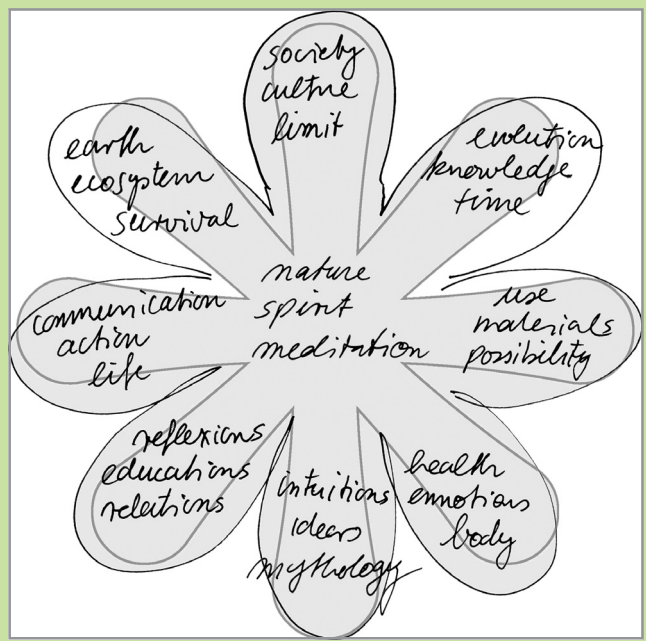


Sacha Kagan / Volker Kirchberg (eds.)

# Sustainability: a new frontier for the arts and cultures



Sacha Kagan / Volker Kirchberg (eds.)

**Sustainability:  
a new frontier for the arts and cultures**

Volume 3 of the series

## **“Higher Education for Sustainability“**

Edited by Gerd Michelsen

The book series “Higher Education for Sustainability“ provides information and experiences on the question of how sustainable development may be applied as a guiding principle for university education, and how it may be implemented in sustainability-related research activities. A variety of different political, methodological, and didactical approaches are intended to form an intricate mosaic of ongoing activities from around the world in the field of higher education. The series aims at stimulating international cooperation and intercultural dialogue on higher education for sustainable development. It is edited by Prof. Dr. Gerd Michelsen, holder of the UNESCO Chair ‘Higher Education for Sustainable Development’, based at the Leuphana University of Lüneburg ([www.leuphana.de/infu/chair](http://www.leuphana.de/infu/chair)).

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The image on the front page is “The Flower of Sustainability“, an artistic depiction by the artist Insa Winkler who explains this image in her article in this book.

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Günther Bachmann

## **“Gatekeeper: a foreword“**

Scarcity changes everything. With the limited availability of water and soil becoming more and more relevant for food supply and economic development, the wheat and corn prices recently jumped to a 10 years high. Oil-junky-economies increasing the oil consumption even in peak-oil times link-up the oil and food prices, with all the humiliating and dramatic consequences this link means to people and the environment. Therefore, “future“ needs to be spelled as carbon neutrality and as sustainability. However, our society as a whole – despite its economy of the plenty compared to global standards – does not yet seem to accept the signs on the wall. What avant-garde do we wait for to read out the signs and interpret them into a zeitgeist?

Halting the destruction of the earth’s environment, helping people to free themselves from the shackles of poverty, and leaving opportunities instead of debts to coming generations, all of this involves nothing short of a fundamental change in our way of working and consuming. All this is about ethics and culture, as it is about technologies, governance, participation and policies. If there is one key issue that will help to get this transition done, science and education would be it. If there is one key issue that will help people to emotionally understand the ups and downs of this transition, art would be it. There is no “either, or“. There is no sense in prioritizing of “hard measures“ such as technologies and “soft issues“ such as ethics. Down the road we will have to address all these issues.

In order to facilitate the understanding of what is at stake globally the value of the arts and culture is a tricky thing. Theoretically, everyone talks about the importance of the arts for a more sustainable thinking. Practically, it is underused and underrated, maybe even not well understood and, worse, not well conceptualized by artists themselves. It is not at all acknowledged in the art’s business which is different from recent development in the business community in general. In the chemical industry, electronics or producing sectors as well as in the financial sector some leading enterprises are biting into the issues of sustainability management. Cleavage and antagonism are food for thought, at least there is a certain potential to do so.

