburg, St. Petersburg State University, Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences) and Alexandra Nenko (Higher School of Economics, St. Petersburg)

Self-Organizing Urban Initiatives: Actors and Practices of Creative Transformation of the City

In this presentation we will dwell upon the issue of self-organizing creative initiatives and their role in transformation of cities. The presentation will discuss preliminary results of mapping of the creative initiatives in St. Petersburg (though also going beyond its borders), including such forms as lofts and non-localized networked initiatives. Among our cases of interest are such initiatives as street-artists, an educational loft focusing on urbanism, important multi-functional loft hosting urban issues related events, and a non-localized network of urban activists with diverse disciplinary background. The common features of the creative initiatives considered are: a) they are all non-governmental initiatives involving private investments, or almost no investments; b) they are oriented towards transformation of the urban public space with creative actions in the broad sense (from direct actions such as creating street art and up to educational activities aiming to transform the views of the urban dwellers on their own living environment). We will discuss the ideological, political, and artistic reference points of the initiatives in question.