

# Chapter 8

## Towards a New Paradigm of the Creative City or the Same Devil in Disguise? Culture-led Urban (Re)development and Sustainability



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### 8.1 Introduction

With an expected 68% of the world's population living in a city by 2050 (United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2018), climate change and rapid global urbanization are among the great challenges of our time, exerting economic, social and environmental pressure on cities worldwide. The need for new models of urban planning and development in order to create open, safe, resilient and sustainable cities has been acknowledged by the world community as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (ASD) and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which were adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2015 (Throsby 2017; United Nations 2019). As we witness the emergence of a paradigm shift within urban planning, the relationship between culture, the economy and cities needs to be rethought, not only with regard to the 2030 ASD, but similarly in relation to building creative metropolises that are also sustainable and circular.

The Brundtland report defines sustainable development as 'the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs' (WCED 1987, p. 41). The report used the concept of sustainable development to particularly link economic and environmental systems. It also stressed the long-term properties of the concept of sustainability, and introduced 'the ethical principle of achieving equity between the present and the future generations' (Diesendorf 2000, p. 3). A 'three pillars model' of sustainability then emerged, which acknowledged environmental, financial and social qualities (United

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Nations World Summit 2005).<sup>1</sup> References to culture and its role were, however, underrepresented or missing in both academic and policy discourses. In fact, only a few scholars have recognised the part it plays. Cultural economist Throsby (1995, 2008, 2017) has long argued that it is not possible to speak about sustainability without also talking about culture. Hawkes (2001), meanwhile, discussed four pillars of sustainable development, acknowledging that environmental, financial and social sustainability require a foundation in culture if they are to be understood and implemented at an individual level. According to Hawkes, cultural vitality is as important for a sustainable society as ‘social equity, environmental responsibility and economic viability’ (Hawkes 2001, p. vii). The 2008 financial crash and recent environmental crises have intensified the debate around sustainable development and a circular economy, but the role of culture is still undervalued. Indeed, the 2030 ASD, and SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities) in particular, does not mention culture’s part in sustainable urban development at all (Throsby 2017).

In this chapter, we focus on the relationship between culture and sustainable development. To do this, we look at the case of De Ceuvel, a planned work space for creative and social enterprises, which is located in a polluted area in a former shipping wharf in Amsterdam North (the Netherlands). De Ceuvel’s location is heavily polluted and has been excluded from the municipality’s masterplan (“ground exploitation programme” under the new Dutch Spatial Law) for 10 years. A tendering process was, however, developed by the Municipality of Amsterdam and other stakeholders as a way to offer the land to interested parties. The objective was to combine culture with environmental sustainability, in particular, and provide new affordable work settings for cultural and creative entrepreneurs. After winning the tender in 2012, the Amsterdam-based architecture bureau Space&Matter and the architect Marjolein Smeele (Smeelearchitecture agency) set up an expert group to plan the regeneration of the area. Working with cultural and creative entrepreneurs that moved there, they transformed De Ceuvel into a clean-tech playground with the aim of making ‘sustainability tangible, accessible and fun’ (De Ceuvel 2019). As an experimental setting, De Ceuvel may be particularly relevant concerning the ways in which culture is interrelated with sustainable development. Our goal in this chapter is to uncover what inspires cultural and creative entrepreneurs to commit to sustainable development, and what their intentions, ambitions and visions are. Given the focus of the public tender on culture and the environmental sustainability pillar, we anticipate that this interrelationship may not be enough to promote a genuine, long-term sustainability-oriented project.

Data on the De Ceuvel case was collected in 2015 using qualitative semi-structured interviews and participant observations on site. This was complemented with a content analysis of De Ceuvel’s website, the tender of the Municipality of Amsterdam, De Ceuvel’s application documents, and policy documents on urban development plans for Amsterdam North. In order to depict recent developments

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<sup>1</sup>Economic sustainability refers to the efficient and responsible use of resources by businesses, so that they can operate and be profitable. Environmental sustainability means the use of natural resources in a way that considers scarcity and the needs of future generations. Socially sustainable communities are resilient and capable of adapting to change.

and changes, we conducted a further analysis of the situation in 2019, which was based on structured, written interviews with both the tenants who had been interviewed in 2015 and new arrivals.<sup>2</sup> Table 8.1 contains further information on the interviewees, who were all Caucasian and well educated (they all had master's degrees, save for one who had a bachelor's degree).