## Only golddusting?

In the German political discourse, we find the term *Nachhaltigkeit* currently used quite inflationary, with some definitely misleading and superficial use of the term. In a certain way the term sustainability is used as semantic gold dust. But the good news is that, once the term surfaces at all, there is a good chance that this opens the debate about the basic sense of the sustainability challenge. This is good because it translates into an argument. And argument is what we need when it comes to sustainability challenging vested interests. There are more and more people who can tell the difference. The point for communicating sustainability is to link ideas and actions towards energy transition, next urbanism, and organic food production with the understanding of sustainability as a cultural and arts project.

Culture helps to detect and discard semantic gold dust. For arts and culture policies, the same task holds true as for other areas of society, be it the business community or the Government strategies: Keeping a critical eye on what people actually mean when they use the word “sustainability”. As we see the concept branching out and webbing into society (which is good) we experience some examples of a misuse of the term. I call it a misuse when sustainability is used as the fashionable keyword of the season, in the sense of mere long durability, or as a replacement of the term ecology with no added social, cultural or economic value.

## Introducing new ways

As an adviser to the German government, the German Council for Sustainable Development has created some sorts of new approaches to link culture and sustainability. The Council has also encouraged others to experiment with new pathways to communicate sustainability. Organizing strategy sessions and workshops, and integrating a wide range of cultural projects into its own events has resulted in pieces of design work and literature, in movie pictures and commercials advocating sustainability. The photo competition “Facing Sustainability”, the grassroots best practice competition “24 Hours for Tomorrow’s World”, and an exhibition of artists active in sustainability projects, “passageN”, show that the somewhat unwieldy and awkward term of sustainability can reach out to the people, as a cultural project.

A lesson to be learnt from both engineers and artists as well: Do not stop asking questions. In this case: Are we successfully communicating? Are we up-linking art and sustainability in a creative way? Could we do better? Are we really addressing the zeitgeist? And if so, are we surfing on the zeitgeist or are we drivers? There is no easy answer. I mistrust any quick and elegant answer anyway. I think we have to put these questions forward again and again. By putting together the views of as many people as possible we will find some answers. And new questions as well – as the contributions to this book will underline.

### *Challenging the zeitgeist*

*Art and Sustainability* is also about the understanding of art itself. All art is about the future of mankind. The well-known saying is true: All art is contemporary. And all contemporary art, in some way, conveys a vision for the future. Be it Michelangelo, Brueghel's Ikarus or Jackson Pollock's work, pieces of art point visions of future out, sometimes hidden and reflected. In this understanding, artists are challenging the zeitgeist, and at the same time, contributing to its permanent renewal. Today, this general approach has to close up more clearly to cover the realm of wrongheaded global developments. Arts for sustainability means involving people and providing room for them to rethink future. We have to allow for ordinary people to become part of the action whereas the action itself would be professionally facilitated.

This is a new feature. It emerges from the concept of intergenerational justice that is amplifying (not replacing) equity concepts within the living generation in North and South. Intergenerational justice asks what legacy the current way of living brings along for our children and their offspring. We are now facing the probability to dramatically downgrade pretty much all of the living conditions on earth. Communicating sustainability is not for wallpaper, and not for simplistic propaganda, nor for mere contemplation. Love and death, and all what is in between, are natural themes of art. The sustainability update is about our yearning for a sustainable lifestyle, equity in "here and there" as well as "now and then", our knowledge about all the lunacy in the world and the non sustainable way of production and consumption

Challenging the zeitgeist means making it visible and accessible, and showing the way out of the crisis, if possible. Normally, this can neither be done in a mirror-like way, nor as a mere description of the 'gloom and doom' nor of the *belleza* of our life. Instead, the *raison d'être* of *art and sustainability* is time beyond the generational view. Making the experience of time is one of the very basic features of life. *But.*

But we have to try harder to make this a trend that has the power to provoke the predominant mainstream culture. Mainstream culture is event culture. It sees more people than ever visit art exhibitions and museums. However, most of them are looking blank and awestruck. No one gets upset, basic questions are seldom asked. It is the event in which they believe. The dictum "all art is contemporary" seems forgotten and being replaced by "all art is event". Shortsighted event culture seems to eat up all art.

Is there a way to link what Vanity Fair's first ever green issue proclaimed as "Green Glamour" to the 'cultures of sustainability' as shown in this book? It is essential that both theoretical and empirical studies show how discourses and practices in art worlds pick the culture of sustainability out as central issue or do not witness what is going on globally. In this sense, successful action needs to be close enough to the spirit of the times to be relevant, and, at the same time, far enough ahead of the times to offer change and to frontier-guard the way towards future.

