

Exhibition | Festival | Urbanism | Architecture | Revitalisation |  
Vision for Telichka | Urban Workshop | Urban Fringe | Participatory  
City Development | CANactions | International | Ukraine | Kiev



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Report "wonderlab Kiev" 2014 Kiev (UA)

### **Collaborative Planning Workshop-Revitalising Telichka**

a cooperation of wonderland, Vienna (AT) and CANactions, Kiev (UA)

12 - 17 May 2014

The CANactions 2014 workshop in Telichka with three working groups lead by Jord den Hollander (NL), Clement Blanchard (FR), and Nasrin Mohiti Asli (IT) and Jacopo Ammendola (IT) and curatee by Daniela Patti and Levente Polyak from Wonderland-platform for European Architecture (AT). The workshop's objectives were elaborating vision, program and design of the future buildings and spaces of Telichka, creating a blueprint for further developments in Kiev, a new framework for participation, community involvement and strategic planning in the city.

### **Wonderlab Report | Workshop in Kiev | Revitalising Telichka**

By Daniela Patti and Levente Polyak

Wonderland's mission is to promote exchange of experiences and knowledge among young European architecture and planning practices. For this reason we organise a series of events such as workshops, lectures or films screenings in different cities around the continent in order support the spreading of concepts such as participation, local rootedness and transparency in the development of the urban realm. We were granted European Culture Funds together with DAZ - Deutsch Architektur Zentrum in Berlin and the CANactions Architecture Festival in Kiev, in order to organise the Wonderlabs: an open format for local and international exchange.

Together with our Ukrainian companions we started brainstorming a year ago about which could be a good location for the development of a collaborative planning workshop. They suggested an ex-industrial site in the Telichka neighbourhood, situation close to the city centre and the river and therefore a perfect location to become a centre for arts and culture, as imagined by its owner. Sometime in October 2013 in defined the site and opened the call for ideas to select the participants of the workshop that would take place in May 2014. It appeared to be somehow business as usual, instead soon after the Maidan protests took place, greatly supported by a large portion of the population amongst which our CANactions friends. Our involvement, as Wonderland Platform for European Architecture was somehow enriched of a much bigger meaning which forced us to question ourselves what Europe ever meant in the first place.

In the following months we followed the events, worried for our friends and hoped for things to remain peaceful in Kiev. But there was an unexpected turn of events, when the epicentre of the Ukrainian international conflict moved from Kiev's protests to be part of Europe to Eastern Ukraine becoming part of Russia. It is important to position our arrival in Kiev after this shift, which explains what we found and how we related to it. When we arrived on Sunday, after a warm welcome by our friends who had started having little hope in our arrival, we were taken for a delightful walk under the sun around the green and lively parks in the historical centre of the city. We saw many high quality public spaces among which one were artists of the neighborhood had prevented the construction of new housing on a panoramic spot of the city and had realised a very dynamic and well-designed park. Idyllic: we were totally perplexed as the happy families and young people sunbathing and eating ice-cream where far from what we expected. Where was the war? Where were the protests?

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The enchantment was soon to be broken when we then went to Maidan. European and Ukrainian flags decorated the entrance through the walls made out of pathway cobble stone, piles of tires created a sort of ginkana in which we ventured, surrounded by a peculiar mix of local inhabitants: paramilitary young men drinking beer and young couples taking a Sunday stroll in the Main Square. We walked past souvenir stalls in front of the panel commemorating the dead, we heard party music coming from afar while walking next to a burned down public building spotted with pink splashes of paint and while some extreme right-wing groups were holding a flag, some ladies were selling flowers to people passing by. The situation was so surreal that we were not even sure about how to formulate questions to our Ukrainian friends who appeared to us as confident and at peace with the surrounding.

During dinner we ended up discussing all together about what was Europe, Ukraine, national identity and our role as citizens in all these processes. Needless to say we reached no conclusion but had much food for thought to share during the workshop. In the following days we enriched our little understanding with some insights coming from the festival participants that had travelled from all over the country, among which the eastern regions. The situation was very complex and one thing we understood was that in times of such uncertainty the horizon narrows down to the local and everyday life, when one feels impotent over national conflicts the margins of operability in the space around us acquire a new meaning. This is how the industrial site of the Telichka made sense in this unpredictable condition: it was a space where wishful thinking and experimentation could take place in a frame of normality rather than the after-party relics of Maidan.

The revitalisation of the industrial site of Telichka: a harmless and routine discourse that meant something different, maybe an occasion to learn in good and bad from Maidan.

The workshop was developed by three groups lead by Jord den Hollander (NL), Jim Njoo (FR) and Jacopo Ammendola and Nasrin Mohiti Asli (IT), each one of which had a completely different take on the story. The development of the "Europe heterotopia"; the progressive phasing; the public space intervention construction. One may ask what do these have to do with one another and with Kiev today. To be honest this is what we asked ourselves too... where we being relevant to the needs of this place or were be being superficial foreigners imposing our decontextualised perspective? Luckily people of Kiev knew far better than us what we could offer, whether consciously or not.

An unexpected news went through the room: together with some European ambassadors it had been decided to organise a debate with the candidate mayors of Kiev. In fact, in the same date as the European elections Ukraine would vote for its government and for the mayor of its capital. The event was translated into English, broadcasted on national television and heavily attended. The expected to become mayor Vitali Klitschko was not present but the other 7 candidates that were present provided very picturesque if not caricatureal visions of the future development of Kiev, the best of which was the tax-free with Dubai-like skyscrapers. Some more realistic and sustainable visions were also outlined in a rather unprogrammatic way but the positive energy and will of intervening constructively on the urban scale, that we had seen amongst our fellow Ukrainian colleagues, was nowhere to be seen.

Many discussions took place with local experts we invited to provide feedback on the ongoing workshop process: people coming from architecture and planning but also economy, social innovation, arts and culture. Many remained silent and maybe perplex by the discussions, other openly criticized. So we kept wondering if we were being at all relevant to the local situation. Deep down this question followed us until the very last day, when we gathered in the main hall of the industrial site and the the workshop participants, the CANactions organisation team, the festival guests, the owner of the site, planners from the City Council, economists, social innovation experts, university researchers and many others filled up the large space.



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*The ship is the heterotopia par excellence. In civilizations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.*

Michel Foucault

It was somehow a ship that became, both metaphorically and physically, the message coming out of this international collaborative experience in Kiev. The very elaborate and powerful presentations allowed to see the urban and physical 'Retooling of Telichka' where the ex-industrial site could gradually retake its productive dimension together with education and creativity, gradually revitalising the neighborhood; or how a heterotopia called Europe could allow for Kiev to rediscover its identity and improve its international ties; or how a boat with wheels could create a public space in the site but also a symbolical link between the centre and the river. Beautiful ideas of working with local resource; thinking of planning not only as a long term plan but also as a space of short term experiments; and opening the space for flexible governance and policies that can embrace all this. But all this would have been absolutely irrelevant to the local situation if it hadn't been for the fact that this allowed to give seeds for thought to all the fantastic Ukrainian people we met there. All the participants and the experts that not only joined the final presentation but that had been tenaciously joined every evening the workshop discussions were discussing together about how to further develop project on the site and in the city.

It is early days to say of the ship will make it to the other side of the sea, but the sailors appear to be motivated and experienced.

The CANactions 2014 workshop in Telichka offers a unique opportunity to rethink the way urban development is conceived in Kiev. With the help of participants, tutors and curators from various countries, the workshop aims at developing an overall vision, a program, an action plan and tools for the territory's development.

Selected pictures online:

<https://www.facebook.com/wonderlabOnSite?ref=hl>

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