This chapter addresses the role of culture in sustainable development. It examines the origins of De Ceuvel and focuses on cultural and creative entrepreneurs and their decisions to commit to sustainable development. It also considers the future of De Ceuvel and assesses to what extent it is a culturally sustainable development experiment.

**Table 8.1** List of interviewees

| Interviewee # | Gender | Age range | Co-founder/tenant         | School degree | Profession                                    | Interview year                    |
|---------------|--------|-----------|---------------------------|---------------|-----------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1             | M      | 25–35     | Assistant to co-Founder   | MSc           | Consultant at consultancy in circular economy | 2015, 2019                        |
| 2             | M      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | MA            | Craftsman                                     | 2015                              |
| 3             | M      | 25–35     | Founder                   | MA            | Architect                                     | 2015                              |
| 4             | M      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | n.a.          | Craftsman                                     | 2015                              |
| 5             | M      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | BA            | Craftsman                                     | 2015                              |
| 6             | F      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | MSc           | Futurologist                                  | 2015 (no longer a tenant in 2019) |
| 7             | F      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | MA            | Spatial designer                              | 2015, 2019                        |
| 8             | M      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | MSc           | Architect                                     | 2015, 2019                        |
| 9             | M      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | MSc           | Project manager at creative content agency    | 2015 (no longer a tenant in 2019) |
| 10            | M      | 35–45     | Founder                   | MSc           | Architect                                     | 2015                              |
| 11            | F      | 35–45     | Tenant                    | MSc           | Architect and interior designer               | 2019                              |
| 12            | M      | 35–45     | Municipality of Amsterdam | MSc           | Project manager                               | 2015                              |
| 13            | F      | 45–55     | Municipality of Amsterdam | MA            | Project manager                               | 2015                              |

<sup>2</sup>The first sample consisted of 12 interviewees (eight tenants, two founders and two project managers from the City of Amsterdam) and the second contained four (all tenants). Three of the tenants interviewed in 2015 had left De Ceuvel between the two data collection rounds. In addition, a content analysis of De Ceuvel's website and its annual reports from 2014 to 2017 complemented the investigation. The data collected in 2015 was part of the thesis "Sustainability and Culture" written by Martina Drosner for her MA in Cultural Economics and Entrepreneurship (Erasmus University Rotterdam). A previous version of this chapter was presented at the AAG (Association of American Geographers) annual conference in San Francisco in 2016, as part of the session "Negotiating the 'creative city': A new cultural governance for the 'creative city'?"

## 8.2 Culturally Sustainable Development

Culture-led urban development policymaking has come a long way. Indeed, in the context of a declining post-industrialized economy, bottom-up regeneration has taken place in derelict industrial brownfields like Tacheles in Berlin and Friche la Belle de Mai in Marseille (Andres and Grésillon 2013). In many cities worldwide, especially in Western countries, artists and creative entrepreneurs were attracted to former industrial buildings as part of their search for affordable, low-maintenance, urban spaces that could be adapted to their individual requirements (Zukin 1989). Organic and decentralized, these cultural activities grew into spaces that combined cultural production and cultural consumption facilities with little or no involvement from local or national governments. With the rise of cultural and creative industries in the 2000s, policymakers aimed to capitalize on cultural production as a way to stimulate economic growth (Braun and Lavanga 2007; Evans 2009; Foord 2009; Lavanga 2004, 2013; van der Borg et al. 2005). Top-down creations of cultural districts, quarters or clusters were expected to boost the economy and revitalize urban areas (Lavanga 2020), with copy and paste solutions circulating worldwide (Pratt 2008).