## From I-need to We-can

In the decades after World War II, the defining ethos was "I need". The I-need-icon formed the basics of a civilized life: growing living standards, decent education, social insurance against ill health and economic hardship, improved housing conditions. Those needs still remain, and with the growing social divide they tend to be more severe than in the past years. They must be satisfied as a basic part of solidarity and citizenship. But the age of necessity is no longer the one and only issue driving the future-bound ethics of our society. By the 1980s, the age of necessity had given way to an age of consumption. The I-need-icon was replaced by the icon of "I want" flanked by short-sighted event cultures and an economy that heats up the atmosphere. This is still predominant.

Now, we need to drive forward a new spirit. Some call it the “I can” philosophy. It focuses on a desire for people to not just have access to material goods, but greater power, control and choice over all aspects of their life and the life options of their offspring. It addresses the jobs they do, the relationships they enter, the services they use, the products they buy, what food they eat and how they relate to other people. To all this the demographic change in our society adds additional features of transition: the decrease of overall population figures, with people getting older and becoming more active, with fragmented families and new mobility needs, with new demands for life-long learning and for adequate housing for the silver generation.

The cutting edge here is culture. A more skilled population with access to technology can enable more and more people to become cultural creatives. They will come up with their own products and services – from blogs, films, music and games, right through to producing their own energy and designing their own social partnership schemes. The tools of distribution are open to all of us. Culture is distribution. In this sense, ‘I can’ means ‘I can connect’. From this step it is not far to the next one: From “I can” to “we can”.

This is explicitly true in the fight against climate change. Sure, individual action over lightbulbs or transport seems to make no difference contrasted with the new coal fired power station being built weekly in China. But this is only true at the first glance. The fundamental answer is to aggregate concern and to find concerted action. Government can do part of the job. Citizens demand for green energy and efficient techniques can develop real market power. The connected “I can” may web into a “we can” demand and build up collective leadership. Is this an illusion, a vision too far reaching out? Maybe. But then, what else do we have? And without this vision what point would it make to ask for a more ambitious politics and community action? And then, societies change. From Jared Diamond’s book *Collapse* about the history of failing and succeeding societies we learnt that environment and culture are among the single most important choices societies can make to determine their way of living, and their survival.

The education for sustainability is key. Important is the teaching in classrooms by teachers. However, the range of resources to support learning is far wider than that. It encompasses workplaces and museums, town

halls and TV media, family values, and religious and societal ethics, to name only the most important. This is a wide range. There is one lingua franca ensuring the exchange of values, approaches, attitudes, and the cultural memory: It is the arts.

Can the arts act as gatekeeper for sustainability?

*Dr. Günther Bachmann*  
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for Sustainable Development  
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# Introduction

Sacha Kagan

## Sustainability as a New Frontier for the Arts and Cultures

This third volume in the series “Higher Education for Sustainability” (edited by Gerd Michelsen) provides a selection of international contributions based on some of the most engaging and stimulating papers presented at the ‘sustainability stream’ of the 2007 conference of the Research Network for the Sociology of the Arts at the ESA (European Sociological Association), an international conference held from March 27<sup>th</sup> to April 1<sup>st</sup> 2007 in Lüneburg, Germany, under the title: “New Frontiers in Arts Sociology: Creativity, Support and Sustainability”. Following up on the clearly international character of the Lüneburg conference with participants coming from the five continents, this volume offers insights from researchers, artists and activists in Europe, North and Central America, Africa and Asia.

This volume, edited by two organizers of the conference, Sacha Kagan (coordinator of the sustainability stream) and Volker Kirchberg (Chairperson of the ESA Arts Research Network from 2005 to 2007), focuses on *sustainability as a new frontier for the arts and cultures*: “Although this matter is of great relevance on a global level, it still very much has a character of novelty with regards to arts sociology”.<sup>1</sup> The present volume sets itself the ambition to foster the development of ‘arts, cultures and sustainability’ as a new, inter- and trans-disciplinary research field.

Before exploring the signification of sustainability for the arts and introducing the wide scope of contributions to this volume, the following paragraphs will first of all assess why the concept of sustainability can be considered as a “new frontier” for contemporary cultures.

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<sup>1</sup> For an account of the insights and advances brought by the Lüneburg conference in its sustainability stream, see Kirchberg and Kagan (2007).

## Sustainability: a new frontier

The word 'sustainability' has become very fashionable in the first decade of the 21st century, and its widespread use has led to all kinds of definitions and interpretations, some of which are missing most of the substance of the concept. For example, some cultural administrators and cultural policy experts are using the term to point at long-term support systems to the arts and cultural industries. Sustainability then merely means 'sustaining' the arts in the long run.

