

# **Cultures of Sustainable Urban Development: From Urban Pioneers and CoHousing Cultures to Selfmade City and Make\_Shift City**

**Dr. Michael LaFond**

Sustainability 2014: Future Urban Development at Different Scales  
Sustainable Development of neighborhood and district –  
actors, strategies and instruments

Berlin is increasingly gaining attention as a Design and Creative City. Parallel to this Berlin has also been getting on with what many would call aspects of sustainable development, for example mobility, energy and water infrastructures as well as alternative housing.

**Creative Sustainability** offers a way to discuss the relationships between Berlin's cultural and sustainable dimensions. This understands sustainability as a cultural challenge – and suddenly we see Berlin has the potential to be a pioneering city – showing that it makes sense, when regarding sustainable urban development strategies – to begin with culture and local interests, motivations, resources, traditions, dreams and possibilities.

A number of recent publications describe Berlin's emergent creative sustainability along with the relevant actors, strategies and planning instruments.

For example **Urban Pioneers** celebrates the resourcefulness and innovation of the hundreds and thousands of temporary uses and users in this city, some of which can be considered to be sustainably pioneering, and not just temporary.

**CoHousing Cultures** is an illustration of the diversity of self-organized, community-oriented and sustainable housing emerging in Berlin and other European cities. CoHousing is seen as potentially one of the most significant foundations for a sustainable city, in that people are given opportunities to organize themselves in designing and managing their own housing and neighborhoods.

**Selfmade City** and **Make\_Shift City**, also recently published in Berlin – are reviews of participatory and community-oriented housing and urban development approaches. These publications make connections among the various sub-cultures including alternative housing and community gardening.

Questions are repeatedly asked, for example how to:

plan for innovation and experimentation?

maintain *Freiräume* for future?

better combine informal and formal planning, bottom-up and top-down approaches?

Inspire and mobilize people to organize themselves?

Integrate cultural and technological aspects, in the sense of a creative sustainability?

European urban populations generally enjoy “rights to the city” and “rights to housing.” Creative Sustainability extends this to include “rights to expression”, adding a cultural element to the political idea of urban democracy. Creative Sustainability begins with local people and their respective cultures, resources, interests, challenges and dreams. Democratizing processes, and long-term, attractive solutions for housing and urban space production are emphasized. This integrates open-source urbanism with social justice, economic development and ecological balance. Increasingly, people understand this to mean democratization processes, which also enable them to directly develop and maintain needed and desired housing and neighborhood forms. For creative sustainability projects to thrive, society to profit in the best way possible, and a contribution be made to sustainable urban development, support needs to be increased for:

- new housing options for increasingly diverse and engaged urban populations, working against trends towards societal isolation and for individual expression.
- projects effectively meeting emerging societal needs and demonstrating successful
- strategies for the self-design and management of housing and neighborhoods, contributing to further democratizations of urban planning and development.
- initiatives increasing social inclusion and gender equality, especially concerning lower-income groups and immigrant populations in collaborative housing projects.
- work for open and communicative neighborhoods and against gated communities.
- housing and ground ownership strategies such as land trusts and long-term lease
- agreements working for affordability and against gentrification and speculation.
- new forms of cooperation among civil society, government and business.