Scholars have strongly criticized cultural policies that drifted towards more market-driven redevelopments, in particular for the lack of attention paid to place-specific characteristics and the increase in socio-economic and spatial inequalities (for example, Banks 2017; Banks and O'Connor 2009; Hesmondhalgh et al. 2014; Lavanga 2006, 2009, 2013; Oakley 2004; Oakley and O'Connor 2015; Rozentale and Lavanga 2014; van der Borg et al. 2005). Culture has mostly been used for instrumental and financial ends for the past few decades, and cultural industries have long been praised for their contributions to innovation and economic growth. Their influence on non-material wellbeing or 'the good life and good society' (Klamer 2002, p. 470) has, however, often been neglected.

The concept of culturally sustainable development may be useful for reconnecting and reconciling culture with the economic, societal and environmental pillars. According to Throsby, sustainable development based on culture 'encompasses both the idea of cultural development in its own right, according art and culture an independent and valued role in their own terms within society, and culture as a set of attitudes and practices that can be instrumental in supporting, constraining and/or contributing to economic and social development in the widest sense' (Throsby 1995, p. 202). Two main definitions of culture can be derived: (a) functional, which refers to the cultural and creative industries and (b) anthropological, which references the intangible values, beliefs, rituals and traditions of a society. Throsby suggested four criteria for defining and assessing culturally-sustainable development. First, development cannot be measured by economic growth alone, but should also address the advancement of material and non-material wellbeing. Along with economic indicators, environmental, social and cultural versions must be added too. Second, a long-term view and responsibility towards future generations are essential. Indeed, sustainable development should strive for intergenerational

equity—‘fairness in the distribution of resources and opportunities between generations, in particular between present and future generations’ (Ibid., p. 203)—and the maintenance of environmental and cultural capital (in its material and immaterial forms). Third, individuals should have the right to fair treatment in the economic, social and cultural spheres. Intragenerational equity means a fair distribution of economic and social opportunities and resources, along with fair access to cultural resources for disadvantaged groups of the present generation. Finally, we need to recognize the interdependence between economic, environmental, social and cultural processes as fundamental for assessing sustainable development. In conclusion, a system-wide approach to policymaking is therefore required.

Moving from a macro- to a meso-level, Kirchberg and Kagan (2013, p. 141) provide insight into what a sustainable, creative city may represent. They argue that this is a place where people can ‘practice ecologically resilient, socially equitable and inter-culturally vibrant modes of life.’ Several elements are recognised as essential: the practice of collaborative art; an openness to experimenting with alternative locally and globally sustainable ways of life; artisanship to complement communal practice; and recognizing the arts as a catalyst for integration, which in turn stimulates the exchange of different cultures within a community (Kagan and Hahn 2011). A creative, sustainable place may share some of the features of utopian experiments and inspire change in society at large. Such experiments, whether it be Auroville in India or Christiania in Copenhagen, have suggested that self-sustaining communities may offer creative solutions to environmental and societal issues (for example, de Geus 1999; Sargent 2005; Sargisson 2000; Vanolo 2013). Utopias may serve to motivate people to make socially and environmentally sustainable choices and reassess their way of life: for example, by enabling a process of holistic thinking about what is a ‘good society (Levitas 2000); by ‘doing the right thing’ and uncovering their true values (Klamer 2017); by inspiring alternative visions of the ‘good life’ (Oakley and Ward 2018); or by fostering an ‘ecological citizenship’ (Duxbury et al. 2017).

While the conceptualisation of culturally sustainable development is advancing, operationalising it is still difficult. Moving towards a more micro-level, we aim to explore why and how cultural and creative entrepreneurs commit to the concept. In doing so, our goal is to examine to what extent De Ceuvel is an experiment with this process.

### 8.3 The Origins of De Ceuvel

De Ceuvel is an eco-hub for creative and social enterprises and is located in a former industrial area of Amsterdam North. It opened to the public in 2014 and describes itself as ‘a city playground for innovation, experimentation and creativity.’ It aims ‘to make sustainability tangible, accessible and fun’ (De Ceuvel 2019). De Ceuvel differs from other Dutch urban redevelopment projects in several ways: (a) its location in a heavily polluted former ship wharf; (b) its innovative approach to turning

an urban brownfield into a self-sustaining ‘regenerative urban oasis’ by way of integrated clean technologies (Ibid.); (c) the fact that it was stimulated top-down via a tender, but developed organically with the aim of attracting creative and social entrepreneurs interested in sustainable development; and (d) its combination of culture and sustainable development at various levels, which is motivated by the belief that ‘the transition to a circular economy and society is not only a technical transition, it’s also a cultural transition’ (Ibid.).