However, the intention of the editors of this volume is not to ride on the wave of an ephemeral buzzword, but to explore the concept of sustainability in its richest implications for the arts and cultures. The use of the term "sustainability" in the present volume, as well as at the 2007 conference of the Arts Research Network of the European Sociological Association, is thus replaced in the context where its full implications can be understood, i.e. the discussion of "sustainable development" since the Brundtland report (1987) popularized the expression.<sup>2</sup>

Without giving a thorough account of the uses and history of the concept of sustainability, which would require a lengthy development<sup>3</sup>, the following can be taken as a working definition:

"The concept speaks to the reconciliation of social justice, ecological integrity, and the well being of all living systems on the planet. The goal is to create an ecologically and socially just world within the means of nature without compromising future generations. Sustainability also refers to the process or strategy of moving toward a sustainable future."<sup>4</sup>

With the above definition, the normative character of sustainability is made clear. One of the fundamentally innovative characteristics of the concept of sustainability is that it calls forward a whole range of apparently paradoxical reconciliations: reconciliation of normative and so-far supposedly 'positive' science, reconciliation of the economy with the ecology, reconciliation of matter and culture (i.e. society, technology and environment), and reconciliation of intra-generational and intergenerational justices (i.e. the needs of present generations across the planet and the needs of future

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<sup>2</sup> WCED (1987)

<sup>3</sup> On the development of the concept of sustainability and its differentiations from 'sustainable development', see Robinson (2004).

<sup>4</sup> Moore (2005): 78

generations). Sustainability is a young concept for an age of super- or hyper-complexity, where challenges of increasingly globalizing economic exchanges as well as cultural exchanges are combining with challenge of interconnected global and local ecological and social crises.<sup>5</sup> Confronting this complexity implies an approach of systems, i.e. anthropo-systems within ecosystems, across space-scales from the local to the planetary, and across time-scales from the short to the very-long term.<sup>6</sup>

The concept of sustainability also thrusts researchers as well as social actors towards interdisciplinary and trans-disciplinary research and action:

“Sustainability research is based on a new relationship between science, the public sphere and practice, and must fulfil quality criteria distinct from those applied in pure subject-base research. In sustainability research, three fundamental levels can be distinguished, with relevance to research the:

- (1) analytical level, aimed at the creation of systems knowledge;
- (2) normative level, at which target knowledge is developed; and
- (3) operative level, at which transformation knowledge is generated.”<sup>7</sup>

Sustainability, as a cultural change process, requires also the advancement of learners’ skills and competencies (learners being both individuals and learning organizations). The skills imply the development of different types of reflexivity in the context of a reflexive modernization.<sup>8</sup> The competencies “are expected to enable active, reflective and cooperative participation toward sustainable development [...] ‘Gestaltungskompetenz’ comprises the following eight key competencies:

- (1) competency in foresighted thinking;
- (2) competency in interdisciplinary work;
- (3) competency in cosmopolitan perception, transcultural understanding and cooperation;
- (4) participatory skills;
- (5) competency in planning and implementation;
- (6) capacity for empathy, compassion and solidarity;

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<sup>5</sup> On the emergence of understandings of complexity, see e.g. Morin (1990)

<sup>6</sup> Morin et al. (2007)

<sup>7</sup> Adomssent, Godemann and Michelsen (2007) : 393–394

<sup>8</sup> Cf. Dieleman (in this volume)

- (7) competency in self-motivation and in motivating others; and
- (8) competency in distanced reflection on individual and cultural models.”<sup>9</sup>

Ethics, systems thinking, reflexivity, trans-disciplinarity and a cultural change process implying specific competencies: Sustainability emerges as a new frontier for the researcher of contemporary cultures.

But how does this new frontier of sustainability relate to the arts and art worlds? Although the whole volume constitutes an exploratory answer to such a question, a preliminary discussion starter is offered in the following paragraphs, identifying some indicators of sustainability in the arts.

## Toward indicators of sustainability in the arts?

How can sustainability be present and/or relevant in the arts? Different approaches to this question are provided in the contributions to this volume. Besides, a growing number of engaged actors in art worlds are introducing the concept in their practices and discourses.<sup>10</sup>

The purpose of the following paragraphs is not to constrain the contributions to this volume into a rigid corset, but to provide some threads of inquiry and to provide a ground for further discussion, reinterpretation and reformulation. A number of ‘indicators’ of sustainability in the arts can be proposed for discussion (‘indicators’ being understood in a qualitative more than in a quantitative sense):

Starting with the most explicit dimension, sustainability in the arts relates to the *contents*, i.e. the topics and issues addressed through arts-related activities. To be labelled as dealing with sustainability in terms of contents, such activities should ideally connect issues of social justice, cultural diversity and ecological issues. Of course, many art works dealing with either the one or the other (e.g. strictly environmentalist topics or single issues of social injustice), could be labelled as touching upon some aspects of sustainability. But most interesting in the concept of sustainability are those instances where the inter-relatedness of cultural, social, economic, political and ecological processes is explored.