Considering the brief history of De Ceuvel sheds light on its outcomes as it developed. Its narrative begins with its top-down establishment via the Municipality of Amsterdam. However, for two reasons, its evolution differs from the standard culture-led regeneration strategies identified by Lavanga (2004, 2009) and Andres and Grésillon (2013). First, the urban redevelopment plans for Amsterdam North were put on hold due to the financial crisis. As a result, the land remained undeveloped, as was also the case with the former ship wharf Ceuvel Volharding. Second, this particular piece of land in the Buiksloterham area was further excluded from the local government’s ground exploitation programme, because the soil is heavily polluted due to the former industrial production of ships. Consequently, no revenue was expected for 10 years. As stated in the report ‘Circular Buiksloterham’, ‘its polluted lands and open spaces can become the centre of the implementation of new clean technologies and a hub for the closure of urban material cycles [...] As such, Buiksloterham can serve as a blueprint and live experiment for how such formerly peripheral areas worldwide can be transformed into a motor for change and regeneration in cities’ (Metabolic, Studioninedots and DELVA Landscape Architects 2014, p. 4–5).<sup>3</sup> In order to utilize the land, a competition for its temporary use was launched in collaboration with three government departments: Stadsdeel Amsterdam Noord (Amsterdam North City District, the owner of the land); Projectbureau Noordwaarts (responsible for the redevelopment of the post-industrial area of Buiksloterham); and Bureau Broedplaatsen, whose function was to create an ‘affordable workspace for artists in the city’<sup>4</sup> (Interviewee 12, policymaker, 2015). In a city fascinated by Florida’s theory of the creative class, and which is experiencing gentrification and over-tourism, Bureau Broedplaaatsen has been in charge of keeping alive the creative, often alternative and anarchist, vibe and infrastructure that makes Amsterdam renowned worldwide (van der Borg et al. 2005).

The three city-government departments created the tender to make the land available for a creative breeding space and offer cheap places to work to cultural and creative entrepreneurs. Excluded for 10 years from the municipality’s masterplan

<sup>3</sup>According to Metabolic, Studioninedots and DELVA Landscape Architects (2014), the polluted plots in Buiksloterham covered over 15 hectares, circa 15% of the total area.

<sup>4</sup>Bureau Broedplaaatsen is a department of the Municipality of Amsterdam. It is in charge of developing creative ‘broedplaatsen, creative breeding grounds or creative locations which host affordable work spaces for artists and creative entrepreneurs in Amsterdam. A diverse range of stakeholders works with Bureau Broedplaatsen to develop the creative broedplaatsen, ranging from artist groups to housing corporations and creative management organisations. It was formed as a follow-up to the BroedplaatsAmsterdam project.

(“ground exploitation programme” under the new Spatial Law), the polluted land was offered to interested parties with an objective of combining both culture and environmental sustainability in the creation of a new cultural breeding space. Potential tenants had to fulfil a number of criteria, as set out in Table 8.2.

The Amsterdam-based architecture bureau Space&Matter and the architect Marjolein Smeele (Smeearchitecture agency) won the tender in 2012. They brought together a team of experts ranging from architects involved in design, project development and management, to organizations specialising in concept development, research, the implementation of clean technology and financial services.<sup>5</sup> With the land secured with a 10-year lease, the team worked together to transform the former de Ceugel Volharding shipyard into a place to experiment with a circular economy, clean technology, urban development and culture.

De Ceugel’s spatial structure consists of refurbished houseboats turned into workspaces and studios. These are located on the polluted soil and are equipped with circular and clean technologies. A wooden jetty connects the houseboats to prevent contact with the soil. Regenerative landscape architecture was also used for the so-called ‘forbidden garden’, where ‘phyto-remediating plants’ extract pollutants from the soil, thereby cleansing it (De Ceugel 2019). This spatial arrangement is complemented by De Ceugel’s soft structure, which consists of its tenants (the creative and social entrepreneurs) and a hospitality facility. As one founder explained, they had the vision to ‘... show in a way that we can combine sustainability and culture in De Ceugel by inviting people to cultural events’ and ‘by also showing them new ways and technologies for sustainability’ (Interviewee 10, founder, 2015).

**Table 8.2** The tender selection criteria (municipality of Amsterdam)

|    | Criteria considered                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  | Weight (%) |
|----|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1. | The need to develop a concept that is extraordinary and/or of high quality with regard to innovative ideas about how environmental sustainability is incorporated                                                                                    | 40         |
| 2. | The degree to which the concept is technically and financially feasible; it must also adhere to the requirements imposed by the departments responsible for both the area’s urban redevelopment and supporting creative “broedplaatsen” in Amsterdam | 30         |
| 3. | The extent to which the concept proves to be a qualitative addition to the physical environment, including concerning quality of life and social security                                                                                            | 15         |
| 4. | The degree to which the applicants are experienced in the operation of creative “broedplaatsen”, real estate and/or hospitality                                                                                                                      | 15         |

Source: Authors’ explanations based on the document ‘Prijsvraag Broedplaats Ceugel Volharding’

<sup>5</sup>The complete list of organizations is available on De Ceugel’s website and includes: Space&Matter (urban planning, architecture, project development); Smeearchitecture (project development, community building); the architect Jeroen Apers (project development, finances); Marcel van Wees (project and general management); Metabolic (concept development, research and implementation of clean technologies and sustainability plans); DELVA Landscape Architects & Bureau Fonkel (design, implementation and maintenance of the Purifying Park); Studio Valkenier (designed Café de Ceugel); and Waterloft (financial advice).

This vision, which was paired with a creative problem-solving approach, was what convinced the jury, as explained by one of its members:

What's really important at De Ceuvel is not that they actually leave the ground cleaner. That's nice, but I think the BIG thing is that you can show people what's possible. Even on a tight budget, and even if you aren't investing a lot of money, you can still do things by having ideas, thinking about it in a smart way. I think that's the big thing that De Ceuvel shows. Not so much the result, but instead showing people the possibilities. (Interviewee 10, founder, 2015)

De Ceuvel's location has been redeveloped with a considerable voluntary effort from its tenants via the creation of the Association de Ceuvel (ADC). This is currently comprised of its board (chair, treasurer, secretary and two tenants), four commercial boats (Crossboat, Metabolic Lab, Café de Ceuvel, Hotel Asile Flottant)<sup>6</sup> and 14 non-commercial boats that house a mini theatre and studio, ateliers, and workspaces for artists and creative entrepreneurs. Boats can either be rented individually or shared.<sup>7</sup>

#### 8.4 Now and the Future of De Ceuvel, or the Temporality Paradox

De Ceuvel accommodates 26 companies, entrepreneurs and artists. The rest of the space is occupied by a floating hotel, and three boats are available for rent for (public) events, meetings and workshops. The plot also has a café, which is environmentally sustainable in three ways: it was built using upcycled materials; it works with local organic food suppliers; and it grows its own herbs in its rooftop greenhouse. Most of the tenants work in the fields of design, social innovation and architecture.<sup>8</sup> The rest are involved in visual art, communication, and the performing arts, while a minority are active in crafts, journalism and event management. Our sample in Table 8.1 is representative of the current population. Architecture and spatial design are the most represented sectors. The majority of our 11 creative entrepreneurs, including the founders, were male and aged between 35 and 45. A quick scan of the current tenants on De Ceuvel's website provides a snapshot of these middle-class, highly-educated, Caucasian entrepreneurs.

Our interviewees mentioned three elements they regarded as important when deciding whether to move to De Ceuvel: first, the community spirit and networking

<sup>6</sup>Crossboat and Metabolic Lab host workshops and events. Hotel Asile Flottant is comprised of six boats retrofitted as hotel rooms, and is docked on the canal at De Ceuvel. It is an independent organisation and a member of the Association de Ceuvel (De Ceuvel 2019).