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<sup>9</sup> Barth, Godemann, Rieckmann and Stoltenberg (2007): 418

<sup>10</sup> See e.g. Fowkes and Fowkes (2006) for one of the most sensible uses of the concept by contemporary art curators in recent years.

Also, the issues addressed could be global or local, but an understanding of sustainability implies a linkage of local and global realities, i.e. what is being at times labelled as 'glocal'. This also involves an attention to intercultural understanding.

Finally, the issues addressed can relate to different timescales, but an understanding of sustainability implies a broad scope that engages both into the short and the longer term timescales.

Besides explicit contents and issues, sustainability in the arts relates to the *processes* by which arts-related activities are carried out: search processes, research processes, learning processes, working processes. These processes involve all-out reflexivity about 'ourselves' in a wide sense (from individual routines to social institutions to power networks). They develop reflexivity skills of different types, appealing to a diversity of human qualities, beyond the limited types of rationality tapped by most scientific discourses and beyond the limitation of imagination embedded in established rules and routines.<sup>11</sup> These processes will also involve developing 'inter' competences: intercultural, inter-sub-cultural, inter-conventional.<sup>12</sup> In doing so, they will be tapping a human capacity for enhanced empathy, beyond sociocentrism and ethnocentrism.

Such processes imply a relatively 'new' way of thinking and of questioning reality: systems thinking. Sustainability poses the challenge of perceiving and processing interconnections beyond the fragmentation of socially constructed realities. It also practically implies the ability to work in interdisciplinary and ultimately trans-disciplinary teams on projects. In the arts, this implies a shift from exclusively autopoietic working processes to more ecopoietic processes.<sup>13</sup>

Besides explicit contents and processes, sustainability in the arts relates to an ensemble of *values*, an ethical enquiry into the meanings and implications of justice or rather justices in the contemporary world. Sustainability implies that social actors bear normativity. Not any kind of normative frame, but a clearly 'open culture', one that acknowledges cultural diversity, favours participatory polyarchic polities and adapts itself to the

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<sup>11</sup> On the importance of reflexivity see Dieleman in this volume. When I write about qualities 'beyond' rationality, I do not mean 'against' rationality. The point is not to revive an anti-rational discourse.

<sup>12</sup> On the meaning of such 'inter' competences, see Kagan (in chapter two) in this volume.

<sup>13</sup> On ecopoiesis, see Haley in this volume.

non-human environment, instead of claiming to be able to adapt the whole environment to the demands of one human culture.<sup>14</sup>

An art that deals with values, processes and issues of sustainability will also be an art that is *critical* in several senses: critically confronting modernity and its mythical figures (the individual, progress, affluence, growth, technology). It will also be critically confronting one's art world, the institutions one works with as an artist or as an art organization, because as coined by the Institutional Critique movement, there is no art outside of institutions.<sup>15</sup> Multiple dimensions of art institutions may be questioned, from the informal powers behind the 'autonomy' of art, the role of art as an elitist social field reproducing social discriminations (even when it claims to constitute an 'institution of critique'), to the art market as a luxury market or as moral laundry haven for powerful men with itchy bad conscience. Here the more traditional art sociologists and critical artists find a common ground for further research and action.

## A wide-ranging research field

The contributions to this volume demonstrate the richness of sustainability as a research field for the study of the arts and cultures, as well as for engaged cultural actors. The diversity of perspectives proposed by the contributing authors (sociologies, ecological art, systems theories, philosophy, economics, phenomenology, etc.) points both at the fruitfulness and at the challenges of this inter- and trans-disciplinary area of inquiry.<sup>16</sup>

The first chapter introduces and investigates the implications of the notion of *Cultures of Sustainability*. Davide Brocchi (*The Cultural Dimension of Sustainability*) contrasts the closed system of a culture of development that encloses itself and aims to model its environment, to the open system of cultures retaining an ability to adapt to their environment. His analysis constitutes also an indictment of a dominant culture of unsustainability.

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<sup>14</sup> On the notion of open systems, see Brocchi in this volume. On polyarchic polities in art, see Kagan and Abbing (2006).

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ed. Welchman (2006)

<sup>16</sup> „Following this nature of the different perspectives of these authors we concede to the sometimes particular but always conscious capitalization of nouns in some of the following texts (e.g., Brocchi, Rahmani).“

The potentialities of open cultures are further explored in Oleg Koefoed's contribution (*Zones of Sustension – an exploration of eventality, culturality, and collective intuition in life and work*). Infusing theoretical considerations with insights from the practice of e.g. FLOSS (the Free, Libre and Open Source Software movement), Koefoed indeed elaborates an understanding of social change in a open systemic perspective. Volker Kirchberg (*Angst and Unsustainability in Postmodern Times*) sketches out salient features of the contemporary globalizing culture of unsustainability, referring to Zygmunt Bauman and Richard Sennett. In the last part of his contribution, Kirchberg provokes the arts and the sociology of the arts into an active involvement with the search for sustainability.

Kirchberg, Koefoed and Brocchi's contributions bring significant insights into the conceptualization and the contemporary relevance of the question of cultures of sustainability, and these insights also resonate with the other articles in this volume, further exploring the discourses and practices of art world members and other cultural sectors engaging into questions of sustainability.

The contributors to the second chapter, *The Reflexive Artist and the Ethics of Sustainability*, set the stage of a 21st century in which the artist may play a major role in the search process of sustainability. Hans Dieleman (*Sustainability, Art and Reflexivity: why artists and designers may become key change agents in sustainability*) analyzes how sustainability as a societal change process can meet the manifold reflexive practices of artists, designers and other creative professionals. One of the dimensions explored by Hans Dieleman, i.e. how art interventions in society can be understood as working to change social structures, is the focal point that Sacha Kagan addresses in his contribution (*Art Effectuating Social Change: double entrepreneurship in conventions*): He analyzes how agency works within institutionalization processes, in specific instances of arts projects, and under which conditions such agency may yield results in terms of modifying existing social conventions. David Haley (*The Limits of Sustainability: the art of ecology*) challenges the established development-oriented definition of sustainability and ecological modernization and sketches out the contours of a new 'systems understanding' of reality that art as ecological-social research can foster: art as an ecopoietic encounter with complex social-ecological realities and with ethical challenges rather than art as an autopoietically closed discourse.

The contributions of Haley, Kagan and Dieleman reveal a community of inquiry: Among other points of convergence, the understanding of sustainability that Dieleman holds has very much in common with Haley's notion of "question based learning". Besides, Kagan's operational framework offers one possible approach to analyzing the working of such forms of agency within social structures.

The third chapter looks into *Discourses, Practices and Search Processes in the Arts*. Felicia Herrschaft (*Reflections on Vulnerability: aspects of sustainability of art in post-war and conflict societies, the examples of Kosovo and Afghanistan*) discusses the hypothesis that the articulation of violation, as demanded by artists, can be described as an opportunity that demands recognition, as their perspective can contribute to sustainable change in conflictual societies. Artists in post-war societies are coping with the experience of being marginalized, ridiculed and prosecuted. The artists' creativity is one strategy they use to create a new way of coping with unbearable situations. Julien Knebusch (*Art and Climate (Change) Perception: outline of a phenomenology of climate*) gives an account of the evolving perceptions of climate across society and especially through artistic processes of inquiry. He analyzes the recent practices of artists working on the topic of climate change.

Engaged *Voices from the Field* are given the opportunity to express themselves in chapter four. This will allow the reader to engage closely into the practices and views of ecological artist Aviva Rahmani in the USA, art activist Jan Jordaan in South Africa and social land artist Insa Winkler in Germany. Aviva Rahmani (*The Butterfly Effect of Hummingbirds: environmental triage: disturbance theory, trigger points, and virtual analogs for physical sites*) explores the values and effectiveness of local site restoration projects and virtual online projects, as 'tipping points' in times of urgent ecological crisis. Jan Jordaan (*Art, Advocacy and Social Development: designing and implementing art-based human rights advocacy campaigns at the organization Art for Humanity*) introduces several concrete cases of art-based advocacy. Insa Winkler (*Chances and Limits of Art and Sustainability*) critically reflects on the ESA arts conference held in Lueneburg in March 2007 and connects its insights to her ongoing reflection and practice of social land art projects. Chapter five critically raises prospects of *Unsustainable Art Worlds or Unsustainable Uses of the Arts*. Caterina Pizantias (*Manifesta 2006: when art met*

*politics*) investigates the recent failure of a famous art festival in the complex geopolitical context of Cyprus, pointing out the limits and relative unsustainability of practices in the world of contemporary art biennales. Arild Bergh (*Everlasting Love: the sustainability of top-down vs bottom-up approaches to music and conflict transformation*), analyzes two projects involving music in Afghanistan and Norway, and in doing so reveals a number of failures of top-down cultural projects. Artists may also explore issues of unsustainability: Kubilay Akman (*Artist's Ego-Trip: framing the self-destructive dimensions of contemporary arts*) carries out an interdisciplinary reflection on issues of creation and destruction as reinterpreted by some contemporary artists.