<sup>7</sup>For an overview of the current tenants and boats, please visit <https://deceuvel.nl/en/boats/>. See Table 8.1 for a list of the tenants and founders interviewed.

<sup>8</sup>The category 'design' includes different aspects, such as landscaping and interior and graphic design. 'Social innovation' refers to activities concerned with designing and developing solutions to meet social needs.

opportunities; second, the amenities (the café, the aesthetics, the nature and the cultural activities); and third, major technological innovation in terms of environmental sustainability. Being part of a group ‘that works on innovative sustainable projects in Amsterdam’ (Interviewee 8, tenant, 2019) seemed to be closely connected to the third factor. The same tenant pointed out, ‘it feels like we’re at the forefront of [environmentally] sustainable innovation, which is the place I’d like to be.’ Another tenant stressed the importance of the like-minded community feeling:

For me [it was] the idea of having your own studio with (...) a group that’s got the same mind-set about taking this experience of making a sustainable, closed-looped city area, which is quite experimental. (Interviewee 7, tenant, 2015)

More than 5 years after opening to the public in 2014, De Ceuvel is seen as ‘one of Europe’s most unique urban experiments’ (Morton 2018). It has received much international media exposure and has won awards and nominations worldwide. Its development is an ‘ongoing process’ on different levels (Interviewee 7, tenant, 2019) but is always aligned with the vision of environmental sustainability. Among the various highlights are the newly-built aquaponics greenhouse, which uses ‘a closed-loop aquaponics system combining fish and vegetable production’ to grow herbs and vegetables for Café de Ceuvel (De Ceuvel 2019); the introduction of Juliette, a blockchain-based solar trading system, which fuels local production and the exchange of renewable energy locally;<sup>9</sup> the opening of the floating Hotel Asile Flottant;<sup>10</sup> and the twofold extension of Café De Ceuvel, due to its increased popularity with the public (Interviewee 11, tenant, 2019).

Nevertheless, not all of the ADC’s environmental sustainability projects have come to fruition. The Bio-gas Boat, for instance, was planned as a way to ‘convert organic waste into biogas’ that could be used in the café (De Ceuvel 2019). However, the project ended in 2019 after technical difficulties caused the ship to sink during a storm (Interviewee 7, tenant, 2019). It did, however, inspire those involved in a sanitation project in the wider area of Buiksloterham, which was carried out by the local Amsterdam water company.

One of the challenges facing De Ceuvel concerns the future of the ADC. As one tenant pointed out, ‘After the first 5 years, we’re looking to the future to see what De Ceuvel can mean after the end of the 10-year term’ (Interviewee 7, tenant, 2019). The experiment has proceeded on a ‘trial and error’ basis, which makes it clear that such a development will be a long-term process. This raises the question of how easily, and to what extent, De Ceuvel can be seen as a model for other projects. Accordingly, the tenants still have a vision to ‘recreate it [De Ceuvel] somewhere else’ (Interviewee 8, tenant, 2015); indeed, this is behind the current conversations and negotiations the ADC is having with the Municipality of Amsterdam. De Ceuvel

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<sup>9</sup> ‘Mining existing crypto-currencies such as Bitcoin consumes a lot of energy, while the Jouliette is generated by the user producing excess solar energy ... Jouliette encourages solar panel owners to exchange energy locally, instead of selling surplus power to the grid’ (De Ceuvel 2019).