Chapter six focuses on *Culture, Heritage and Urban Developments*. The economic dimension of sustainability here encounters the cultural dimension of sustainability: The chapter explores how the arts and culture as an economic sector, may contribute to a reorientation of economic development towards more sustainable perspectives. Pier Luigi Sacco, Guido Ferilli and Sabrina Pedrini (*System Wide Cultural Districts: an introduction from the Italian viewpoint*) address the role of culture for creating economic value, and more specifically culture as a lever for the strategic economic development of urban centres. They point at culture's role in the creation of intangible added value. This discussion coincides with those of voices advocating a reorientation of economic growth towards qualitative growth and intangible production, away from a purely quantitative conception of economic growth. Annie Tubadji (*Sustainable Utilization of Cultural Heritage Resources for Socio-Economic Development Purposes: what has to be done by institutions and organizations?*) asserts the need for strategic planning in the sustainable utilization of cultural heritage, analyzing efforts conducted so far and proposing an integrated model.

Chapter seven looks into *Fashion and Ethics (or how does sustainability enter the creative industries?)*... The sociologists Laura Verdi and Emanuela Mora outline, in two complementary articles, how recent developments in the creative industry of fashion are contributing to the rise of a responsible consumer ethics, or "Homo Civicus". Laura Verdi (*From Art & Fashion to Homo Civicus*) analyzes discourses and practices in contemporary fashion and argues that "it is not far-fetched to hypothesise the birth of a society founded more on participation and solidarity, sharing and responsibility than on generic positions of consensus or conflict, which are becoming

progressively inadequate to understand complex societies.” Emanuela Mora (*The Symbolic and Material Space of Fair Fashion*) shares the findings and insights of a survey conducted on consumers of ‘fair fashion’ in Italy, and introduces thereafter a number of case studies of producers of ‘fair fashion’. Her findings especially bring new lights on the motivations of consumers of fair fashion.

Finally, a postface by Sacha Kagan and Hans Dieleman proposes *a New Agenda for Research and Action* based on arts, sciences and sustainability: As an invitation to further exchanges beyond the scope of this single volume.

This volume owes its qualities to the open-minded, engaged and generous contributions and exchanges coming from all the speakers at the 2007 ESA Arts RN conference in Lüneburg. As editors of this volume, Volker Kirchberg and Sacha Kagan heartedly thank them for their insights and their conversations that greatly inspired us all, i.e. the editors and the contributors to this volume. Warm thanks go to all the contributors to this volume, who crafted their contributions with the greatest care and dedication.

Of course, responsibility for any shortcomings lies with the editors of this volume, and we welcome readers’ feedback on this matter.

## **About the Authors**

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Sociologist, academician, art critic and editor. He graduated from Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University (Istanbul) in 2002 and completed his Ph.D dissertation there in 2006. His academic interests are sociology of arts, sociology of literature, aesthetic, social theory and contemporary arts. He is currently teaching at the University of Gaziantep (Turkey) and also editing EuroArt Web Magazine ([www.euroartmagazine.com](http://www.euroartmagazine.com)).

### **Dr. Günther Bachmann**

Executive agency director of the German Council for Sustainable Development, an independent body of 15 eminent persons, focusing on managing and communicating issues of sustainability and societal learning ([www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de](http://www.nachhaltigkeitsrat.de)). His previous work focused on political and technical regulation of soils as part of environmental laws. Looking at wilderness and nonlinearity of soils, memory of nature, is looking at the keeper of the long view.

### **Arild Bergh**

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Sociologist of art and sustainability, professor titular at the Universidad Autónoma de Ciudad de México (UACM) and a member of the staff of the faculty of Social Sciences at the Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam. His research focuses on the role of art in change processes towards sustainability, from epistemological and sociological perspectives ([www.artopie.info](http://www.artopie.info)).

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Ecological artist and Research Fellow in MIRAD at Manchester Metropolitan University ([www.mirad.mmu.ac.uk](http://www.mirad.mmu.ac.uk)): "I perceive our ability to survive climate change as the enactment of an evolutionary narrative. My arts practice aims to generate poetic dialogues that will resonate as creative interventions, in pursuit of aesthetic diversity to develop communities of inquiry for an eco-centric culture."

### **Felicia Herrschaft**

Studied philosophy, cultural anthropology, psychoanalysis and sociology at J.W. Goethe-University, Frankfurt/M. Her dissertation is on experimental public spheres and conceptual art, based on her radio programmes with artists in her public radio show in Frankfurt (redaktion universal at Radio X). In 2005 she established the webproject [www.fehe.org](http://www.fehe.org) with artists.

### **Jan Jordaan**

BA in Fine Arts at Pretoria University. Since 1975 lecturing Printmaking at the Durban University of Technology. In the 1980's he assisted grassroots organizations and ran workshops for rural and township artists. He mobilizes artists, publishing collective portfolios to highlight and address social concerns. In 2003 he founded Art for Humanity ([www.afh.org.za](http://www.afh.org.za)), an NGO using Art as a medium for Human Rights advocacy.

### **Sacha Kagan**

Since 2005 Research Associate at the department "Organization and Distribution of Arts and Culture" at the Leuphana University Lüneburg. Involved in social research and action (and PhD candidate) on the arts, cultures and sustainability. Coordinator of the 'Sustainability stream' at the ESA Arts Conference 2007 in Lüneburg and of the Cultura21 international network ([www.cultura21.net](http://www.cultura21.net)). MA in Cultural Economics (Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam) and Diplômé de Sciences Po Bordeaux.

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Since 2004 University Professor at the department “Organization and Distribution of Arts and Culture” at the Leuphana University Lüneburg. Numerous publications in the sociology of culture, museum studies and urban sociology. Chairperson of the Research Network for the Sociology of the Arts at the European Sociological Association (ESA) from 2005 to 2007, he organized the ESA Arts Conference 2007 in Lüneburg ([www.new-arts-frontiers.eu](http://www.new-arts-frontiers.eu)).

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Living in Paris. Studied history, politics, and cultural management. Finishing his PhD in French literature at the university Paris 3 Sorbonne Nouvelle (Paris 3 / CNRS – UMR 7171). Subject: “Openness to the World in French poetry at the beginning of the twentieth century”. Junior Lecturer at the same university, and project manager for Leonardo/OLATS ([www.olats.org](http://www.olats.org)), as well as guest editor for Leonardo Journal (MIT Press).

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**Dr. Caterina Pizanias**

An independent curator and itinerant academic. For a number of years the Sociology of Knowledge has provided a home of sorts, out of which she has travelled to, or lived in, various other disciplines while blurring the boundaries between the conceptual and the creative. She seeks exhibits that will transcend the artistic boundaries and aspire to create “new possibilities”.

**Aviva Rahmani**

Her projects merge science with aesthetics, ranging from complete landscape restorations to multi-disciplinary museum venues ([www.ghostnets.com](http://www.ghostnets.com)). She teaches, lectures and performs internationally. She is the recipient of numerous grants and fellowships. Current work addresses the geo-political impacts of global warming at international sites, using the internet “to create residencies without the jet travel that spews carbon emissions over the earth’s waters.”

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**Insa Winkler**

Working as an artist on different cultural interfaces about nature. Among philosophical contemplation, research about mythology and morphogenetic phenomenon of the biosphere, she is originating site specific land and eco art works ([www.insawinkler.de](http://www.insawinkler.de)). Beside a long experience in curating intervention art projects, she is an M.A. candidate in Art for architecture and environment.

The search for sustainable futures calls forward a cultural change process. The cultural dimension of (un)sustainability stands at the core of the global crisis, pointing at the roots of unsustainable development and exploring alternatives. While sustainability offers an inspiring research field for artists and other cultural actors, the arts and other cultural sectors constitute experimental, reflexive and transformative fields for the advancement of sustainability.

This book explores the manifold dimensions of that new mutual frontier: The twenty-one selected texts offer interdisciplinary insights from sociology, economics, phenomenology and philosophy, and from artists actively contributing to the search process of sustainability. The twenty-one authors share their experiences from Europe, Asia, North and Central America and Africa.

Cultural actors and artists around the world as well as civil society organizations and institutional actors will find significant insights for their work in this book. This book also sets a landmark for a new research approach that will interest students, researchers and educators in the fields of arts and culture (including fashion and creative industries), as well as in the fields of sustainability, peace studies, ecology, systems thinking, globalization and development.

## **About the Editors**

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