<sup>10</sup>Asile Flottant is a member of the ADC, but works as an independent business and pays a small fee for maintenance of the site.

could be recreated at a different location, as the houseboats can be moved, thus exemplifying to the public and the local government that creative, sustainable solutions can be designed in a way that outlasts temporal and spatial restrictions. Houseboats have been a common sight on many canals in Amsterdam since the 1970s, and their prices are competitive with those of traditional homes. De Ceuvel works as a community of houseboats that can be moved to other former docks along the River IJ, countering the lack of affordable work and housing spaces in the city centre.<sup>11</sup> In this respect, De Ceuvel may encapsulate a temporality paradox: it was born as a temporary project, but can be a permanent one, too. Its temporality, combined with its reliability in terms of its mobile infrastructure, may thus enable De Ceuvel to colonize other fringe areas in Amsterdam that need clean-tech innovations. However, the challenge of the De Ceuvel experiment is not to simply replicate and recreate it in a new location, but to adapt to a new context and related economic, environmental, social and cultural challenges.

## 8.5 Culture and Environmental Sustainability at De Ceuvel

The relationship between culture and environmental sustainability takes at least three different forms at De Ceuvel. First, it was policy-induced and planned via its top-down implementation as a creative ‘broedplaatsen’ and a ‘playground for sustainable technologies’ (De Ceuvel 2019). Following the redevelopment of the area led by experts, the first tenants arrived and the ADC opened its premises up to the broader public. As one tenant explained, the effects of the policy are still significant:

That’s not because they [creative entrepreneurs and artists] would be more inclined to go for [environmental] sustainability. It’s just because the Bureau Broedplaatsen has a policy where you have to be a cultural entrepreneur to be here. ... Of course, from a general, demographic perspective, this [group of entrepreneurs] would be an educated group, so we make decisions that are more conscious. But it’s not that we’re here because of it [environmental sustainability]. (Interviewee 2, tenant, 2015)

Second, the connection between culture and environmental sustainability may not have been inherent in the tenants’ work initially but could have grown over time in parallel with the increasing global, national and local interest in sustainable development and a circular economy. One tenant summarised that:

[a] lot of the cultural creatives have [environmental] sustainability as a theme in their work, and a lot of the sustainable ecopreneurs need creative thoughts to bring their ideas to life. I think they go hand in hand. (Interviewee 8, tenant, 2019)

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<sup>11</sup> Space&Matter is also involved in the development of Schoonschip in Amsterdam North. This project aims to develop a residential area with floating, sustainable, circular houses. Initiated by a group of Amsterdam residents, it will be completed in 2020 and is run as a foundation.

Third, culture is used as a medium to convey the environmental sustainability message to a wider audience. The ADC aims to involve and inspire the public to join ‘the social transition to a contemporary circular lifestyle’ (De Ceuvel 2019). This is based on the belief that this transition is both technical and cultural (Ibid.). It occurs through the variety of cultural events and activities that regularly take place at De Ceuvel, with the aim of ‘bringing awareness, making knowledge publicly accessible (...) making [environmental] sustainability low threshold and fun’ (Interviewee 1, assistant to a co-founder, 2019). De Ceuvel has a goal to reach out to a broader audience, from the already ‘converted’ to the multi-ethnic inhabitants of the neighbourhood; Amsterdammers who have never crossed the River IJ; and children and tourists.<sup>12</sup>

However, most of the cultural activities do not reach the local neighbourhood, a relatively poor area. Indeed, the audience attracted is mostly made up of those ‘who can associate [themselves] with this place [...] All these people who’ve been gentrifying the hell out of these neighbourhoods, they like coming here’ (Interviewee 2, tenant, 2015). The locals do not go to De Ceuvel, even though some attempts have been made to reach out to them, for example with a traditional Dutch music festival and information sessions. It may be that the locals regard the café and activities as too expensive and view De Ceuvel as filled with ‘strange people’. Meanwhile, those at De Ceuvel may develop a more snobbish and colonizing attitude towards the neighbourhood. In this way, the two parties become separate islands.

In conclusion, according to the interviewees, working at De Ceuvel enables them to realize their shared values through their professional work, as well in terms of interactions with the other tenants. However, the only public involved are the ‘already converted’ rather than people in the local neighbourhood. Our findings are confirmed by a recent report on value creation produced by trans-sectoral cooperation and commissioned by the Dutch Ministry of the Interior and Kingdom Relations. One of the tenants said that ‘what’s mentioned as culture in De Ceuvel is limited to an environmental communication tool for mainly white millennials—very Calvinist. There’s little connection, little inter-generational, little diversity in De Ceuvel. If I hadn’t invested 25K euros in my boat, then I’d probably already have left the place’ (Weiler 2019, p. 65; authors’ translation).

## 8.6 Conclusions

This chapter aimed to improve understanding of the relationship between culture and sustainable development using the case of De Ceuvel, an experiment where culture and environmental sustainability are intertwined. The goal was to assess

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<sup>12</sup>De Ceuvel organizes art workshops for young children, as well as events like Ceuvel Kids, with nature-exploring activities or Easter egg hunts in and around the café. It organizes public tours for adults every Sunday. De Ceuvel is also part of the Public Art tour in Amsterdam North, and is one of the options available as a place to visit during the ‘We Make the City’ place-making conference.

why and how cultural and creative entrepreneurs commit to sustainable development. Since its inception, De Ceuvel has attracted creative entrepreneurs who wanted to work on environmental challenges and use culture to make the wider public aware of these issues and possible solutions. The decisive factors mentioned by our interviewees were: cheap rents; opportunities to collaborate and network with like-minded creative ecopreneurs; the amenities available (the café, the aesthetics, the nature and cultural activities); and the major technological innovations in relation to environmental sustainability. However, not everything in the garden is rosy. Indeed, our analysis suggests that funding opportunities have shaped the kinds of activities engaging our artists or entrepreneurs, with the majority following the money and possibilities that the circular economy may offer.

Along with a temporality paradox, another version may emerge. De Ceuvel has become an environmentally sustainable playground, but it is also part of a larger redevelopment process involving the entire Buiksloterham area. The broader plan is to expand the gentrification process already occurring in Amsterdam North. Indeed, while over-tourism characterizes central Amsterdam, Amsterdam North is seeing a rise in new residential areas and has a booming night-time economy, with new cafés and restaurants. A recently opened metro line means the area is only a few minutes from the city centre. Nevertheless, will the creative city saga continue, camouflaged as a sustainable or circular city, with the displacement of residents and precarious creative labour? Affordable spaces for artists in Amsterdam have become a mirage, while Amsterdam North, once a haven for alternative artists' communities (for example, NDSM Art City) may lose its final members, as already experienced by the rest of Amsterdam. Indeed, many Amsterdam-based artists are relocating to the closest city of Haarlem or are flooding to the rising creative city of Rotterdam.

The redevelopment of De Ceuvel can be assessed as a success in terms of both how it has advanced environmental technologies and some of the long-term effects it will have in relation to future generations. However, when cultural and social sustainability are considered, it is not possible to conclude that intragenerational equity is ensured. A fair distribution of economic and social opportunities and resources, along with fair access to cultural assets for disadvantaged groups of the present generation, were not part of the project. There is also a lack of recognition of the interdependence among its economic, environmental, social and cultural processes. An imbalance within De Ceuvel may also emerge in relation to the distribution of resources, the time invested and the rewards for different tenants. The entrepreneurs and organizations that have benefitted the most financially and reputationally may indeed be among the circle of founders, namely the architects and project managers who won the tender. For them, De Ceuvel may have been like a business card for future redevelopment projects that want environmental sustainability and to build a community of like-minded people. De Ceuvel may then be seen as a free publicity tool that increased the reputation, visibility and media attention paid to those involved, with skyrocketing commissions, awards and building projects being the result. One might wonder about the extent to which the type of creative entrepreneurs attracted—mostly in the architecture and design sectors—can explain how De Ceuvel was conceived and further developed.

In conclusion, De Ceuvel cannot be regarded in terms of either Throsby's (1993) conception of a culturally sustainable development project or as a sustainable creative area discussed by Kirchberg and Kagan (2013). The role of culture has mostly been instrumental in bridging other, mainly financial and environmental, goals. The empowerment of diverse society groups is minimal or lacking. A tender that would have also included social and cultural sustainability, combined with a performance assessment of its mid-term and final results, may have helped to settle a more inclusive project from the start. While environmental awareness may have been raised among the 'already converted', it is now time to experiment with a systemic form of project development that includes cultural and social sustainability.

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